National Council on Teacher Quality

South Carolina: Recommendations to Strengthen Implementation of the Science of Reading
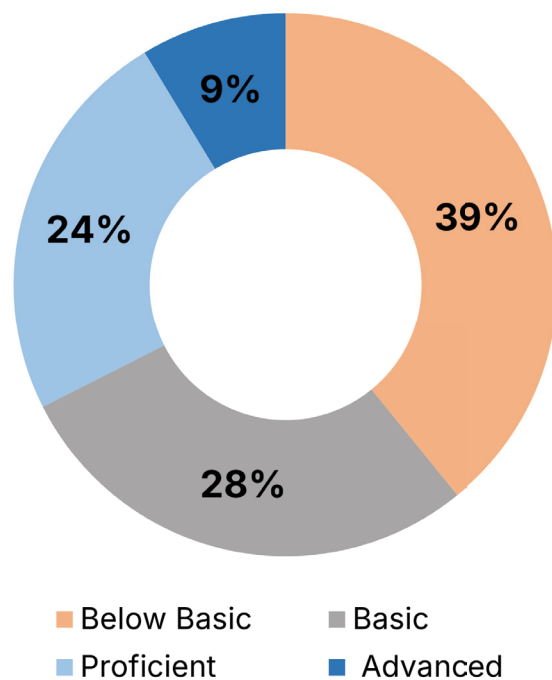
Literacy is critical for success in school, work, and civic engagement. Elementary teacher effectiveness is critical to improving students' ability to read. Research suggests that with effective reading instruction, more than 90% of students would learn to read[1]—meaning that nearly *1 million additional students* would enter fourth grade as skilled readers each year.

State education leaders across the country are rightly prioritizing efforts to improve elementary student reading outcomes. However, only when state leaders implement a literacy strategy that includes *teacher effectiveness* will states achieve a teacher workforce that can strengthen student literacy year after year.

The stakes for students in South Carolina

In South Carolina, **only 61% of fourth grade students can read at a basic level** based on the most recent National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP). That number falls precipitously for South Carolina's historically underserved students. Students who are not reading at grade level by the time they reach fourth grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school, which in turn leads to additional challenges for them as adults: lower lifetime earnings,[2] higher rates of unemployment,[3] and a higher likelihood of entering the criminal justice system.[4] These alarming statistics can be largely attributed to inequities in access to effective reading instruction—**a problem that strong state policy and bold state leaders can solve.**

Fourth grade students' reading levels

- Below Basic — 39%
- Basic — 28%
- Proficient — 24%
- Advanced — 9%

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South Carolina's performance on state policies to strengthen implementation of the Science of Reading

NCTQ's *State of the States: Five Policy Actions to Strengthen Implementation of the Science of Reading* report provides a framework of steps state policymakers should take to ensure their teacher workforce can implement the science of reading and sustain it over time. States fall into one of four categories based on the extent to which they have implemented five policy actions. **South Carolina earned a moderate rating, meaning the state has some policies in place across the five actions, but there is more to do.**

South Carolina Rating:

Moderate

■ Strong   ■ Moderate   ■ Weak   ■ Unacceptable

Policy actions are weighted equally. The chart below shows how South Carolina performs across the five policy actions.

How is South Carolina performing on the five state policy actions?

South Carolina ranks **slightly above** the national average.

#	Policy Action	Rating
1	Sets specific, detailed reading standards for teacher prep programs	**Strong**
2	Reviews teacher prep programs to ensure they teach the science of reading	**Weak**
3	Adopts a strong reading licensure test	**Weak**
4	Requires districts to select high-quality reading curriculum	**Weak**
5	Provides professional learning for teachers and ongoing support to sustain the implementation of the science of reading	**Moderate**

How does South Carolina perform on each of the indicators?

NCTQ identified 18 key indicators within the five policy actions and analyzed the extent to which states are implementing them. The indicators represent policies and practices states should employ to support the implementation of the science of reading across the five policy actions. See below for South Carolina's performance on all indicators.

