ALABAMA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

ALABAMA'S JOURNEY TO READING SUCCESS:

THE *ALABAMA LITERACY ACT*

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

Every Child.

Every Chance.

Every Day.

Dr. Eric G. Mackey, Alabama State Superintendent of Education

PHASE I: Published June 2020

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Introduction

"Reading is the fundamental skill upon which all formal education depends." In 1999, Dr. Louisa Moats wrote this as her opening statement in her research article on teacher preparation, Teaching Reading is Rocket Science. Dr. Moats went on to say,

> "Any child who doesn't learn to read early and well will not easily master other skills and knowledge, and is unlikely to ever flourish in school or in life. Low reading achievement, more than any other factor, is the root cause of chronically low-performing schools, which harm students and contribute to the loss of public confidence in our school system. When many children don't learn to read, the public schools cannot and will not be regarded as successful - and efforts to dismantle them will proceed."

In an effort to improve reading outcomes for students across Alabama, the Alabama Legislature passed the Alabama Literacy Act, which became law on June 10, 2019. This legislation extends comprehensive information and other guidance for educators to focus concentrated and systematic efforts to improve the reading skills of all public school students in early literacy so that every student is reading at or above grade-level by the end of third grade.

Note to Alabama Educators

Alabama Educators:

We hope you find the initial phase of this implementation guide beneficial. We realize that while the Alabama Literacy Act is comprehensive, the individual components of it are critically important in helping all students achieve reading success. In an effort to make this guide a living, breathing resource, the Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI), in close collaboration with other sections of the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) and external partners, will provide a blended model of professional learning and support for all educators at the K-3 level to assist with implementation. The professional learning and support opportunities are in the following list.

- Leader Lunch & Learn sessions broadcasted live and recorded for Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and school leaders (June 2020)
- Differentiated professional learning sessions for all educators at the K-3 level

(July 2020)

- Assistance with a "uniform format" established by the State Superintendent for school reporting (p. 27)
- Data collection, analysis, and instructional adjustment cycles • Job-embedded ongoing professional learning and coaching for all educators at the K-3 level via a blended model of delivery; and
- Tools to assist implementation steps, instructional adjustments, and data reporting

As we continue to support LEAs in the implementation of the Alabama Literacy Act, the ALSDE will annually add updates such as these.

- The Literacy Task Force's ongoing work with recommendations on annual vetted list of assessments, recommendations for core reading and intervention programs, and collaborative efforts with state public teacher preparation programs and Regional Inservice Centers to develop a state continuum of teacher development for approved science of reading;
- Revision of the 2011 Alabama Action Plan for Literacy: Birth Through Grade 12 with the Campaign for Grade-level Reading group and future implementation components
- Revision of Alabama Course of Study: English Language Arts aligned to the science of reading
- Completion of the Alabama Coaching Framework and impact for LEAs

- Additional evidence-based early literacy resources, summer camps or other extended learning resources, at-home resources for parents and other family supports, communication resources (both statewide and local)
- State statute or legislative revisions, as well as any federal impact on early literacy initiatives
- Statewide uniform accountability system for ARI, as well as LEA annual reporting requirements
- Definitions, additional clarification, and official guidelines for the state summative assessment system, the Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program (ACAP), including definition/clarification of the "lowest achievement level", "acceptable score on an alternative standardized reading assessment," and "demonstration of mastery of third grade minimum essential state reading standards as evidenced by a student reading portfolio" (p. 21)

While Phase I will assist LEAs for the 2020-2021 school year, the ALSDE realizes there is still a lot of information that will guide future implementation of the Alabama Literacy Act. Through ongoing efforts, we hope to provide Phase II by February 2021 and Phase III by July 2021. Thank you for your dedication to ensure Every Child. Every Chance. Every Day.

Sincerely,

Eric G. Mackey

State Superintendent of Education

Science of Reading

It is important to note that as this implementation guide is being developed, there is **currently no single adopted definition of the science of reading;** however, replicated research is clear regarding effective practices. A definition offered by The Reading League states, "The science of reading is a body of empirical research derived from multiple disciplines (cognitive, psychology, neuroscience, linguistics, etc.). The findings from thousands of research studies reveal how the brain reads, and why it has difficulty doing so sometimes."

Furthermore, Dr. Louisa Moats states, "The body of work referred to as the 'science of reading' is not an ideology, a philosophy, a political agenda, a one-size-fits-all

approach, a program of instruction, nor a specific component of instruction. It is the emerging consensus from many related disciplines, based on literally thousands of studies supported by hundreds of millions of research dollars, conducted across the world in many languages. These studies have revealed a great deal about how we learn to read, what goes wrong when students don't learn, and what kind of instruction is most likely to work the best for most students" (Center for the Collaborative Classroom).

Because of its complexity, various depictions have been developed and published to help educators understand the science of reading research, as well as the alignment of systematic and explicit instructional methods that include concepts, skills, and knowledge that is required for ALL students to become skillful readers.

The following graphics have been developed by various educators throughout the years and represent a small sample of the resources utilized across the nation to assist in their pursuit to understand and implement the complexity of the science of reading effectively into daily classroom instruction.

The Alabama Literacy Act Terminology Comparison Chart (Alabama Literacy Task Force)

Instruction must include: (defined in Legislative Act 2018-414, p. 14):	**Assessment must measure:**	**Deficiencies must be reported to parents in the following areas:**	**Intervention must be provided in:**
Phonological Awareness	Phonological Awareness (Phoneme Segmentation, Phoneme Blending, Phoneme Manipulation, etc.)	(Recommended)	Phonological Awareness

Phonics	Alphabetic Principle, Decoding, Encoding, Accuracy	Letter Naming Fluency, Correct Letter Sounds, Nonsense Word Reading, Oral Reading Accuracy, (Recommended Spelling)	Phonics including Decoding and Encoding
Vocabulary	Vocabulary	Vocabulary	Vocabulary
Fluency		Sight Word Fluency	Sight Words
Comprehension	Comprehension	Comprehension	Comprehension
Screening for Dyslexia	Dyslexia Risks	Risks, Characteristics	Dyslexia-specific Intervention
Language Development	(Oral Language) Recommended (p. 6, funds tied to improvement in Oral Language)		Language Development

Emergent Literacy Skills that Relate to Later Forms of Conventional Reading and Writing (Whitehurst and Lonigan, 2001). (Adapted from Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement)

Phonological Processing	Print Awareness	Oral Language
Phonological sensitivity: ability to detect and manipulate the sound structure of oral language	Ability to distinguish letters	Children with larger vocabularies have more developed phonological sensitivity
Phonological naming: efficiency of retrieving phonological information from permanent memory	Letter knowledge is linked with children's ability to manipulate phonemes	Children with smaller vocabularies are limited in phonological sensitivity
Phonological memory: short-term memory for sound-based information	Invented spelling — writing words following a phonological strategy	**Implications for older learners:** Learners with more semantic knowledge better comprehend what they read; Learners who read more frequently and fluently develop larger vocabularies and can access more difficult texts

NELP Literacy Variables (NELP, 2008). (Adapted from Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement)

Variables with a medium to large predicative relationship with later measure of literacy development	Variables that are moderately correlated with at least one measure of later literacy achievement
Alphabet Knowledge: Knowledge of the names and sounds associated with printed letters	**Concepts of Print:** Knowledge of print conventions, such as left–right or front–back, and concepts such as book cover, author or text
Phonological Awareness: The ability to detect, manipulate or analyze the auditory aspects of spoken language, including the ability to distinguish or segment words, syllables or phonemes, independent of meaning	**Print Knowledge:** A combination of elements of alphabetic knowledge, concepts about print and early decoding
Rapid Automatic Naming of Letters or Digits: The ability to rapidly name a sequence of random letters or digits	**Reading Readiness:** Usually a combination of alphabetic knowledge, concepts of print, vocabulary, memory and phonological awareness
Rapid Automatic Naming of Objects or Colors: The ability to rapidly name a sequence of repeating, random sets of pictures of objects, for example, "cat," "tree," "house," "man," or colors	**Oral Language:** The ability to produce or comprehend spoken language, including vocabulary and grammar
Writing or Writing Name: The ability to write letters in isolation, when asked, or to write one's own name	**Visual Processing:** The ability to match or discriminate visual symbols
Phonological Memory: The ability to remember spoken information for a short period of time	

Changing Emphasis of the Subskills of the Five Components of Reading (Adapted from Michigan's Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative, 2017)

Changing Emphasis of the Subskills of the Five Components of Reading
(Adapted from Michigan's Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative, 2017)

Component	K	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th and Beyond
Phonemic Awareness	Blend & Segment	Phoneme Analysis: Addition, Deletion & Substitution; Spelling Dictation				
Phonics	Sounds/Basic Phonics		Advanced Phonics & Multisyllabic		Multisyllabic & Word Study	
Fluency	Sounds and Words		Words & Connected Text		Connected Text	
Vocabulary	Speaking & Listening			Listening, Reading & Writing		Reading & Writing
Comprehension	Speaking & Listening			Listening, Reading & Writing		Reading & Writing

The requirements set forth in the Alabama Literacy Act are based upon this vast body

of research that continues to be further studied and replicated. These requirements illustrate evidence-based practices in effective core reading instruction and support. These practices also build upon the inception of the Alabama Reading Initiative's (ARI) foundation for Alabama public school reading instruction.

INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION (IHE)

To ensure teachers are prepared, public teacher preparation programs leading to the attainment of an initial elementary teaching certification shall require, **beginning with the 2020-2021 academic year,** "no less than nine hours of reading or literacy coursework, or both, based on the science of learning to read, including multisensory strategies in foundation reading skills. The nine credit hours of reading or literacy coursework shall be incorporated within the current credit hours currently approved for the degree program and not require additional credit hours for graduation" (pp. 30-31).

The Alabama Literacy Act also establishes both the Alabama **Literacy Task Force** and the **Alabama Committee on Grade-level Reading** and outlines how both committees are formed, as well as their roles and responsibilities as they relate to early literacy**.**

THE LITERACY TASK FORCE

This group is defined as a standing task force that meets a minimum of two times per year and provides recommendations for comprehensive core reading and intervention programs, a state continuum of teacher development for the science of reading (with the Institutions of Higher Education and the Regional Inservice Centers) and an annual list of vetted and approved assessments (pp. 2-3).

THE ALABAMA COMMITTEE ON GRADE-LEVEL READING

This group consists of three members appointed from each Alabama State Board of Education district. The Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate will appoint one member from each district, coordinating to ensure diversity. Each member must be a parent of a K-12 Alabama Public School student, a practicing teacher, a retired teacher, or employed in the field of education.

By June 30, 2020, the committee will revise the 2011 Alabama Action Plan for

Literacy: Birth through Grade 12 in consultation with the Alabama Campaign for Grade-level Reading group. The committee will also make recommendations on implementing the Alabama Literacy Act, provide standing oversight over the quality of professional learning and program quality, as well as providing recommendations on adopting innovative strategies and programming to improve the effectiveness of this act (pp. 32-33).

With the enactment of the Alabama Literacy Act, the collaborative efforts of the Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI), the Alabama Dyslexia Advisory Council, and the establishment of the various committees, such as the Literacy Task Force and the Alabama Committee on Grade-level Reading, the ALSDE has developed Phase I of this comprehensive resource guide. We hope this resource will provide LEAs with general guidance regarding instruction that adheres to the science of reading and utilizes assessment data to monitor progress, adjust instruction, and provide timely and targeted interventions. Additionally, it will provide a statewide framework for implementation and expectations for Alabama educators and stakeholders.

There is an intentional alignment of the key components of the Alabama Literacy Act as it relates to the implementation for LEAs. Roles and Responsibilities of the

ALSDE and the Alabama State Board of Education are outlined, followed by the expectations for all public school kindergarten through third grade classrooms, schools, LEAs, and regional support. A glossary of important terms containing resources and tools for implementing the Alabama Literacy Act is provided at the end of the implementation guide.

All stakeholders are encouraged to use the implementation guide as a resource for ensuring that reading instruction is grounded in the science of reading and to plan and implement a proactive, systemic instructional approach to prevent reading failure. Ensuring that all students achieve grade-level proficiency by the end of third grade must be paramount for every Alabama educator.

Alabama's Journey to Reading Success: The Alabama Literacy Act Implementation Guide Key Areas

The Alabama Literacy Act, in its entirety, can be found HERE.

