



# Alaska Reads Act Frequently Asked Questions

## General Questions

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- 1. I would like to start receiving the subscription of Alaska Reads Newsletter. How can I get this started?**

Please go to [https://public.govdelivery/accounts/AKDEED/subscriber/new?qsg-AKDEED\\_2](https://public.govdelivery/accounts/AKDEED/subscriber/new?qsg-AKDEED_2) and enter your email address, then select which topic(s) you would like to subscribe to.

- 2. I would like to learn more about the Alaska Reads Act, where can I find more information on the requirements?**

Current and updated information on the Alaska Reads Act can be found on the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) website at: <https://education.alaska.gov/akreads>

- 3. How will district leaders receive Reads Act requirements and forms?**

Current and updated information on the Alaska Reads Act can be found on the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) website at: <https://education.alaska.gov/akreads>. In addition, a series of weekly webinars will begin on January 12, 2023 to support leaders in implementation of the Reads Act. Forms will be included in the Department form page on the DEED website.

## District Reading Intervention

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- 1. I would like to learn more about what documentation a District would need to provide in order to qualify for this program.**

All districts will be required to implement the requirements in the District Reading Intervention portion of the Reads Act. Each district will need to submit a K-3 MTSS Plan that outlines the core curriculum, intervention, group sizes, screening, and progress monitoring. The plan will be posted on the DEED website.

- 2. Section 14.30.765 (e) reads: A student in grade three should demonstrate sufficient reading skills to progress to grade four. A student demonstrates sufficient reading skills to progress to grade four by**
  - (1) scoring at grade level or higher on the statewide screening tool or on the statewide summative assessment;
  - (2) achieving an acceptable score on an alternative standardized reading screening as determined and approved by the department; or

(3) demonstrating mastery of reading standards through a student reading portfolio based on criteria established by the department.

**Does a student need to meet all three criteria?**

This portion of the Reads Act refers to a student in grade three. They need to have at least one of the three criteria to demonstrate readiness for fourth grade.

**3. Is there a discussion on the scoring range for above and below proficient? If a student does score below proficient, are there opportunities to supplement with other data?**

The department plans to use the scoring for the literacy screener to determine reading deficiencies. As an alternative, a student reading portfolio developed by the Department may be used to provide documentation of proficiency.

**4. Section 14.30.765 (c) reads: If at any time during the school year a student in grades kindergarten through three demonstrates a reading deficiency, the district or school shall notify the student’s parent or guardian. In the fall kindergartners have not had exposure to direct instruction, as preschool and kindergarten are not required in the State of Alaska. Is there a grace period for kindergarteners to gain exposure prior to being declared deficient and put on an RTI plan?**

There is not a “grace period” stated in the law. If a student is identified in kindergarten as below benchmark for that time of year, intervention would be provided.

**5. Reading teacher is only allowed to teach the tier III level. With interventions would a regular education teacher be certified to teach tier III interventions with proper certification?**

In Section 14.30.765, the act states that to the extent practicable, intensive reading intervention service must,

- (1) be provided by a district reading teacher, or paraprofessional under the supervision of a reading teacher, to all students in grades kindergarten through three who are determined to have a reading deficiency based on the statewide screening tool adopted under AS 14.30.760(a)(1).

According to this language, a reading teacher could design and direct the intervention and it could be delivered by the reading teacher or a paraprofessional.

**6. Will there be money given to schools to service tier II and tier III students?**

This is a two-part answer:

- a. As part of an MTSS/RTI model, students receive intervention if they are in tier II or tier III. While additional funding will not be provided for this specifically, districts may opt to use other funding sources to purchase added intervention materials as they prioritize this in their budget. Some schools may already have evidence-based intervention materials.
- b. Funding for schools that apply and are accepted into the Department Reading Program will have some funding available for supports.

**7. Someone with a low IQ might not qualify for special education but will always test below proficient and be an RTI student. Does the State of Alaska have a plan for these students?**

For students with this situation, an individual reading improvement plan would be appropriate to meet the individual needs of that student. Regular communication with parents and progress monitoring would be appropriate for any student that struggles in reading.