✔ Yes   ○ Partially   ✖ No

1. Teacher prep standards	Does state law or regulation include specific, detailed standards for all five core reading components for elementary teacher prep programs?	✔
	Does the state include how to teach reading to English Learners within the reading standards for teacher prep programs?	✔
	Does the state incorporate how to teach struggling readers, including those with dyslexia, in the reading standards for teacher prep programs?	✔
2. Teacher prep program approval	Does the state maintain full authority over prep program approval?	✔
	Does the state review the syllabi for reading courses to determine the integration of all reading standards and the science of reading as part of the program renewal process?	✖
	Does the state include reading specialists/experts in the review of reading instruction in elementary teacher preparation programs as part of the program renewal process?	✖
	Does the state include licensure pass rate data as part of the program renewal process?	✖
3. Elementary reading licensure test	Does the state use at least an acceptable reading licensure test for elementary teacher candidates?	✖
	Does the state require all elementary teacher candidates to pass a reading licensure test?	✔
	Does the state publish any pass rate data on reading licensure tests?	✖

✔ Yes   ○ Partially   ✖ No

4. High-quality curriculum	Does the state require districts to select reading core curricula materials from an identified list?	✔
	Does the state provide guidance and/or evaluation tools to districts to aid in the selection of high-quality supplemental materials for interventions, struggling readers?	✖
	Does the state provide guidance and/or evaluation tools to districts to aid in the selection of high-quality supplemental materials for English Learners?	✖
	Does the state have a policy that requires districts to publish curriculum they are using?	✖
	Does the state publish district-level information about the curriculum used in each district on the state's website?	✖
	Does the state allocate funds toward reading curriculum materials?	✔
5. Professional Learning	State requires training for all elementary teachers in scientifically-based reading instruction.	✔
	State allocation for training in scientifically based reading instruction for inservice teachers.	✖

Recommendations for South Carolina

Program approval:

- Require literacy experts on site visits during program renewal processes to gauge implementation of the science of reading.
- Revise state program renewal processes to include a review of syllabi for all reading courses to verify alignment with the science of reading.
- Revise state program renewal processes to include a review of pass rate data for elementary preparation programs.
- Review state program renewal processes to ensure the state maintains full authority and has a process to review elementary preparation programs specificallyfor alignment with the science of reading.

Licensure Test:

- Revise the current test or select a new test that at least adequately covers all five core components of the science of reading.

- Publish first-time pass rate data by program on the reading licensure test to determine which programs are well preparing candidates with the key knowledge of the science of reading.

High-Quality Reading Curricula:

- Develop resources or tools to help districts select reading curricula that include support for struggling readers, including students with dyslexia.

- Develop resources or tools to help districts select reading curricula that include support for English Learners.

- Enact a policy that requires districts to publish what reading curricula they are using to ensure transparency for parents and the school community.

- Require the state to collect and publish the reading curricula districts are using to ensure all students have access to high-quality reading curricula.

Professional Learning:

- Provide funds so that all teachers can access high-quality professional learning and ongoing support, such as literacy coaches, to sustain implementation.

Getting Started

Teacher Preparation Program Performance: Of the **13 prep programs** NCTQ reviewed in South Carolina, **only 8%** of programs adequately cover all five components of the science of reading. See more details on how well South Carolina's teacher preparation programs cover the science of reading in the Teacher Prep Review Reading Profiles for South Carolina.

State Reading Policy Action Guide: NCTQ developed the State Reading Policy Action Guide that outlines five key actions states can take to strengthen implementation of the science of reading, including case studies that illustrate how states have done this work.

Questions? Contact Shannon Holston, NCTQ Chief of Policy and Programs at shannon.holston@nctq.org.

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Endnotes

1   Torgesen, J. K. (2004). Preventing early reading failure. *American Educator, 28*(3), 6-9.

2   Tamborini, C. R., Kim, C., & Sakamoto, A. (2015). Education and lifetime earnings in the United States. *Demography, 52*(4), 1383-1407.

3   Chapman, C., Laird, J., Ifill, N., & Kewal Ramani, A. (2011). *Trends in high school dropout and completion rates in the United States: 1972-2009. Compendium report.* NCES 2012-006. National Center for Education Statistics. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/dropout/intro.asp#r4

4   Chapman, C., Laird, J., Ifill, N., & Kewal Ramani, A. (2011); Harlow, C. W. (2003). *Education and correctional populations*. Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report. https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/ecp.pdf