- **Section I: Responsibilities Outlined in the Alabama Literacy Act**

  Provides guidance for implementation of vital information related to the components of the Alabama Literacy Act regarding the responsibilities of the ALSDE, LEAs, individual schools, and school faculties

- **Section II: The Alabama Model for Literacy Support**

  Provides information related to the selection of Full Support (FS), Limited Support 1 (LS1), and Limited Support 2 (LS2) schools as defined in the Alabama Literacy Act, as well as the varied levels of support that will be provided

- **Section III: Defining the Role of Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI) Literacy Specialists**

  Outlines the role of the ARI Regional Literacy Specialists and the Local Reading Specialists; describes the required qualifications and responsibilities of the specialists within the region, district, and schools; and includes the accountability expectations for the schools and districts they assist directly aligned to increasing student reading achievement

- **Section IV: Alabama's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (AL-MTSS) & Response to Instruction (RtI)**

  Provides an overview of the ALSDE's ongoing work to develop a comprehensive framework and guidance document for AL-MTSS and the current guidelines encompassed in Alabama's RtI process that are fundamental to the implementation of the Alabama Literacy Act

- **Section V: Guidance for Literacy Assessment, Instruction, and Intervention**

  Features literacy assessment guidance regarding screening and diagnostics for the determination of reading deficiencies, and includes information on scientifically based reading instruction, intervention, and additional tutoring

- **Section VI: End-of-Third grade Promotion**

  Explains third grade retention criteria and outlines the "Good Cause Exemptions" leading to promotion to fourth grade

- **Section VII: Summer Learning— Summer Reading Camps and Alabama Summer Achievement Program (ASAP)**

Outlines the components of all grades K-3 summer learning requirements for all students with reading deficiencies and defines the ASAP as the summer learning required for the students in the Full Support Schools

- **Section VIII: Dyslexia and the Alabama Literacy Act**

  Provides overviews of the Alabama Literacy Act and the Alabama Administrative Code (AAC) as both documents outline the required supports for students with characteristics of dyslexia and all struggling readers, as well as program requirements and professional learning requirements for educators

- **Section IX: Family Communication Expectations, Public Reporting Requirements, and Resources**

  Includes information regarding communication with parents about the Alabama Literacy Act, specific criteria that each school board must provide, and sample letters and other templates that can be utilized by LEAs

- **Section X: Glossary of Terms**

  Provides a list of terms and definitions relevant to the Alabama Literacy Act

Section I: Responsibilities Outlined in the Alabama Literacy Act

Section I Includes:

1. Responsibilities of the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE)
2. Responsibilities of the Local Education Agency (LEA) 3. Responsibilities of the Local School with Grades K, 1, 2, and/or 3

Section I: Responsibilities

The Alabama Literacy Act outlines specific responsibilities at the state, regional, and local levels, specifically for the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE), the Alabama State Board of Education, Local Education Agencies (LEA), and local schools with grades K-3. The Alabama Literacy Act also requires the establishment of a standing task force and the Alabama Committee on Grade level Reading. Expectations and guidelines are outlined for families, communities, and stakeholders to ensure a collaborative effort to improve the reading proficiency of each and every student in order to achieve grade-level or above by the end of third grade.

Role of the State Superintendent of Education	Role of the Alabama Literacy Task Force
1. Convene a standing task force, within three months after the effective date of the act, to provide specific recommendations. 2. Certify that each Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI) regional literacy specialist and local reading specialist meets the minimum qualifications outlined **before the specialists are hired** with funds appropriated by the Legislature to support the ARI. 3. Ensure development of a uniform, evidence-based accountability reporting system for the ARI that will assess student growth and proficiency, so progress can be measured against goals for teacher professional learning and student achievement on state approved, formative and summative assessments. 4. Submit an annual report, no later than December 31, on the status of teacher professional learning, student growth, and proficiency against grade-level standards in K-3 reading to the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Speaker of the House of Representatives, President Pro Tempore of the Senate, and Chairs of the House Ways and Means Education Committee, Senate Finance and Taxation Education Committee, House Education Policy Committee, and Senate Education Policy Committee.	1. Meet in regular sessions at least twice a year. 2. Recommend comprehensive core reading and reading intervention programs. 3. Develop a state continuum of teacher development for approved science of reading as defined in subsection (e) of Section 6. 4. Provide recommendations for an annual list of vetted and approved assessments which are valid and reliable reading screening, formative, and diagnostic assessment systems for selection and use by LEAs. 5. Determine measurable performance growth (p. 6). 6. Designate community-based summer programs (p. 17). 7. Set minimum essential standards for third grade portfolio option (pp. 21-22). 8. Set annual reading growth and proficiency targets based upon information which must be reported by school systems (p. 28).

Section I: LEA Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the Local Education Agency (LEA)

Hire ARI local reading specialists who meet specific minimum qualifications	**Ensure adherence to duties and responsibilities of the local reading specialists**	**Offer comprehensive core reading program**	**Select an assessment system**	**Provide an intervention program**
Required Alabama Professional Educator Certificate and a bachelor's degree Advanced course work or professional development in the science of reading, such as multisensory language instruction, or comparable alternative training approved by the State Board of Education Two years (at a minimum) of experience as a successful elementary or literacy teacher Knowledge of scientifically based reading research, a strong knowledge base in the science of learning to read and the science of early childhood education Specialized	Ensure adherence to the Alabama Literacy Act They may not perform administrative functions such as serving as an evaluator, substitute teacher, assessment coordinator, or school administrator. See Section III: Part 2, The Qualifications and Roles of the ARI Local Reading Specialist, for additional details.	Program must be based on the science of reading which develops foundational reading skills. **No school district may use any curriculum that does not include instructional time** in any public school with K-3 students.	Select valid and reliable reading screening, formative, and diagnostic assessment systems that have been approved by the State Superintendent of Education.	Based on the results of the reading assessment, each K-3 student who exhibits a reading deficiency or characteristics of dyslexia shall be provided an appropriate dyslexia-specific reading intervention program to address his or her specific deficiencies.

expertise in quality reading instruction and intervention,				

dyslexia-specific interventions, and data analysis Excellent communication skills with outstanding presentation, interpersonal, and time management skills				

Section I: LEA Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the Local School with Grades K, 1, 2, and/or 3

Conduct student reading assessments	**Establish comprehensive core reading and intervention programs**	**Provide dyslexia specific intervention**	**Provide appropriate reading intervention programs**

LEAs will be provided with an annual list of vetted and approved assessments which are valid and reliable reading screening, formative, and diagnostic assessment systems. Results of student performance on early reading assessments, which will be administered a minimum of 3 times a year, will be analyzed to determine reading deficiencies. Students will be evaluated after each grading period. Any student determined to have a reading deficiency will be provided additional tutorial support.	Students in need of additional support will be provided an intervention program that adheres to the following guidelines. • Selected from a vetted and approved list from the ALSDE • Provided in addition to the comprehensive core reading instruction that is provided to all students in the general education classroom • Shall be implemented during regular school hours	Appropriate dyslexia specific intervention will be provided to students with characteristics of dyslexia and all struggling readers.	Provides explicit, direct instruction that is systematic, sequential, and cumulative. • Language development • Phonological awareness • Phonics • Fluency • Vocabulary • Comprehension Provides daily, targeted, small group reading interventions based on student areas of need. • Phonological awareness • Phonics (including decoding and encoding) • Sight words • Fluency • Vocabulary • Comprehension

Section I: LEA Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the Local School with Grades K, 1, 2, and/or 3 (continued)

Written notification will be provided to parents or legal guardian of any K-3 student who exhibits a consistent deficiency in any of these areas. • Letter naming fluency • Letter sound fluency • Nonsense word fluency • Sight words • Oral reading accuracy and fluency • Vocabulary • Comprehension Must be notified in writing no later than 15 school days after the identification. *A consistent deficiency is identified when students do not respond to explicit, systematic, core instruction (Tier I). If the deficiency is at or on grade-level, the first response should be Tier II classroom intervention. If the deficiency is a prerequisite foundational skill, then the response indicates the need for Tier III intervention in a separate setting. Additional details are described in Section IV: AL-MTSS and RtI.	Written notification must include specific components. • Statement informing parent or legal guardian that the student has been identified with a deficiency in reading • Notification that a reading improvement plan shall be developed by the teacher, principal, other pertinent school personnel, and the parent or legal guardian • Description of current services being provided to the student • Description of proposed evidence-based reading interventions and supplemental instructional services and supports to be proposed for discussion while establishing the Student Reading Improvement Plan (SRIP) • Notification that parent or legal guardian shall be informed in writing at least monthly of the progress of the student towards grade-level reading • Strategies and resources for parent or legal guardian to use at home to help the student succeed in reading • Statement that if the reading deficiency of the student is not addressed by the end of third grade, the student will not be promoted to fourth grade unless a good cause exemption is satisfied • Statement that while the statewide reading assessment is the initial determinant for promotion, the assessment is not the sole determiner at the end of third grade Also, students will be provided with a test based portfolio option and an alternative reading assessment option to demonstrate sufficient reading skills for promotion to fourth grade. Sample parent notification letters can be found in Section IX and may be customized for LEA use.

Section I: LEA Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the Local School with Grades K, 1, 2, and/or 3 (continued)

Provide a Student Reading Improvement Plan (SRIP)	Provide Summer Reading Camps
SRIPs will be provide according to the following guidelines. • Provided for any student in Grades K-3 who demonstrates a reading deficiency at any time • Created at the school level by the teacher, principal, other involved school personnel, and the parent or guardian of the student • Developed no later than 30 days after the deficit is identified • Used to describe the evidence-based reading intervention services that student shall receive, including dyslexia-specific intervention services to improve the reading deficit For a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP), the special education case manager shall participate in the development of the SRIP to address how the evidence-based reading interventions and supplemental instructional services and supports will align with the specially designed instruction delivered through special education services. **A student's goals and services outlined should complement, not replace, the evidence based reading interventions.** The teacher providing the instruction is responsible for implementing the SRIP. If a student receives services through inclusion or in a resource setting, the service provider and the teacher will work together to implement the plan. A sample SRIP template can be found in Sections IV and IX and may be customized for LEA use. Other state and local plans such as Problem Solving Teams (PSTs), health, 504, gifted, and Individual English Language Plans (I-ELPs) should also consider the verbiage of the Alabama Literacy Act and the implications that may or may not be included in current planning templates.	Summer Reading Camps will be provided according to the following guidelines. • Provided to all grade K-3 students identified with a reading deficiency • Comprised of a minimum of 70 hours of scientifically-based reading instruction and intervention • Staffed with the most highly effective reading teachers (effectiveness may be shown by student reading performance data, completion of MSLE, and teacher performance evaluations) who have the knowledge and skills to provide direct, explicit, and systematic reading instruction and intervention supports to improve any identified areas of reading deficiency • Administered using SBOE-approved reading assessment to all participating students at the beginning **and** at the conclusion of the summer reading camp in order to measure the reading progress of students • Monitored for daily attendance in order to show the required participation of the student • May be held in conjunction with existing summer programs in district or in partnership with a community-based summer program. For a student with an IEP, **Extended School Year (ESY) services are not to be substituted for summer reading camps.** Students with disabilities should have equal access to participation in summer learning. ESY services are special education and/or related services that are provided to a child with a disability beyond the normal school year based on factors such as significant regression.

Section II: The Alabama Model for Literacy Support

Section II Includes:

1. The Alabama Process for Determining and Identifying Literacy Support for K-3 Schools
2. The Plan for Support: Journey to Alabama's Reading Success for Alabama School Administrators, School Literacy Specialists, and K-3 School Faculties
3. Other National Collaborative Efforts for Evidence-Based Support: Excellence in Education (ExcelinEd), Regional Education Laboratories (REL) Southeast, and Region 7 Comprehensive Center (R7CC)

Section II: The Alabama Model for Literacy Support

1. THE ALABAMA PROCESS FOR DETERMINING AND IDENTIFYING LITERACY SUPPORT FOR K-3 SCHOOLS

The Alabama Literacy Act specifies that the ALSDE is to provide support to LEAs through a gradual release model. Schools will be identified for tiered levels of literacy support based on their third grade reading proficiency scores from the state's annual summative assessment, which is also utilized for federal and state accountability. Beginning with the 2020-2021 school year, schools that scored in the lowest five percent on the 2018-2019 spring Scantron administration will be designated as Full Support (FS) Schools. Limited Support 1 (LS1) Schools are those schools that had 20% to 45% of their third grade students score proficient; Limited Support 2 (LS2) Schools are those that had 46% and above of their third grade students score proficient. To ensure consistency, the ALSDE will continue to serve these schools under the same designation of FS, LS1, and LS2 for a minimum of three years before considering the reassignment of schools to FS, LS1, or LS2 designation. However, the Alabama Literacy Act specifies that these schools will remain FS "...until that school has improved core instruction to the extent that it is no longer among the lowest five percent of elementary schools in reading proficiency as determined by annual results of the state summative assessment for federal and statewide accountability."

Full Support (FS) Schools are those elementary schools identified with the greatest need based on their third grade reading scores from the state summative assessment. The regional literacy specialist shall be assigned primarily to one school and will be responsible for the following minimum responsibilities: develop targeted daily coaching support, organize and provide ongoing professional learning in the science of reading, monitor reading progress of students in Grades K-3, analyze students' reading data, make instructional adjustments and recommendations, and monitor interventions that will impact reading achievement for all students.

Limited Support 1 (LS1) Schools are those elementary schools that will have regional literacy specialists assigned to provide a minimum of monthly visits to monitor the implementation and support of core reading and intervention instruction, to monitor reading instruction and make instructional adjustments and recommendations, to provide ongoing professional learning on the science of reading, and to monitor reading progress of all Grades K-3 students a minimum of three times a year.