**8. Is having the dyslexia screener part of the requirements of the screener if districts want a waiver?**

Yes, a dyslexia screener is part of the requirements of the screener if districts choose to apply for a waiver to use an alternate district adopted literacy screener.

**9. Will there be a specific dyslexia screener required statewide?**

The dyslexia screener is included in the state adopted mCLASS literacy screener. If a district completes a waiver to use their own literacy screener, it must have a dyslexia screener as part of the requirements for approval.

**10. Will the dyslexia screener allow educators to diagnose dyslexia? Or will it simply indicate a risk level for dyslexia?**

The dyslexia screener will indicate the risk level. Further assessment would be required to diagnose dyslexia.

**11. Would the new reading plans begin next school year 23/24?**

The Reads Act will be implemented beginning July 1, 2023. Programs associated with the Act will be implemented at that time.

**12. The goals for reading proficiency are for English reading only, is that correct? Could this lead to conflict in schools where native language is strongly integrated into curricula?**

The Reads Act applies to all state-funded schools serving kindergarten through grade three and includes world and Native languages.

**13. What will be the recourse for districts unable to meet requirements of the Reads Act?**

Alaska Department of Education and Early Development realizes that requirements of the Reads Act will be a process. They will work to support districts in implementation.

**14. Will a parent/family handout about the Reads Act Requirement and Regulations be made available to districts and community stakeholders?**

Alaska Department of Education and Early Development is drafting supporting documents that may be used to inform stakeholders.

**15. Will educators still be able to use their professional judgment to select materials and means of instruction to determine the student interventions based on on-going student assessment data rather than utilizing only one set of materials or program determined by the state?**

The Reads Act requires districts serving kindergarten through third grade to use materials based on the science of reading to instruct students. Intervention materials and core curriculum will be part of the K-3 MTSS Plan each district or school will submit to the Department for approval each year. Part of the approval process will include adherence to usage of evidence-based intervention materials.

**16. When will the approved curriculum for core ELA instruction be identified?**

The Reads Act requires districts to use materials based on the science of reading for grades kindergarten through third grade. Each district will submit the curriculum used for core ELA instruction as part of their K-3 MTSS Plan. Approval of that plan will include using a core ELA curriculum that is aligned to Alaska ELA standards and science of reading.

**17. What does after school hours look like?**

After school hours will look different in each school and/or district, depending on resources for implementation. It was intentionally left flexible to incorporate best practice and evidence-based curriculum into individual context.

**18. How does the Reads Act apply to homeschool and correspondence families and what is the impact on districts?**

If the district employing a homeschool or correspondence program receive state funds, it must comply with the Reads Act. DEED will work with the administrators in charge of those programs to assist them in meeting the requirements of the Reads Act.

**19. How does the Reads Act apply to public charter schools in terms of the requirements of the Reads Act and us of screeners and resources?**

If they district receives state funds, they must comply with the Reads Act. DEED will work with the administrators in charge of those programs to assist them in meeting the requirements of the Reads Act.

**20. Does a Tier III intervention imply a likely learning disability and trigger IDEA with 504 or IEP intervention?**

Tier III doesn't automatically mean there is a learning disability. Many factors affect students in their reading journey. If evidence-based intervention occurs and adjustments are made throughout a year with no improvements, a team (including parents) may determine to explore whether a learning disability exists or not.

**21. It sounds like this new assessment would replace district adopted MAP Growth screening. How often would this assessment be administered? How many times would a single student take this assessment?**

As part of the District Reading Intervention, each student must be screened using state approved literacy screener three times each year. If a student is at benchmark after the first screener, the Reads Act does not require further screening, although it is recommended through best practice. The literacy screener does not necessarily replace Map Growth.

**22. Will all districts be required to use the Amplify screener? I had heard that there would be options to continue with the one currently in use (for example, Fastbridge used by Anchorage SD).**

Amplify's mCLASS is the state adopted literacy screener. If a district chooses to use an alternative district literacy screener, they must complete a waiver that has to be approved by the department.