Limited Support 2 (LS2) Schools are those elementary schools that will have regional literacy specialists assigned to provide a minimum of quarterly visits to provide onsite coaching support, to monitor the reading progress a minimum of three times a year, adjust instruction according to student-specific needs, and provide ongoing professional learning on the science of reading (pp. 7-8).

Local Reading Specialists (LRS) or "Coaches" have been an integral component of ARI for many years and continue to play a pivotal role in coaching and mentoring teachers in the implementation of the science of reading. Through collaborative efforts with the Region 7 Comprehensive Center, the ALSDE is developing a comprehensive Alabama Coaching Framework that will be completed in July 2020 and aligned to evidence-based practices and The Theory of Action research. It includes roles and responsibilities for both regional and local school reading specialists. The ALSDE will be implementing additional measures of effectiveness, including both qualitative and quantitative data analyses, to track regional and local reading specialists' activities and effectiveness as it relates to student reading proficiency. LEAs must maximize their use of these positions to ensure gains in student reading proficiency.

District and School Level Administrators will also have distinct roles and responsibilities defined in the Alabama Coaching Model Framework. It will be imperative that all administrators, who are responsible for monitoring and supporting reading specialists, have clearly defined expectations. It will also be critical that all parties involved understand how their specific duties are coordinated to increase student reading achievement and are committed to adhering to them to ensure the success of our youngest learners.

Section II: The Alabama Model for Literacy Support

2. THE PLAN FOR SUPPORT: ALABAMA'S JOURNEY TO READING SUCCESS FOR ALABAMA SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS, LITERACY SPECIALISTS, AND K-3 SCHOOL FACULTIES

The ARI Literacy Team will utilize the Alabama's Journey to Reading Success process to implement a plan for all schools identified as FS, LS1, or LS2. This process outlines five "circles of influence" that must be cohesive and function effectively for schools to be successful. The circles of influence are defined below.

Collaborative Leadership involves developing a grade-level Problem Solving Team (PST) approach for school support and aligning to the AL-MTSS framework (defined in Section IV) that is intensely focused on the literacy achievement of all students based on their individual needs.

Ongoing Professional Learning involves examining the status of teacher knowledge and skills in the science of reading, looking at data to determine the immediate focus of professional learning, and making changes to meet the needs of all students in grades K-3 while ensuring all educators stay current on all integral components.

Assessment includes identifying and utilizing multiple assessments to accurately and efficiently determine the students' current reading readiness as defined by the science

of reading components, examining current reading and literacy goals, and utilizing data to identify gaps in order to develop individualized reading plans that address specific core reading and intervention strategies to close the gaps. A comprehensive assessment system infographic can be found in Section V under the Essential Reading Assessment Terminology subheading. This resource defines and describes the different types of assessments that should be used throughout the year in different situations.

Curriculum and Standards involves the alignment of instructional strategies and curricula resources relating to the Alabama Course of Study: English Language Arts standards, comprehensive core reading, and reading intervention programs with the science of reading.

Instruction and Intervention, including comprehensive core reading and intervention programs, must be based on the science of reading. Sufficient protected time during the school day, to provide systematic and explicit reading instruction and ensuring students are supported by the comprehensive AL-MTSS system of supports, is paramount for students to become successful readers by the end of third grade.

Journey to SUCCESS for Reading and Literacy

CIRCLES OF INFLUENCE FOR IMPROVED STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Collaborative Leadership: How do we use a team approach for school support?

- What specific supports are in place from the LEA level to assist building administrators in supporting each school's literacy efforts? To assist ARI-funded reading specialists?
- Is there a full-time, ARI-funded reading specialist in each building serving grades K-3? If not, how are the coaching needs of teachers met in each school without a reading specialist?
- What is the PST structure at the school level? How does each PST communicate with parents?
- How are the Alabama Administrative Code (AAC) requirements for Response to Instruction (RtI) and support for students with characteristics of dyslexia communicated to all schools, and how do you ensure that those requirements are met at each school in the district?

Assessment: What is the current state of the school in terms of academic

growth?

- What are the LEA's and each school's current literacy goals? Identified by which data sources? What screeners, informal assessments, and formative assessments are in place? Are they consistent districtwide?
- How many students are below grade-level? How many students require "catch-up growth"?
- What are the LEA's and each school's current literacy gaps? What are the LEA's and each school's definitions of "gap"? Identify among the Big 5+2 (Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, Comprehension, Oral Language, and Writing) where data show instructional gaps.
- How are data communicated between and among all schools in the district's feeder patterns? How are data communicated between and among grade-levels in the same school?

Curriculum & Standards: What is the current status of curriculum alignment?

- How do you ensure that administrators and teachers understand the rigorous instructional intent of the ELA standards? How are ELA standards used in data analysis discussions?
- How are ELA standards mastery expectations communicated and monitored in grades K-3?
- What is used for core reading instruction? Curriculum/Method/Program? In what grades? Is it the same Curriculum/Method/Program in grades K-3?
- Is there a gap between the standards and the core curriculum?
- Do you have an aligned phonics progression in grades K-3? Is it the same phonics progression across the LEA?
- How do you ensure that Tier II and Tier III interventions align with and support Tier I instruction?

Instruction & Intervention: What are the structures for Tiers I, II, and III?

- Do K-3 schools follow the ALSDE guideline of 150 minutes (120 core, 30 Tier II) for ELA instruction?
- What is each school's vision concerning literacy across the curriculum? • What is the structure for Tier III intervention? What is each school's dyslexia specific intervention process?
- What is the structure for special education classroom services in grades K-3? • What services are provided for EL students needing language acquisition and/or intervention?
- What are the expectations of the LEA and each school for common instructional routines and procedures?

Professional Learning: How will 2020-2021 professional learning be aligned with reading and literacy data?

- How many teachers have participated, or are participating in professional learning in the science of reading? How is this information collected and shared with administrators and reading specialists?
- What gaps do data reveal in teachers' knowledge and expertise in teaching the Big 5+2?
- What is the current structure for job-embedded coaching and ongoing professional learning?

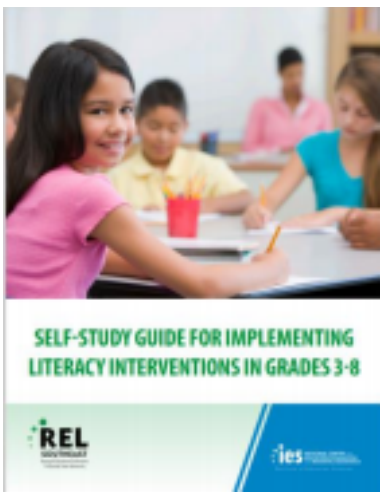
Section II: The Alabama Model for Literacy Support

3. OTHER NATIONAL COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS FOR EVIDENCE-BASED SUPPORT: EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION (ExcelinEd), REGION 7 COMPREHENSIVE CENTER (R7CC), REGIONAL EDUCATION LABORATORIES SOUTHEAST (REL)

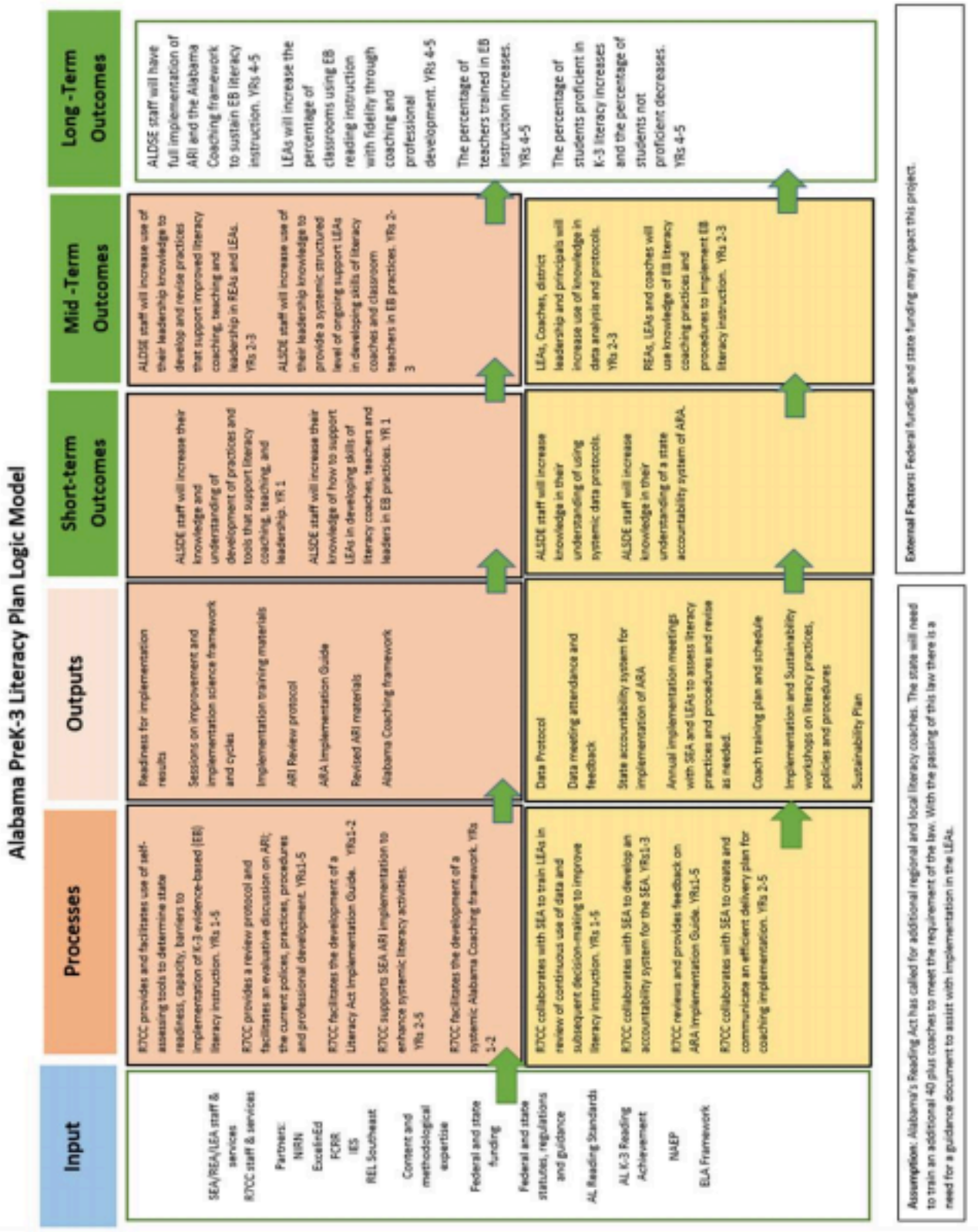
Excellence in Education (ExcelinEd) is partnering with ARI through their national network of other states who participate in their Early Literacy Network; they are also assisting with an Alabama-specific communication campaign for the Alabama Literacy Act.

The Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Southeast partners with states to develop and assist with the utilization of research to improve student outcomes. REL provides a repository of evidence-based practices through the What Works Clearinghouse, develops infographics, and provides self-assessment tools for early literacy and upper grades instruction that can be helpful for district and school-based practitioners to conduct self-studies for planning and implementing interventions. These are intended to promote reflection about current strengths and challenges while planning for interventions, spark conversations among staff, and identify areas for improvement.

These guides provide templates for data collection and guiding questions for discussions that will improve the implementation of literacy interventions and decrease the number of students failing to meet grade-level literacy expectations.



The Region 7 Comprehensive Center is partnering with the ALSDE to develop a comprehensive Alabama Coaching Model Framework and to assist with early literacy student achievement as outlined in their logic model approach (See next page).



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What specific supports are in place from the LEA level to assist building administrators in supporting each school's literacy efforts?
- Have LEA staff participated in science of reading professional learning to support building administrators?
- What are the LEA's and each school's current literacy goals?
- What data sources were used to support these literacy goals? • Is there a full-time, ARI-funded reading specialist in each building serving grades K-3? If not, how are the coaching needs of teachers met in each school without a reading specialist?
- Based on the LEA's current data, are the K-3 schools with the most challenging data being supported by a full-time ARI-funded local reading specialist? If not, what changes will need to be made to ensure that the most challenged schools receive the most support in implementing effective science of reading instruction?

Section III: Defining the Roles of Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI) Literacy Specialists

Section III Includes:

1. The Qualifications and Roles of ARI Regional Literacy Specialists: Full Support, Limited Support 1, and Limited Support 2
2. The Qualifications and Roles of the ARI Local Reading Specialists

Section III: Roles of ARI Literacy Specialists

1. THE QUALIFICATIONS AND ROLES OF ARI REGIONAL LITERACY SPECIALISTS: FULL SUPPORT, LIMITED SUPPORT 1, AND LIMITED SUPPORT 2

The ARI Regional Literacy Specialist (RLS) must meet the qualifications outlined in the Alabama Literacy Act (pp. 8-9).

MINUMUM QUALIFICATIONS

- The required Alabama Professional Educator Certificate
- A bachelor's degree and advanced coursework or professional development in the science of reading, multisensory language instruction such as Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS), or a comparable alternative training approved by the State Board of Education
- A minimum of four years of experience as a successful elementary or literacy teacher
- Knowledge of scientifically based reading research, special expertise in quality reading instruction and intervention, dyslexia-specific interventions, and data analysis
- A strong knowledge base in the science of learning to read and the science of early childhood education
- Excellent communication skills with outstanding presentation, interpersonal, and time management skills

MINUMUM ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

In addition to the roles and responsibilities defined in the Alabama Literacy Act and described in Section II of the implementation guide, other contributing factors will include the Alabama Coaching Model Framework (to be completed July 2020), the ALSDE Memorandum of Agreement, and any other state and LEA specific documents that relate to increased student reading achievement. It is intended for RLS to fulfill 12-month work agreements (per state budget allocations). The additional time will allow the RLS to support summer literacy efforts.

- Assist with summer reading camp planning and implementation
- Analyze school-year data to guide core reading and intervention instruction for the next school year

- Assist with assessments at the beginning and end of summer camp and analysis of the summer reading camp data
- Provide support for the completion of the Comprehensive Early Literacy Report due to ALSDE each September
- Collaborate with ARI State and Regional Staff

However, one of the most critical responsibilities of both regional and local reading specialists will be to ensure that new teachers and/or K-3 teachers who have the most "at-risk" or "struggling" students receive the science of reading and multisensory sensory training required by the Alabama Literacy Act, as well as implementation support throughout the year.

Section III: Roles of ARI Literacy Specialists

2. THE QUALIFICATIONS AND ROLES OF THE ARI LOCAL READING SPECIALISTS (LRS)

The ARI Local Reading Specialist (LRS) must meet the qualifications outlined in the Alabama Literacy Act (pp. 9-11).

MINUMUM QUALIFICATIONS

- The required Alabama Professional Educator Certificate

- A bachelor's degree and advanced coursework or professional development in the science of reading, such as multisensory language instruction, or comparable alternative training approved by the State Board of Education
- A minimum of two years of experience as a successful elementary or literacy teacher
- Knowledge of scientifically based reading research, special expertise in quality reading instruction and intervention, dyslexia-specific interventions, and data analysis
- A strong knowledge base in the science of learning to read and the science of early childhood education
- Excellent communication skills with outstanding presentation, interpersonal, and time management skills

MINUMUM ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- Collaborating with the principal to create a strategic plan for coaching • Facilitating schoolwide professional development and study groups • Modeling effective reading instructional strategies for teachers • Coaching and mentoring teachers daily
- Facilitating data analysis discussions and supporting teachers by using data to differentiate instruction according to the needs of students
- Fostering multiple areas of teacher professional learning, including exceptional student education and content area knowledge
- Prioritizing time for those teachers, activities, and roles that will have the greatest impact on student reading achievement, such as coaching and mentoring in classrooms
- Monitoring the reading progress of all students a minimum of three times per year and making recommendations for adjustment of instruction according to student's specific needs

- Serving solely as a reading specialist, not performing administrative functions such as serving as an evaluator, substitute teacher, assessment coordinator, or school administrator

In addition to the roles and responsibilities defined in the Alabama Literacy Act, other contributing factors will include the Alabama Coaching Model Framework (to be completed July 2020), the ALSDE Memorandum of

Agreement, and other state and LEA-specific documents that relate to increased student reading achievement. Through collaborative efforts with the State and Regional Literacy Staff, LRS will also be responsible for assisting with the training of new LRS, new teachers or other K-3 teachers to ensure they have or receive the required science of reading and multisensory strategies training required by the Alabama Literacy Act, as well as implementation support during the year.

The ARI will use allocated funds to fund LRS, RLS, professional learning activities, and administrative activities that support all of the following activities for kindergarten through third grade students in public K-12 schools.

- Administration and analysis of reading screening, formative, and progress monitoring assessments to guide instruction, and use of diagnostic assessments to inform intervention
- Scientifically based reading instruction, multisensory language instruction including oral language development, phonological awareness, phonics instruction that includes decoding and encoding fluency, writing, vocabulary, and comprehension, and the Alabama Course of Study: English Language Arts
- Explicit and systematic instruction with detailed explanations and extensive opportunities for error correction and feedback
- Differentiated reading instruction and intensive intervention based on student need, including students exhibiting the characteristics of dyslexia

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Based on the job requirements in the Alabama Literacy Act, do your ARI funded Local Reading Specialists meet the qualifications? If not, what personnel adjustments should be considered?

- Have you prioritized the ARI-funded LRS support needed in schools based upon reading proficiency data? Schools with the most challenging data should have a full-time LRS.
- Are the LRS highly skilled in content knowledge of the science of reading and in coaching teachers in the science of reading? If not, what professional learning plans are in place to provide the learning and support needed?
- How do you monitor and ensure that LRS' daily activities and weekly schedules align to data-driven needs?
- How do you measure LRS effectiveness beyond the ALSDE Memorandum of Agreement?
- How is student achievement and growth used to measure both the classroom teacher and the LRS effectiveness?

Section IV: Alabama's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (AL-MTSS) and Response to Instruction (RtI)

Section IV Includes:

1. Development of Alabama's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (AL-MTSS)
2. Overview of Alabama's Response to Instruction (RtI) Model
3. Other Student Plans
4. Student Reading Improvement Plan (SRIP) Components

Section IV: Alabama's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (AL-MTSS) and Response to Instruction (RtI)

1. DEVELOPMENT OF ALABAMA'S MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS (AL-MTSS)

With the support of the National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI) in 2019, state leadership began a comprehensive overhaul of the traditional Response to Instruction or Intervention (RtI) to transform the role of state and district support to a comprehensive Alabama Multi-Tiered System of Supports (AL-MTSS) model that is all inclusive to serve the "whole" child. For years, Alabama has operated under a Response to Instruction (RtI) framework that includes a Problem Solving Team (PST) that meets monthly to review at-risk students, develop RtI plans, and adjust strategies accordingly to ensure appropriate grade-level instruction occurs daily for ALL students, as well as timely, targeted interventions as needed.

AL-MTSS will encompass the current RtI framework and expand academic and behavioral supports into a more comprehensive system of supports, as well as provide a repository of state programs and initiatives that can be used, measures of impact or effectiveness, and the alignment of other national evidence-based practices.

THE ALABAMA MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

AL-MTSS DEFINITION

Alabama's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (AL-MTSS) is a comprehensive framework that encompasses the academic, behavioral, physical, mental health and wellness, and social-emotional needs to support the whole child. The AL-MTSS uses a proactive, team-driven approach that involves stakeholders: state, regional, district, school, higher education, community, family, and student to ensure equitable access to opportunities that will improve outcomes for every student. The purpose is to implement and sustain a continuum of evidence-based practices that align with the needs of all students and eliminate barriers to teaching and learning. Data are utilized at all levels to ensure safe, positive, and personalized services that assist all students along their educational journey…Every Child. Every Chance. Every Day.

AL-MTSS COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK ELEMENTS

The ALSDE believes that the needs of every child are not left to chance but are in the hands of prepared, compassionate education professionals and strong, caring communities every day. The ALSDE is committed to working with districts, schools, and communities in developing a comprehensive framework of supports that:

- Provides for the **ACADEMIC NEEDS** of every child.
    - Every educator is prepared to meet the academic needs of every child, PreK-12, so that each child is intellectually challenged and academically prepared for success in school, in college, in employment, and in a global environment.

- Provides for the **BEHAVIORAL NEEDS** of every child.
    - Every child is met with equitable access to opportunities that build success, confidence, skill, and communicate a high level of expectations so that every child feels valued and accepted for what they bring to the learning environment and what they will take into the world.

- Provides for the **PHYSICAL/MENTAL HEALTH WELLNESS NEEDS** of every child.
    - Every child and adult will encounter a learning community that promotes a healthy lifestyle and provides a physically and mentally safe and supportive educational environment where the wellness needs of all are respected and nurtured so that all may be their best selves and lead their best lives.

- Provides for the **SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL NEEDS** of every child.
    - Every child and every adult is equipped with the self-awareness skills necessary to understand and manage emotions; the social awareness and relationship skills necessary to feel and show empathy for others and maintain positive relationships; and the skills for responsible decision making in and out of schools so that each can achieve school, career, and life goals.

- Provides for the **ENGAGEMENT NEEDS** of every child.
    - Every child is engaged in varied and meaningful activities with skillful and caring adults. Engaging interaction occurs before, during, and after the school day so that there are multiple opportunities for involvement ensuring every child has every chance, every day.

THE ALABAMA MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

DATA-BASED DECISION MAKING

Data-based or data-driven decision making refers to the ongoing process of gathering and analyzing multiple data types and sources to make the decisions needed toward improving the educational environment and processes for all children. Data-based decision making is necessary to assist all educators in identifying areas of need or focus in ongoing professional learning and development of critical content knowledge.

TEAM-DRIVEN LEADERSHIP

Team-driven, shared leadership expands the collective impact of a school on the organization, operation, and academics by creating leadership roles or decision making opportunities for teachers, staff members, students, parents, and community members. Team-driven leadership allows schools to utilize talent, expertise, and experience beyond traditional school leadership. This practice allows all involved to focus attention, energy, skills, and time on their areas of expertise, and as a result, the whole organization, and particularly students, reap the benefits. By sharing leadership responsibilities, school decision making becomes more collaborative, comprehensive, and self-reflective as more people are committed to every child's success. This practice creates shared responsibility for the performance and results of a school.

SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

A safe, supportive, and healthy learning environment provides students, educators, and the school the opportunity to grow in dynamic ways. These environments eliminate barriers to teaching and learning by promoting high expectations, encouraging innovation, and supporting positive risk-taking for students and faculties.

ENGAGED STAKEHOLDERS

Engaged stakeholders have an equitable interest in the school in providing a positive school experience for all students. Internal stakeholders include staff who have a direct responsibility in creating the conditions necessary for students to learn and grow, as well as families vested in the long-term success of children. External stakeholders are those community leaders who have a stake in the development of a well-prepared workforce. Engaged stakeholders actively work to improve educational excellence and equity, particularly regarding the most vulnerable students and families, by engaging in authentic partnerships that ensure that the voice, ideas, and concerns of the school and community are well represented.

PK-12 EVIDENCE-BASED INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

PK-12 evidence-based instructional strategies are those practices, techniques, and teaching strategies proven to be effective through experimental research studies or large-scale research field studies/meta-analyses. Evidence-based research shows that some strategies have far more impact than others on student outcomes. When teachers and leaders are reviewing and selecting instructional strategies, educators should consider those academic and behavioral practices and programs grounded in scientific evidence that lead to improved educational outcomes. Educators must also consider the unique characteristics of the children being served, the setting in which the program or practice will be implemented, and the diverse learning needs of every child. Leaders should assess the gap between current practices and prioritized outcomes, work to identify the practices that show a positive impact on student outcome goals, match resources to student need, and use formative and summative measures for success.

Section IV: Alabama's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (AL-MTSS) and Response to Instruction (RtI)

2. OVERVIEW OF ALABAMA'S RESPONSE TO INSTRUCTION (RTI) MODEL

The Alabama Administrative Code (AAC), Chapter 290-3-1 (19) (2.) states "Response to Instruction (RtI) refers to an instructional framework that promotes a well-integrated system connecting general, gifted, supplemental, and special education services in providing high-quality, standards-based instruction and intervention that is matched to students' academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs. RtI combines core instruction, assessment, and intervention within a multi tiered system to increase student achievement and reduce behavior problems."

Understanding Alabama's RtI Model - Response to Instruction (RtI)

Universal Screening for ALL Students

The Alabama Literacy Act requires the Literacy Task Force to provide an annual vetted list of screening assessments. Multiple screening and assessment tools may be used to gather additional data to determine student reading deficiencies. REL's infographic provided in Section V can assist LEAs in understanding the different assessments that can be utilized.

Dyslexia-Specific Screening for Students

Students identified as "having a reading deficiency" from the universal screening should be immediately screened for characteristics of dyslexia in order to determine the best pathway for interventions.

- Dyslexia-specific screening is a component of the assessment system defined in the Alabama Literacy Act.
- Additional dyslexia-specific screening recommendations and examples are outlined in the Alabama Dyslexia Resource Guide.
- The Alabama Dyslexia Advisory Council (DAC) collaborates with the ALSDE to update the Alabama Dyslexia Resource Guide, and a current revision is in process.

Tier I Instruction for ALL Students

- **ALL** students receive Tier I instruction to ensure mastery of grade-level content standards and should always remain in Tier I instruction, receiving Tier II and Tier III interventions at other times.
- Tier I instruction takes place in whole group and small group. Small group instruction does not denote intervention; rather, it is differentiated Tier I instruction.
- Daily formative assessments determine when students need Tier II intervention to quickly remediate a deficit grade-level skill.

Tier II Intervention for SOME Students

- Tier II intervention targets deficit **grade-level skills**.
- It is provided by the classroom teacher in a small group setting based on daily formative assessment.

- Students who are identified as "having a reading deficiency" will need Tier II intervention and the deficiency must be explained in the parent notification letter.