## Department Reading Program

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**1. Am I understanding correctly that the year of Reading Program participation is the year of implementation, NOT the year of planning?**

The Department Reading Program spans two school years. In year one, ranking of schools, notification of ability to apply for participation, and acceptance in the program occur between October and April. Between April and May, a Department Reading Specialist is assigned to the participating schools and a K-3 Intensive Reading Improvement Plan is designed specifically for the school with collaboration from the reading specialist and the school staff. In year two, the plan is implemented with the school.

**2. How are the "Department Reading Specialists" as defined in the Reads Act going to be selected? Will they be on site so these individuals are informed firsthand about the unique needs of AK rural remote schools?**

The Department Reading Specialists identified in the Reads Act will be employees of the Department of Education. Reading Specialists will be assigned to multiple schools that participate in the Department Reading Program. They will not live in the district, but draft regulations indicate a minimum of one site visit per year. Interactions with school staff will help each specialist understand the unique needs of each school and community.

## Early Learning Program

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**1. What are Early Education Programs?**

The Reads Act updated language from "Pre-Elementary Programs" to "Early Education Programs" as part of their expanded definition of what can constitute an elementary school.

Early Education Programs are programs which are primarily designed to prepare children, 3-5 years of age, for elementary school; regularly serve a group of five or more children; and is operate by a school district or a Head Start agency.

**2. What is the Early Elementary Grant Program?**

The Early Education Grant Program supports school districts who want to start or improve an early education program for 4- and 5-year-old children. There will be \$3,000,000 available annual to fund 3-year grants to eligible districts. Districts receiving funding will work toward meeting the Early Education Program Standards. At the end of the grant, districts who have not met all of the standards, may receive an additional year to finish meeting their goals.

**3. What are the requirements to apply for the Early Education Grant Program?**

Districts will fill out an application that will be available in early 2023. As part of the application process, districts are required to describe the program they would like to start or improve, as well as consult with each Head Start and quality early education/pre-kindergarten programs and submit documentation of the consultation process. A review team at DEED will review the applications and

application materials for completeness. Districts with low performance according to the department's accountability system.

**4. What are the Early Education Program Standards?**

The Early Education Program Standards are standards adopted by the State Board of Education outlining the requirements for high-quality early education programs. The standards are based on Head Start Program Standards and other federal standards required for early education programs to receive federal funding.

**5. Who is required to meet the Early Education Program Standards?**

Districts receiving grant funding have three years to meet the Early Education Program Standards. If a district is not able to meet the standards during the three-year grant, there is a provision in the act to provide an additional year to work on meeting all of the Early Education Program Standards. Districts applying for formula funding will need to provide evidence that all of the standards are being met.

**6. What assessments for early education programs are required this coming fall because of the AK Reads Act?**

As part of the proposed standards, grant funded and approved Early Education Programs will be required to utilize the Statewide Assessment Tool (Teaching Strategies GOLD) provided to by the state. The proposed Early Education Program standards also require programs to utilize the Statewide screening tool (The Ages & Stages Questionnaire) and programs may utilize their own self-assessment tool.

The Reads ACT requires the use of a literacy screener (mClass) in K-3, but not in early education.

\$3,000,000 will be awarded, in 2023-2024 the award will be \$6,000,000, in 2024-2025 the award will be \$9,000,000, and so on until the end of the act in 2034.

**7. What is the AK Reads Act Early Education Program Grant?**

The Alaska Reads Act states up to \$3million will be allocated to approved applicants for the AK Reads Act Early Education Program Grant for the next 10 years. This grant funds grantees for three years, with the purpose of establishing and maintaining a quality early education program that meets DEED- Early Education Program standards. At the end of the three years, the district may apply to fund their program through receiving a .5 ADM for each 4- and 5-year-old students enrolled in their early education program. An additional year may be available to provide additional time for a district to meet the standards

**8. Is the Early Education Program Approval application the same as the Pre-Elementary Approval to Operate application?**

No, the Early Education Program Approval application is not the same as the pre-elementary approval to operate application. The Early Education Approval application is a process for School District programs to provide documentation that they are meeting the Early Education Program standards. Once a school district is approved, they can count their preschool students as part of their average daily membership to receive half foundation funding.