Tier III Intervention for SOME Students

- Tier III intervention targets deficit foundational reading skills that were missed in earlier grades and/or deficit reading readiness skills when students do not enter school (kindergarten) ready.
- Tier III intervention takes place "in addition to comprehensive core instruction".
- Students should be placed in Tier III intervention as soon as identified by the PST as "having a reading deficiency".
- Further assessment (for special education services) may take place **while** intervention is being provided.
- Students who are identified as "having a reading deficiency" need Tier III intervention and the deficiency must be explained in the parent notification letter.

RtI, Tiered Instruction, and The Alabama Literacy Act

The RtI framework outlines the process for appropriate grade-level instruction that occurs daily for ALL students, as well as timely, targeted interventions, as needed. Per the Alabama Literacy Act, all students are to be provided comprehensive core reading instruction. In addition to comprehensive core instruction, intervention is to be provided to any student who exhibits a reading deficiency. A helpful link to "The Ladder of Reading" from the International Dyslexia Association is included here. The infographic illustrates the percentages of learners "who require an explicit, sequential, systematic, phonics-based approach to learning to read, compared to the small proportion of individuals who learn to read effortlessly."

https://dyslexiaida.org/ladder-of-reading-infographic-structured-literacy-helps-all students/

The Alabama Literacy Act stipulates that, "The parent or legal guardian of any K-3 student who exhibits a consistent deficiency in letter naming fluency, letter sound fluency, nonsense word reading, sight words, oral reading accuracy, vocabulary, or comprehension at any time during the school year shall be notified in writing no later than 15 school days after the identification" (p. 14). This language supports existing requirements in Chapter 290-3-1 of the AAC regarding the responsibilities of school Problem Solving Teams (PSTs). The AAC states that PSTs are "required to review data-based documentation regarding students' progress regularly, advise teachers on specific interventions matched to student needs, and communicate with parents

regarding student intervention needs being provided."

MINIMUM PARENT NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

The parent notification requirements must meet the qualifications outlined in the Alabama Literacy Act (pp. 14-15).

- A statement that the student has been identified as a having a deficiency in reading or exhibits the characteristics of dyslexia
- Notification that a Student Reading Improvement Plan (SRIP) shall be developed by the child's teacher, principal, other pertinent school personnel, and the parent or legal guardian
- A description of the current services provided to the student • A description of the proposed evidence-based reading intervention and supplemental instructional services and supports that shall be proposed for discussion while establishing the SRIP
- Notification that the parent or legal guardian shall be informed in writing at least monthly of the progress of the student towards grade-level reading • Strategies and resources for the parent or legal guardian to use at home to help the student succeed in reading
- A statement that if the reading deficiency is not addressed by the end of third grade, the student will not be promoted to fourth grade unless a good cause exemption is satisfied
- A statement indicating that while the statewide reading assessment is the initial

determiner for promotion, the assessment is not the sole determiner at the end of third grade. Additionally, students shall be provided with a test based student portfolio option and an alternative reading assessment option to demonstrate sufficient reading skills for promotion to fourth grade

Date:

Dear Parent/Legal Guardian:

Being a skillful reader is critical for a student's overall success throughout school and in life. To help ensure students become successful lifelong readers, all students in grades K-3 are administered a state-approved reading screener a minimum of three times a year. This screener provides teachers with individual student strengths and deficiency areas to assist with reading instruction and intervention plans. According to the Alabama Literacy Act, "Commencing with the 2021-2022 school year, third grade students shall demonstrate sufficient reading skills for promotion to fourth grade. A student scoring at the lowest achievement level in reading on the established state assessment for third grade will not be promoted to fourth grade unless the student meets a good cause exemption for promotion." In our proactive planning approach, we invite you to develop a Student Reading Improvement Plan, or "SRIP", with us to ensure that we all work together to help your child progress in reading skills to prevent retention.

Your child,_, has been identified as having a deficiency in reading **OR** exhibits characteristics of dyslexia from the most recent reading screener results of given on .

Screener results indicate a consistent deficiency in one of more of the following area(s):

Letter Naming Fluency	**Correct Letter Sounds**	**Nonsense Word Reading**	**Oral Reading Accuracy**
Vocabulary	**Sight Word Fluency**	**Comprehension**	

Next steps include the development of a Student Reading Improvement Plan (SRIP) by the teacher, principal, parent/legal guardian, and other important school personnel (as needed) to specifically address your child's identified reading deficits. Your child currently receives the following services:

1)

2)

3)

Through the development of the SRIP, the following evidence-based reading interventions and supplemental instructional services and/or supports are being proposed:

1)

2)

3)

You will receive strategies and resources to use at home to help your child succeed in reading. These resources can be found at . You will be notified in writing monthly regarding your child's progress toward grade-level reading.

Provide a statement here regarding how or when the SRIP meeting will be held. It is important for our team to finalize and begin implementing the plan to help your child become a successful reader. If the reading deficiency isn't addressed by the end of third grade, your child may not be promoted to fourth grade unless a good

cause exemption is satisfied as outlined in the Alabama Literacy Act. While the statewide reading assessment is the initial determinant for promotion, it isn't the only option. Students may also participate in a "test-based student portfolio and an alternative reading assessment option to demonstrate sufficient reading skills for promotion to fourth grade" (p. 15). We look forward to working with you to help your child become a lifelong successful reader.

Sincerely,

Section IV: Alabama's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (AL-MTSS) and Response to Instruction (RtI)

3. OTHER STUDENT PLANS

The mission of an RtI framework within a MTSS model is to ensure all students' academic needs are met. While the Alabama Literacy Act provides an important opportunity to address the core reading instruction and intervention needs of ALL students with reading deficiencies, some students with reading deficiencies may ultimately be found to meet the eligibility requirements for special education and have a disability and a need for special education services pursuant to the Alabama Administrative Code (AAC). Others will already have been identified with a disability, and some will not yet have had the opportunity to receive evidence-based reading instruction in general education. With the development of any plan, it is important to

distinguish between accommodations and modifications to ensure the allowable and appropriate measures are included in the student's plan. A definition and examples of accommodations and modifications are described in Section V.

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

The effective implementation of SRIPs for ALL students who are identified with reading deficiencies in their early years should result in fewer students being identified as having Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) and subsequently a need for special education services. The evidence-based reading interventions and supplemental instructional services and supports outlined in a student's SRIP should have the positive impact of decreasing the rate of disability identification. For an unidentified student with a SRIP already in place who is referred for a special education evaluation, assessment data collected from valid and reliable reading screening, formative, and diagnostic assessment systems will likely assist in determining whether a SLD exists.

504 PLANS

Some students may also require a 504 plan as part of the AL-MTSS and/or RtI supports for learning. Information concerning 504 planning and documentation can be found by following the link provided:

https://www.alsde.edu/sec/pss/504%20Compliance/A%20Section%20504%20Guide%2 0to%20Support%20the%20Alabama%20Literacy%20Act.pdf#search=504

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

The ALSDE is working with the Region 7 Comprehensive Center (R7CC) and the Regional Education Laboratory (REL) Southeast to develop an Alabama EL framework that will include comprehensive and systemic guidance for LEAs. The initial draft should be completed by December 2020, and additional guidance should be provided in Phase II of this resource guide.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

If a K-3 student has a current IEP, Individual English Language Plan (I-ELP), 504, Gifted, or other state or local plan, the Alabama Literacy Act requirements still apply, including the parent notification of the reading deficiency area(s), notification within

15 days of being identified, information outlined in the parent notification sample template, and monthly updates regarding the student's reading progress.

Section IV: Alabama's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (AL-MTSS) and Response to Instruction (RtI)

4. STUDENT READING IMPROVEMENT PLAN (SRIP) COMPONENTS

Following parent notification, a Student Reading Improvement Plan (SRIP) will be developed by team members identified in the Alabama Literacy Act including the teacher, principal, other pertinent school personnel, and the parent or legal guardian (p. 14). Most schools may choose to utilize their Problem-Solving Team (PST); however, that is not required.

A Student Reading Improvement Plan (SRIP) sample template is provided on the following page and includes information that should be considered in a reading improvement plan to remediate reading deficiencies. Critical features of any plan should include 1) the names of the team members developing the plan and a place for each to sign after each meeting; 2) state-approved screening assessment data that determined the reading deficiency; 3) specific intervention(s) selected to target the reading deficiency; 4) description of Tier I and Tier II instruction, classroom accommodations, assistive technology, and additional tutoring (if/when applicable) that will support the intervention and assure transfer toward mastery of grade-level skills; 5) explicit steps for evaluating progress after each grading period; and 6) detailed adjustments that will be made to Tier I, II, and III instruction and intervention if sufficient progress is not being made at each progress monitoring check point.

STUDENT READING IMPROVEMENT PLAN (SRIP) SAMPLE TEMPLATE

Student: _____Date of Birth: _____ Grade: _____

School: Date of Screening:_____

Problem-Solving Team Members:

_____

_

_____

_ _____

Description of Evidence-Based Reading Intervention Services and Programs/Resources, including dyslexia-specific intervention services:

_____

_

_____

_ _____

"Daily targeted small group reading interventions based on student need in phonological awareness, phonics including decoding and encoding, sight words, vocabulary, or comprehension" (p. 14).

Screening	Deficiency Area(s)	Progress Monitoring	Risk Level for Reading	Other Information
Assessment/Tool(s)		Dates:		

Classroom Accommodations: (if applicable)

_____

_

_____

_ _____

Assistive Technology: (if applicable)

_____

_____

_____

Additional Tutoring Plan: (if applicable)

_____

_____

_____

Evaluation after each grading period and dates parents will be notified:

_____

_____

_____

Adjustments to Tier I, II, and III instruction based on data:

_____

_____

Any Additional Information:

_____

_

_____

_ _____

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Do administrators and teachers understand how a well-developed and well defined RtI plan directly aligns with the requirements of the Alabama Literacy Act in terms of data reporting, core instruction grounded in the science of reading, and intervention practices?
- What professional learning have schools had regarding RtI and the Alabama Literacy Act? What is needed?
- How do you need to adjust your PST process to ensure the needs of students with reading deficiencies are addressed in the most timely and effective manner?

When developing Student Reading Improvement Plans (SRIP), your team may also consider the questions below.

- Do you and your staff know the difference between accommodations and modifications as well as when these strategies and supports are appropriate for students?
- Does your current direct, explicit, and systematic instruction address and build all the foundational early literacy skills identified in the screener? • What is the minimum time allotment specified for your core reading and intervention instructional programs?
- Are your current progress monitoring components and communication requirements to parents/legal guardians aligned to specific reading deficiency areas identified from the screener? If not, how will you adjust your current templates and communication plans?

Section V: Guidance for Literacy Assessment, Instruction, and Intervention

Section V Includes:

1. K-3 Assessment: Screening, Diagnostics, Progress Monitoring, and Statewide End-of-Third grade Assessments
2. K-3 Core Reading Instruction
3. K-3 Intervention and Tutoring

Section V: Guidance for Literacy Assessment, Instruction, and Intervention

1. K-3 ASSESSMENT: SCREENING, DIAGNOSTICS, PROGRESS MONITORING, AND PROMOTION

ASSESSMENT SYSTEM MINIMUM COMPONENTS

Demonstrate Reading Skills for Promotion

"(h) Commencing with the 2021-2022 school year, third grade students shall demonstrate sufficient reading skills for promotion to fourth grade. Students shall be provided all of the following options to demonstrate sufficient reading skills for promotion to fourth grade, and the State Superintendent of Education shall provide guidelines for the implementation of this subsection: (1) Scoring above the lowest achievement level, as determined by rule of the State Board of Education, on a board approved assessment in reading as provided in Section 3. (2) Earning an acceptable score on an alternative standardized reading assessment as determined and approved by the State Superintendent of Education. (3) Demonstrating mastery of third grade minimum essential state reading standards as evidenced by a student reading portfolio" (p. 21).

Recommendations from Literacy Task Force

The Literacy Task Force shall provide annual vetted and approved assessments which are valid and reliable reading screening, formative, and diagnostic assessment systems.