**9. Are Early Education Programs still required to do the annual Early Education Authorization to Operate application (Formerly known as the Pre-Elementary Approval to Operate)?**

Yes, all Early Education Programs operated by a school district or a Head Start agency (which are primarily designed to prepare children, 3-5 years of age, for elementary school; regularly serve a group of five or more children) are still required to do the annual authorization to operate application and complete the annual end-of-year report.

**10. What is DEED's role in examining/verifying/enforcing the important do no harm and non-compete components of the Act?**

DEED will only approve Reads Act grant applications for programs who have completed the required consultation form for the Reads Act Early Education Program application.

## Virtual Education

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**1. What is the vision for the Alaska Virtual Consortium?**

DEED is exploring options and creating a framework for the Alaska Virtual Consortium (AVC) with the intent of creating greater access to virtual education resources to support educators and students statewide. Once the AVC is recruited and convened, the consortium members will be tasked with exploring the collected resources and refining the plan for the consortium vision and model. A website will be developed to post appropriate information, resources, and guidelines.

**2. I'd like to know more about the forming of the AVC. Has it happened already? How will participants be nominated and selected? Representative distribution of districts/stakeholders?**

DEED has created draft bylaws for the AVC, which include membership guidelines. The AVC membership will not exceed 15 members and will include the following stakeholder representatives:

- a. Regional educators, to include both teachers and administrators from both rural and urban school districts
- b. Tribal Representatives
- c. Parents and/or students
- d. Statewide Education Organizations
- e. State Board of Education Member

The AVC will be convened following State Board of Education approval of the Virtual Education regulations, which include membership recommendations.

**3. Will districts be required to participate in the Alaska Virtual Consortium?**

The AVC will be an optional resource to districts designed to support resource sharing, alignment of standards of practice, and professional learning to support virtual content delivery. The AVC committee, once convened, will develop guidelines and resources to support districts and provide guidance and suggestions to DEED on how to support virtual education needs statewide.

## Teacher Certification

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**1. Do the Alaska Reads Act certification requirements apply to all teachers or only to new teachers into the profession?**

Both veteran teachers and teachers new-to-the-profession will need to meet the training, coursework, or testing requirements of the Reads Act. The State Board of Education will determine what the requirements will be.

**2. What will currently certified K-3 teachers need to do to maintain certification?**

The Reads Act requires that all educators working with K-3 grade students complete training, coursework, or testing to demonstrate competency in the Science of Reading regardless of when they were certified. The state board will determine what training, coursework, or testing will meet the requirements through regulations. The proposed regulations will provide options that will include training, coursework, and testing.

**3. If a teacher has a masters in language and literacy with a K-12 Reading Endorsement, are they required to take the Praxis?**

The State Board of Education will determine through regulations what will be required. It is being proposed through regulations that educators will be able to meet the requirement in a variety of ways, including taking a test.

**Is there a fee for this?** If an educator elects to take a test to meet the requirements, the educator will need to pay for the exam.

**4. I wonder about the National Board Teachers who have achieved endorsement in Reading in the acquisition of language or literacy. Has there been conversations about the NBCT teachers? National Board-Certified Teachers will need to meet the requirements as determined by the State Board of Education through regulations. The proposed regulations require all educators, regardless of current or previous certification or training, to meet the same requirements.**

**5. Who will be funding the tests teachers need to take?**

If an educator elects to take a test to satisfy the requirements, the educator will be expected to incur the cost of the exam.

**6. Will teachers have to pay for the courses and tests that are required?**

Yes, educators may need to pay for the required training, coursework, or testing. The department is working to provide options to educators that will be at little to no cost.

**7. Is there someone looking at our credential to be very specific with what we need in order to be valid?**

For the Reads Act, it is being proposed through regulation to add Reads Act Endorsements to verify the teacher has met the requirements of the Act.