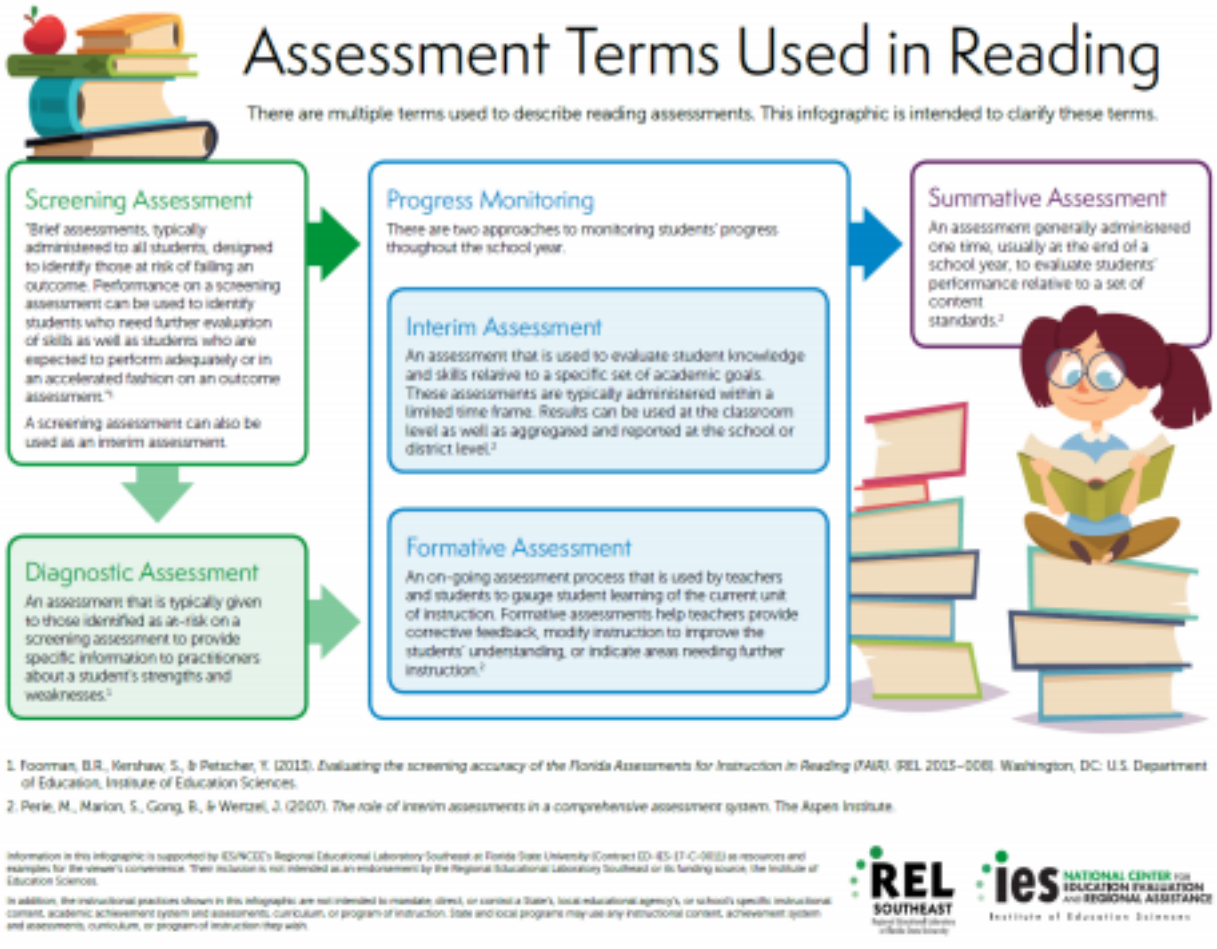
"(b) Each approved assessment system shall do all of the following: (1) Provide screening and diagnostic capabilities for monitoring student progress; (2) Measure, at a minimum, phonological awareness, the alphabetic principle, decoding, encoding, accuracy, vocabulary, and comprehension; and (3) Identify students who have a reading deficiency, including identifying students with characteristics of dyslexia" (pp. 3-4).

"(c) In determining which assessment systems to approve for use by local education agencies, the task force, at a minimum, shall also consider all of the following factors: (l) The time required to conduct the assessments, with the intention of minimizing the impact on instructional time; (2) The level of integration of assessment results with instructional support for teachers and students; and (3) The timeliness in reporting assessment results to teachers, administrators, and parents" (pp. 4-5).

ESSENTIAL READING ASSESSMENT TERMINOLOGY

Dyslexia-Specific Screening Assessment: Identify those students with characteristics of dyslexia or those struggling for other reasons. Additional information is provided in the Alabama Dyslexia Resource Guide.

Assessment System: The following infographic defines and describes the variety of assessments that can and should be utilized during the school year to effectively impact student achievement.



SAMPLE TIMELY & EFFECTIVE INFORMAL ASSESSMENTS

• Listening to students read and marking miscues
• Taking anecdotal notes as students complete tasks independently and in groups • Analyzing writing samples for spelling errors that give clues to foundational reading deficits

COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, & UTILIZATION OF ASSESSMENT DATA

• Provide a foundation for explicit, systematic instruction for ALL students • Elicit accurate information to drive appropriate planning for intensive interventions
• Align a system of sequenced assessments for teachers, administrators, and parents to have sufficient information in a timely manner directly aligned to students' needs
• Identify specific students who struggle to acquire priority grade-level skills necessary for success in the next grade the following year
• Mitigate loss for the students who have the greatest reading deficiencies and require more solutions for interventions
• Assist with the identification of evidence-based literacy practice(s) that are most appropriate at a given interval of time to accelerate student literacy development

COHESIVE ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS

• Empower educators to gauge student literacy development
• Prevent learning deficiencies
• Increase student literacy success by the end of third grade
• Provide vital information that guides whole group instruction, small group instruction, and timely intervention services

K-3 COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS

• Require consistent collaboration of school leadership - principal and literacy coach - with K-3 classroom teachers and interventionists
• Include ongoing data analysis from one assessment cycle to another, to identify student progress monitoring results, determines priority literacy needs, identifies necessary adjustments to differentiate instruction and intervention, and designated solutions to meet the various student needs
• Provide a variety of assessments designed for re-administration such as assessment tools and procedures that serve to monitor student progress over time

- Include summative assessment one-time administration to provide a much more comprehensive set of literacy details regarding student literacy deficiencies

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

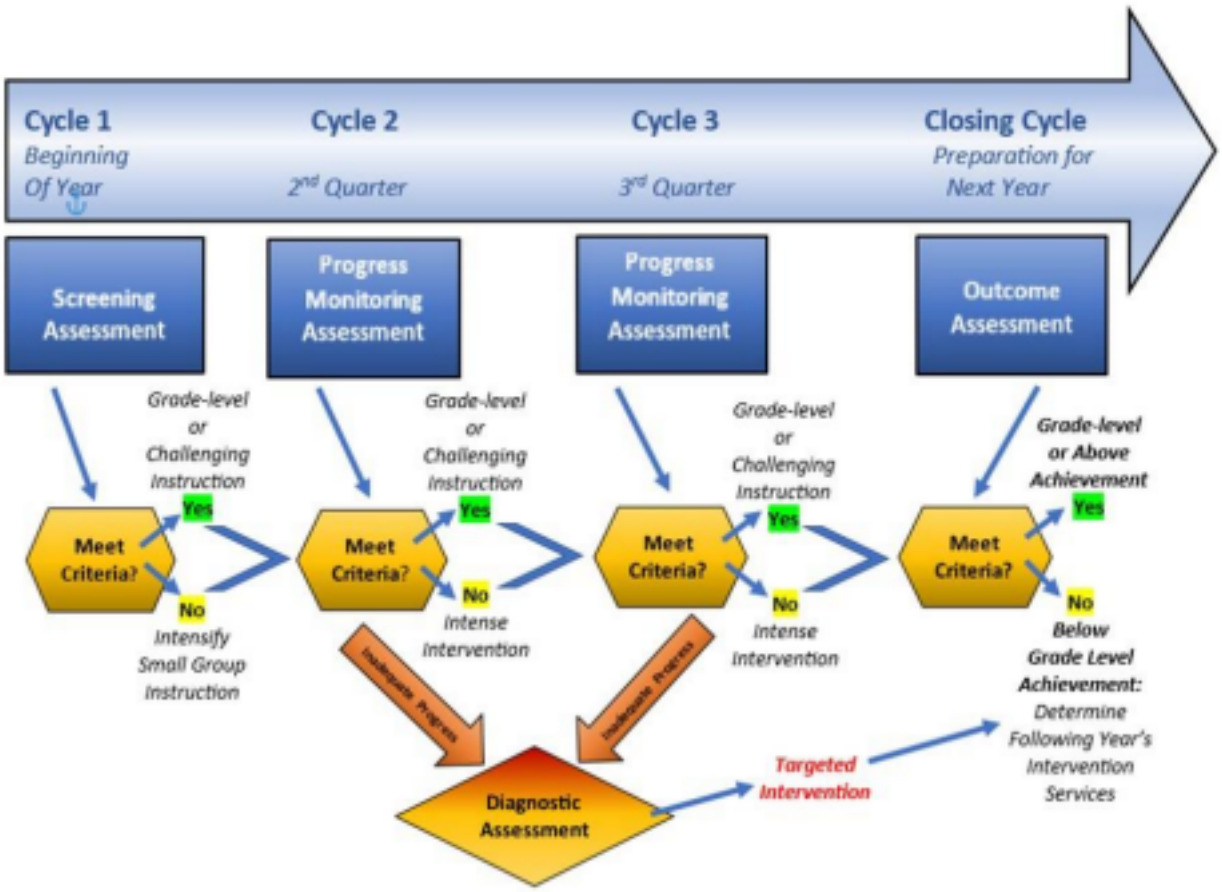
- The Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program (ACAP) provides the statewide summative assessments used for Alabama's students.
- As it relates to the Alabama Literacy Act, "h) Commencing with the 2021-2022 school year, third grade students shall demonstrate sufficient reading skills for promotion to fourth grade. Students shall be provided all of the following options to demonstrate sufficient reading skills for promotion to fourth grade, and the State Superintendent of Education shall provide guidelines for the implementation of this subsection: (1) Scoring above the lowest achievement level, as determined by rule of the State Board of Education, on a board approved assessment in reading as provided in Section 3. (2) Earning an acceptable score on an alternative standardized reading assessment as determined and approved by the State Superintendent of Education. (3) Demonstrating mastery of third grade minimum essential state reading standards as evidenced by a student reading portfolio" (p. 21).

DATA ANALYSIS CYCLE

The visual below provides an example of the implementation of an assessment system that includes scheduled assessment cycles across the school year to analyze data for decision-making priorities.

• Fall screening assessment results identify those students performing on grade level from those performing below grade-level. Screening data informs planning for delivery of differentiated instruction.
• Winter screening assessment results (progress monitoring and benchmark assessments) include analysis of progress monitoring results to inform principals, local reading specialists, and teachers to further refine differentiated instruction.
• Spring screening assessment results should indicate and support increased student performance on the outcome assessment by the end of the school year, as well anticipate the school's intervention needs per grade-level for the following school year.

School-level K-3 Assessment System



SPECIAL POPULATIONS

- All students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) must participate in the state assessment program through the Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program (ACAP) Summative, the ACAP Summative with accommodations, or the ACAP Alternate.
- Likewise, a student with an IEP will participate in vetted and approved reading screening, formative and diagnostic assessments to identify reading deficiencies and measure and monitor progress, p. 505, AAC 290-8-9.03(1)(a)(8) State and Districtwide Assessments.
- A student who meets the criteria for participation in the ACAP Alternate, and has documentation in his or her IEP of instruction based on alternate achievement standards, will be exempt from mandatory retention via a good cause exemption.
- Students can only receive accommodations if they have an IEP, 504, or I-ELP as noted in the Alabama Administrative Code (290-4-2-.03 Student Assessment Students of Special Populations).

ACCOMMODATIONS

• Extra time is built into the assessment to accommodate any student. • Read aloud for any assessment must mirror accommodations already occurring within the classroom.

• Reading the "reading" sections is not a construct of the assessment. • The ACAP Summative is designed to include various accessibility features that could help students who may have a reading deficiency and/or characteristic of dyslexia.

ALSDE RESOURCES

• Student Assessment Program Policies and Procedures for Students of Special Populations Manual is currently being updated and will be posted by August 2020. • Accommodations and Modifications visual can be found on the next page.

The terms Accommodation/Modification are often used interchangeably; yet accommodations level the playing field but modifications change the game entirely.

Accommodations

An accomodation changes how a student learns the material.

Accommodations alter how the content is taught, made accessible, and/or assessed, while not changing what a student is expected to master. An accommodation is a support or service that is provided to help a student fully access the general

- Change how a child learns or accesses the curriculum
- Change the way materials are presented
- Change the way a student may respond
- Do not change the content of instruction
- Allow students with disabilities the opportunity to complete the same curricular activities as peers, but possibly in a different way
- Do not change the expectations for learning
- Keep intact the objectives of the content or activity
- Enable the student to bypass the effects of the disability
- Help remove barriers

Examples of accommodations:

Braille materials, extra time to complete assignments, text-to-speech software, advance organizers, sign language interpreters, extended time on tests, taking a test in a separate room, allowing typed responses as an alternative to handwritten responses, one-on-one or small group instruction, oral administration of subject-area tasks that do not assess decoding/reading comprehension, etc.

Modifications

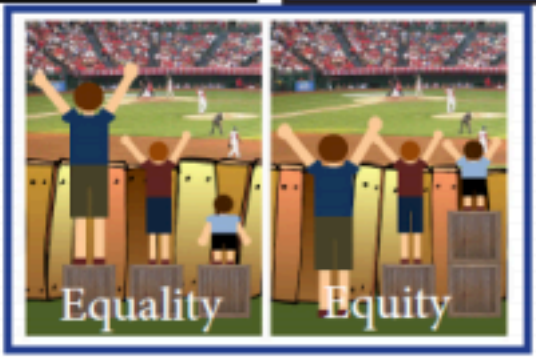
A modification changes what a student is taught and expected to learn.

Modifications describe very fundamental changes to the course content, required work, or instructional level and are different from accommodations. Modifications are not available at the secondary level in order to earn credits.

- Change what a child is taught and expected to do in school
- Alter the standard expectations for a course or assessment
- Individualized changes made to the content and performance expectations for students
- Change the complexity level of information to be learned
- Modify the course or activities/objectives to meet the needs of the learner
- Allow students with more significant learning needs to experience the same curriculum as their peers, but with different learning outcomes
- Utilize grading criteria and/or credits received that are different from peers

Examples of modifications:

Reduce assignments, changes in a scoring rubric or grading scale, assigning different reading materials, using lower-level texts containing the same subject matter presented in a simplified form and in less depth, testing on a subset of the covered content, etc.



ACAP Summative Accessibility Accommodations Checklist (April 2019):

Revised April 2019

ACAP

ACAP Summative
Accessibility Supports and Accommodations Checklist

Student: _____ **School:** _____ **Grade:** ____ **Year:** ____

The state assessment accessibility support and/or accommodations selected below must mirror instructional supports, which are provided regularly in the classroom, when the student receives instruction and takes classroom tests, and have proven to be successful. When completed by the educational team, this checklist becomes part of the student's plan.

- ☐ Accessibility supports are required for student to participate.
- ☐ Accessibility supports are not required for student to participate.
- ☐ Accommodations are required for student to participate.
- ☐ Accommodations are not required for student to participate.
- ☐ Student will not participate in the reading/language arts subtest because student is an EL student in his/her first 12 months of enrollment in a U.S. school, but will participate in the mathematics subtest and will participate in the science subtest. (if applicable)

Justification for all decisions made above:

ALL students are eligible for Accessibility Supports. Students with an IEP, 504, or an I-ELP are eligible for Accessibility Supports and/or Accommodations. Students with an I-ELP are eligible for additional Accommodations marked with an *.

Accessibility Support All Students	**Subjects**		
	ELA	**M**	**S**
Movement Breaks	☐	☐	☐
Scribe (1:1)	☐	☐	☐
Individual (1:1)	☐	☐	☐
Small Group (10 or less)	☐	☐	☐
FM System	☐	☐	☐
Oral Reader (student reads-aloud, 1:1)	☐	☐	☐
Other **ALSDE APPROVAL**	☐	☐	☐

1:1 Individual administration (Test Administrator and student). A proctor is **required** for **all** individual administrations.

If the school is chosen to participate in piloting of an assessment or the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the student will participate unless the IEP Team is reconvened.

Students needing special formats will participate in pilots only if special formats are available.

For additional information regarding the Alabama Student Assessment Program, please contact the Student Assessment Section at 334-694-4817.

Accommodations IEP, 504, I-ELP Only Paper Test (PT) Online Test (OT)	**Subjects**		
	ELA	**M**	**S**
Paper Test/ Print on Demand **ALSDE APPROVAL**	☐	☐	☐
Text-to-Speech (computer read aloud w/headphones) (OT)		☐	☐
Human Reader (Test Administrator read-aloud, 1:1)		☐	☐
ASL Directions Only	☐	☐	☐
SEE Directions Only	☐	☐	☐
ASL Test Items (1:1)		☐	☐
SEE Test Items (1:1)		☐	☐
Homebound (1:1) **ALSDE APPROVAL**	☐	☐	☐
Extended Time ☐ double ☐ triple	☐	☐	☐
Braille (PT)	☐	☐	☐
Refreshable Braille (OT)	☐	☐	☐
Assistive Technology	☐	☐	☐
Communication Device	☐	☐	☐
*Spanish		☐	☐
*English/Native Language Word-to-Word Glossary (No highlighting, writing prompts, spell check, etc.)	☐	☐	☐
*Translated Directions	☐	☐	☐
Abacus		☐	☐
Calculator (If allowable) (talking, large print, etc.)		☐	☐
Other **ALSDE APPROVAL**	☐	☐	☐

Section V: Guidance for Literacy Assessment, Instruction, and Intervention

2. GUIDANCE FOR K-3 CORE READING INSTRUCTION

A comprehensive core reading program is a critical component to impact student reading achievement and must include the following as defined in the Alabama Literacy Act.

- Is based on the science of reading
- Develops foundational skills
- Is provided to all students in the general education classroom
- Includes instructional time

The Alabama Course of Study for English Language Arts specifies the recommended daily time frames for reading instruction at each grade-level. Instruction must be scientifically based, explicit and systematic, and differentiated based on student needs.

The Alabama Literacy Act requires the State Superintendent to convene the Literacy Task Force "to provide recommendations for the comprehensive core reading programs" (p. 2).

The Literacy Task Force has begun work to establish short-term and long-term goals for the development of a process for an annual review of high-quality, comprehensive core reading materials and tools for recommendation to the Alabama State Superintendent of Education. These recommended core reading materials will be used by LEAs and schools and will align with the Alabama ELA Course of Study standards, which are also currently being revised. They will also include the alignment of the science of reading research for Grades K-3. These recommendations will be made following the adoption of the new Alabama Course of Study: English Language Arts by the Alabama State Board of Education and will be provided to the Alabama State Textbook Committee upon convening. Additional information and updates will be provided in Phase II of this resource guide.

SCIENTIFICALLY-BASED READING INSTRUCTION COMPONENTS

- **Multisensory Language Instruction** - so students can engage with learning through more than one sense at a time and through materials organized in the logical order of the language
- **Oral language Development** - so students will relate sounds to meanings • **Phonological Awareness -** so students understand the sound structure of words and sentences
- **Alphabetic Principle** - so students gain the ability to apply knowledge of the relationship between sounds and letters
- **Decoding** - so students apply the alphabetic principle to pronounce written words
- **Encoding** - so students use knowledge of the relationships between sounds and letters to spell and write words
- **Phonics** - so readers understand relationships between the individual sounds of spoken language and the letters of written language including syllable types, morphology of Greek and Latin roots, and multisyllabic words
- **Fluency** - so readers have the ability to read with accuracy, appropriate rate, and proper expression
- **Vocabulary** - so students own a body of oral language they understand when listening and speaking and written language they recognize when reading and use when writing
- **Comprehension -** so students have the ability to read and process text and understand its meaning; and
- **Writing -** so students can express their thoughts and transfer knowledge from listening and reading

Readers flourish when scientifically-based reading instruction is explicit and systematic, which means that the daily teaching process must include detailed explanations, extensive opportunities for guided practice, and opportunities for error correction and feedback.

Reading instruction must also be differentiated based on student needs. Teachers use daily formative assessment data to determine differentiated whole group and small group instruction and intervention, as needed (p. 6).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The research-based Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986) is a representation of how reading comprehension develops. It explains how skillful reading comprehension is the product of two separate but equally important components - word recognition and language comprehension. This link provides additional information about The Simple View of Reading.

The components of the Simple View of Reading are represented by a theoretical model by Scarborough (2002) referred to as Scarborough's Reading Rope. The underlying skills and elements come together to form two strands that comprise the essential components that lead to reading comprehension. This link provides additional information about Scarborough's Reading Rope.

Section V: Guidance for Literacy Assessment, Instruction, and Intervention

3. GUIDANCE FOR READING INTERVENTION AND TUTORING SUPPORTS

- Students who exhibit a reading deficiency, or the characteristics of dyslexia, "shall be provided an appropriate reading intervention program" to address their individual needs. Additionally, students shall be evaluated after every grading period and receive additional tutorial support if they are determined to have a reading deficiency (p. 13).
- Students with characteristics of dyslexia and **all struggling readers** must be provided a dyslexia-specific intervention, as defined by the rule of the State Board

of Education in the Alabama Administrative Code (AAC), Chapter 290-3-1, which refers to Response to Instruction.

The Literacy Task Force has begun work to establish short-term and long-term goals for the development of a process for an annual review of high-quality reading intervention materials and tools for recommendations to the Alabama State Superintendent of Education.

Intervention materials listed in the Alabama Dyslexia Resource Guide will also be reviewed during this process to ensure there is alignment and no contradicting information for LEAs. Following this initial review, any additional interventions will be submitted for review. These recommended intervention materials will be used by LEAs and schools and should address the individual needs of students in Grades K-3 who exhibit a reading deficiency or have characteristics of dyslexia. Additional information will be provided in Phase II of this resource guide.

Reading intervention programs are intended to remediate deficit skills and ensure the catch-up growth needed for students who are behind to read on grade-level by the end of third grade. The Alabama Literacy Act (p.14) provides guidance in the use of intervention programs.

- "Provide explicit, direct instruction that is systematic, sequential, and cumulative in language development, phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, as applicable." These skills are essential to reading at any level, regardless of the age of the student. They build upon one another and must be carefully sequenced in order to fill gaps in student learning.
- "Provide daily targeted small group reading intervention based on student needs in phonological awareness, phonics including decoding and encoding, sight words, vocabulary, or comprehension." This targeted small group intervention is

in addition to small group instruction that occurs as a regular part of comprehensive core reading instruction for all students.
- "Be implemented during regular school hours." Grade-level mastery is the goal of each year of learning, so students must be provided opportunities for intervention within the regular school day to ensure the catch-up growth necessary for reading at grade-level.

Reading intervention decisions must be made based on the results from assessments. A list of vetted and approved comprehensive reading and intervention programs will be provided. The Alabama Literacy Act also requires that students be evaluated following every grading period and provided additional tutorial support when

they are not making appropriate progress toward grade level. The logical time to schedule tutorial support is before or after the school day or at scheduled breaks during the day when tutors are available. The tutorial support must be carefully aligned with the intervention instruction so that deficit reading skills are further remediated. Technological resources can be used to provide additional practice opportunities for students.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Does the school have all the required types of assessments in place to comprise a schoolwide assessment system?
- Is a school leadership team in place that has scheduled systematic assessment administrations and data analysis of the various data results to enlighten and inform K-3 classroom literacy instruction and intervention?
- Do administrators, literacy specialists, and teachers have a shared understanding of each assessment's purpose, administration schedule, and how data will be collected, analyzed, and used to inform instruction and intervention?
- Are regular data meetings held that result in action steps for classroom practice,

rather than for the sole purpose of data reporting?

- Do regular data meetings include focus on identifying schoolwide student achievement gaps - including demographic groups - and identifying changes in those gaps during the year and across school years?
- Are administrators' walk-throughs and literacy specialists' coaching cycles focused on the action steps resulting from the data meetings?
- Does the school offer a comprehensive core reading program based on the science of reading? If so, have all teachers been trained on the use of the core program? If not, what is the process for acquiring one?
- Does the comprehensive core reading program have a clear scope and sequence for teaching foundational reading skills?
- Is the comprehensive core reading program aligned from kindergarten through third grade? There is not a single recommended phonics progression, and order of skills varies by program. Therefore, if programs are not aligned from one grade-level to the next, skills can be missed unintentionally. **This is extremely important to examine, especially if students transition from a primary school to an intermediate school in the feeder pattern.**
- What professional learning and coaching do teachers need to implement the core reading program with fidelity?
- Does the local reading specialist provide professional learning based on data from walk-throughs?
- Are the multisensory strategies utilized by teachers standardized across grade levels so that students, especially struggling readers, do not have to learn and "unlearn" techniques?
- What professional learning and/or coaching do administrators need for observing and assessing the quality of instruction for the core reading program?

- What is your school-level or LEA-level professional learning plan, including an accurate needs assessment, to ensure all K-3 teachers understand how to teach the science of reading?
- Do administrators and teachers understand the differences between Tier II and Tier III interventions?
- What professional learning/coaching is needed to increase implementation of Tier II intervention within the regular classroom?
- Is Tier III intervention a scheduled part of the regular school day? • Does the school have an intervention program(s) that meet(s) the specifications of the Alabama

Literacy Act? If not, what is the process for acquiring one? • Does the school have an interventionist(s) as described in the Alabama Administrative Code Chapter 290-3-1 (20) g.? If not, what is the plan for meeting this requirement?

- How will you ensure that Tier III intervention supports the student's identified reading deficiency?
- What is the school's plan for offering tutorial support, when needed, beyond intervention services?
- How will you ensure that tutorial support reinforces intervention instruction? • What community-based resources are available to assist the school with tutorial support?
- How will you assess the effectiveness of the tutorial support provided?

Section VI: End of Third Grade Promotion

Section VI Includes:

1. The End of Third Grade Promotion Process in the Alabama Literacy Act - Decision

Making, Good Cause Exemption, Exemption Request Guidelines
2. Support for Previously Retained Third Grade Students Not Qualifying for Good Cause Exemptions
3. Incoming Third grade Students Instruction Requirements

Section VI: End of Third grade Promotion

1. THE END OF THIRD GRADE PROMOTION PROCESS IN THE ALABAMA LITERACY ACT: DECISION MAKING, GOOD CAUSE EXEMPTION, EXEMPTION REQUEST GUIDELINES

The Alabama Literacy Act establishes a process designed to improve the reading proficiency of Alabama public school students. The Alabama Literacy Act is intended to ensure that Alabama's K-3 public school students are able to read at or above grade-level by the end of the third grade. The Alabama Literacy Act provides a

framework for a preventative model with early identification of reading deficiencies and immediate interventions which are both essential to meeting the needs of each and every Alabama student. The process begins early by ensuring students are provided with specific reading instruction, intervention, and careful monitoring of the progression of each student's proficiency in reading from one grade to another.

BEGINNING "WITH THE 2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR, THIRD GRADE STUDENTS SHALL DEMONSTRATE SUFFICIENT READING SKILLS FOR PROMOTION TO FOURTH GRADE" (p. 21).

THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Decisions for promotion will follow the guidelines below. These guidelines provide options for a student to demonstrate sufficient reading skills for promotion to fourth grade.

- Scoring above the lowest achievement level, as determined by rule of the State Board of Education, on a board approved assessment in reading
- Earning an acceptable score on an alternative standardized reading assessment as determined and approved by the Alabama State Superintendent of Education
- Demonstrating mastery of all third grade minimum essential state reading standards as evidenced by a student reading portfolio

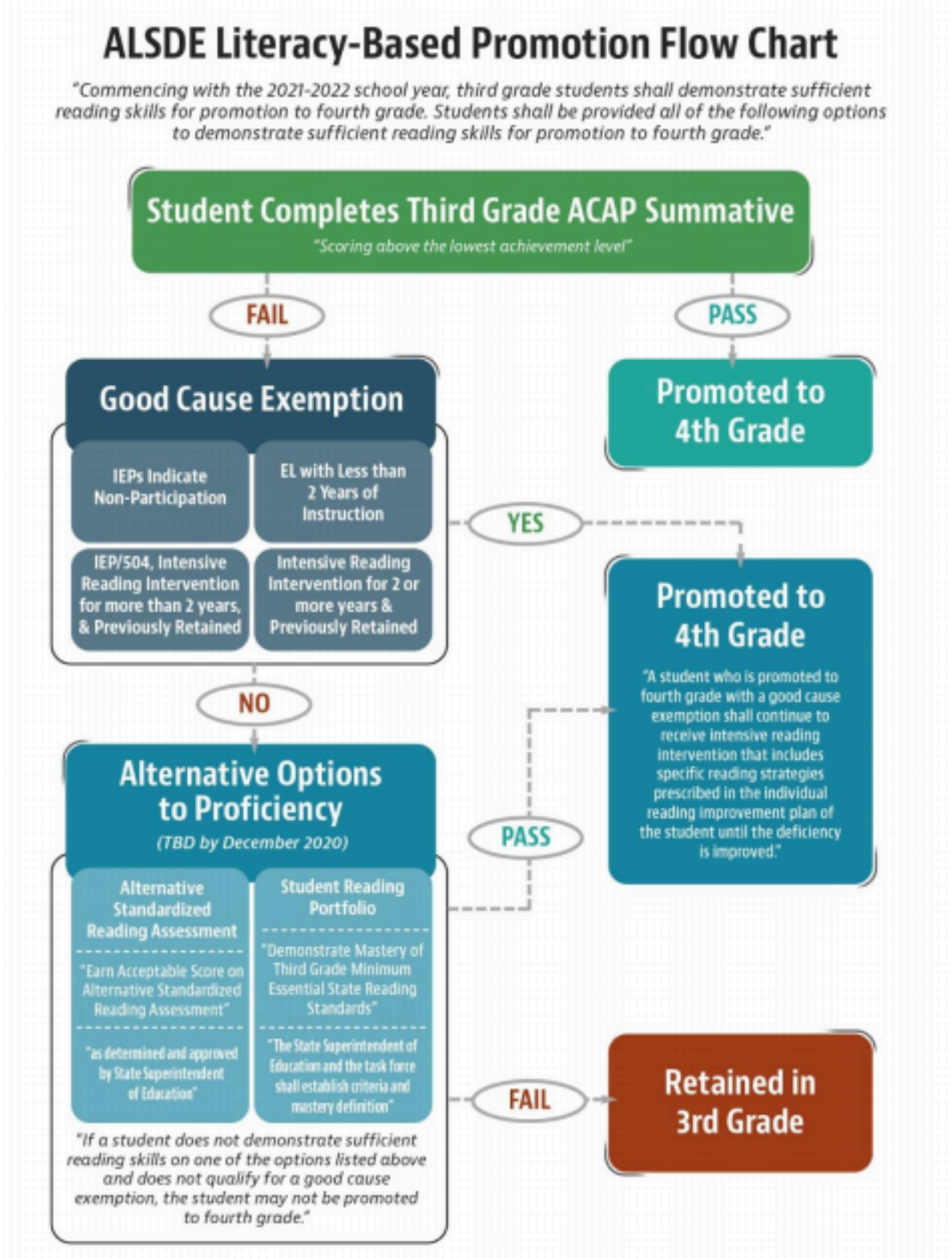
The Alabama State Superintendent of Education and the Literacy Task Force will establish the criteria for the minimum essential standards and student reading portfolios and provide a definition of mastery of all third grade state reading standards.

If a student does not demonstrate sufficient reading skills on one of the three options provided and does not qualify for a good cause exemption, the student may not be promoted to fourth grade.

An LEA may only exempt students from mandatory retention for a good cause exemption.

A student who is promoted to fourth grade with a good cause exemption shall continue to receive intensive reading intervention that includes specific reading

strategies prescribed in the individual reading improvement plan of the student until the deficiency is improved. The LEA shall assist schools and teachers with the implementation of reading strategies that research has shown to be successful in improving reading among students with reading difficulties (pp. 21-22).


ALSDE Literacy-Based Promotion Flow Chart
"Commencing with the 2021-2022 school year, third grade students shall demonstrate sufficient reading skills for promotion to fourth grade. Students shall be provided all of the following options to demonstrate sufficient reading skills for promotion to fourth grade."
Student Completes Third Grade ACAP Summative
"Scoring above the lowest achievement level"
FAIL
PASS
Promoted to 4th Grade
Good Cause Exemption
IEPs Indicate Non-Participation
EL with Less than 2 Years of Instruction
IEP/504, Intensive Reading Intervention for more than 2 years, & Previously Retained
Intensive Reading Intervention for 2 or more years & Previously Retained
YES
Promoted to 4th Grade
"A student who is promoted to fourth grade with a good cause exemption shall continue to receive intensive reading intervention that includes specific reading strategies prescribed in the individual reading improvement plan of the student until the deficiency is improved."
NO
Alternative Options to Proficiency
(TBD by December 2020)
PASS
Alternative Standardized Reading Assessment
"Earn Acceptable Score on Alternative Standardized Reading Assessment"
"as determined and approved by State Superintendent of Education"
Student Reading Portfolio
"Demonstrate Mastery of Third Grade Minimum Essential State Reading Standards"
"The State Superintendent of Education and the task force shall establish criteria and mastery definition"
FAIL
Retained in 3rd Grade
"If a student does not demonstrate sufficient reading skills on one of the options listed above and does not qualify for a good cause exemption, the student may not be promoted to fourth grade."

ALSDE Literacy-Based Promotion Flow Chart

Good Cause Exemption

A local education agency may only exempt students from mandatory retention, as provided in subsection (i), for good cause. A student who is promoted to fourth grade with a good cause exemption shall continue to receive intensive reading intervention that includes specific reading strategies prescribed in the individual reading improvement plan of the student until the deficiency is improved. The local education agency shall assist schools and teachers with the implementation of reading strategies that research has shown to be successful in improving reading among students with reading difficulties. Good cause exemptions shall be limited to the following:

(1) Students with disabilities whose Individual Education Plan indicates that participation in the statewide assessment program is not appropriate, consistent with state law.

(2) Students identified as English language learners who have had less than two years of instruction in English as a second language.

(3) Students with disabilities who participate in the statewide English language arts reading assessment and who have an Individual Education Plan or a Section 504 plan that reflects that the student has received intensive reading intervention for more than two years and who still demonstrates a deficiency in reading and was previously retained in kindergarten, first grade, second grade, or third grade.

(4) Students who have received intensive reading intervention for two or more years and who still demonstrate a deficiency in reading and who were previously retained in kindergarten, first grade, second grade, or third grade for a total of two years.

No student shall be retained more than twice in kindergarten through third grade.

Mandatory Retention Request Criteria

A request to exempt a student from the mandatory retention requirement using one of the good cause exemptions listed in subsection (j) shall be made consistent with the following:

(1) Documentation shall be submitted to the school principal from the teacher of the student that indicates that the promotion of the student is appropriate. Documentation shall include a statement identifying which good cause exemption is requested, as well as the existing reading improvement plan or Individual Education Plan of the student, as applicable.

(2) The school principal shall review the recommendation of the teacher, determine if the student meets one of the good cause exemptions, and shall make his or her determination in writing to the local superintendent of education. The local superintendent of education, in writing, shall approve or reject the recommendation of the school principal.

(3) The LEA shall provide written notification to the parent of any student who is retained in third grade for not achieving the reading level required for promotion. Notice shall clearly state the reasons why the student is not eligible for a good cause exemption and shall include a description of the proposed interventions and supports that shall be provided to the student to improve any identified area of reading deficiency during the retained year.

Supports for Students Not "Demonstrating Sufficient Reading Skills"

(1) A student who is retained in third grade shall receive intensive acceleration. The intensive acceleration shall be taught by a highly effective teacher of reading who has received training in the science of reading and multisensory language instruction, as demonstrated by student reading performance data and teacher performance evaluations; shall have a reduced teacher-student ratio; and shall provide explicit and systematic reading instruction and intervention for the majority of student contact time each day.

(2) A student who is promoted to fourth grade with a good cause exemption shall continue to receive intensive reading intervention that includes specific reading strategies prescribed in the individual reading improvement plan of the student until the deficiency is improved.

THE ALABAMA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
P.O. Box 302101 ☆ Montgomery, AL 36130-2101 ☆ 334-694-4688 ☆ 334-694-4990 (f) ☆ www.alsde.edu

GOOD CAUSE EXEMPTIONS

- Students with disabilities whose Individual Education Program (IEP) indicating

that participation in the statewide assessment program is not appropriate, consistent with state law.

- Students identified as English language learners who have had less than two years of instruction in English as a second language, which means students identified as English learners who have had less than two years of classroom instruction once they enter the language instruction education program.
- Students with disabilities who participate in the statewide English language arts reading assessment and who have an IEP or a Section 504 plan that reflects that the student has received intensive reading intervention for more than two years yet still demonstrates a deficiency in reading and was previously retained in kindergarten, first grade, second grade, or third grade.
- Students who have received intensive reading intervention for two or more years and who still demonstrate a deficiency in reading and who were previously retained in kindergarten, first grade, second grade, or third grade for a total of two years. No student shall be retained more than twice in kindergarten through third grade. This means a student may be retained for a total of two years, which may or may not have been a repeat of the same grade. To further illustrate, a student may be retained one time in first grade and one time in second grade - a total of two years (pp. 22-23).

SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

A student with the most significant cognitive disability who receives instruction based on the Alternate Achievement Standards (K-1) and who is assessed using the ACAP Alternate for testing grades 2 and 3, qualifies for good cause exemption under the state law. The law states that an IEP team must determine that the alternate assessment is appropriate for the child. However, a student participating in the ACAP Alternate for third grade must be assessed with an alternate reading measure to determine grade-level reading. A student who is receiving instruction from the alternate achievement standards in kindergarten through second grade must also receive alternate means of screening, formative and diagnostic evaluations to identify reading deficiencies and measure and monitor progress. The primary delivery of reading instruction and interventions should be a collaborative effort between the general education teacher and the special education service provider. The individualized reading interventions and strategies may be outlined in a student's IEP or Student Reading Improvement Plan and will be addressed

utilizing measures appropriate to the student's severity of reading deficits, rate of learning, and the level of supports needed. Reading deficits may be addressed

through individualized learning goals, specially designed instruction, and related services as deemed necessary by the student's IEP team. Although these students meet the criteria for the ACAP Alternate, have documentation in their IEPs for instruction based on alternate achievement standards, and will be exempt from mandatory retention via a good cause exemption, they are entitled to the same program and process outlined in the Alabama Literacy Act for ALL students. Therefore, IEP team decisions regarding participation are to be based on the unique needs of the student.

EXEMPTION REQUEST GUIDELINES

A request to exempt a student from the mandatory retention requirement using one of the good cause exemptions listed earlier must be made according to these guidelines.

- **Documentation** - Documentation shall be submitted to the school principal from the teacher of the student that indicates that the promotion of the student is appropriate. Documentation shall include a statement identifying which good cause exemption is requested and the existing reading improvement plan or IEP of the student, as applicable.
- **Superintendent, School Principal, and Teacher** - The school principal will review the recommendation of the teacher to determine if the student meets one of the good cause exemptions. The principal will make his or her determination in writing to the local superintendent of education. The local superintendent of education, in writing, shall approve or reject the recommendation of the school principal.