

# READ ACT UPDATE

## Senate Bill 19-199



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

### Colorado knows reading by third grade is critical

Reading is an essential skill that must be developed early in a child's educational career. Students who do not read at grade level by third grade struggle throughout their academic career and have limited options as adults. Educators must have a deep understanding of the science of evidence-based reading to help every child meet this critical benchmark and become a lifelong reader. Recognizing this, the Colorado legislature passed the Colorado Reading to Ensure Academic Development Act (READ Act) in 2012 to ensure that all children in Colorado reach grade level proficiency in reading by the end of third grade.

After six years of implementation of the READ Act, schools and districts were not seeing the dramatic improvements in reading levels envisioned by state leaders.

- Colorado has seen only a 2 percent increase in third graders meeting or exceeding expectations on the Colorado Measures of Academic Success tests in English language arts.
- Statewide data shows only a 1 percent reduction in the number of students identified with a significant reading deficiency (SRD).

Reviewing the implementation of the READ Act, policy makers identified challenges that contributed to its lower-than-desired impact:

- The statute defined clear allowable uses of READ Act per-pupil intervention funds, but it did not provide clarity regarding accountability for the use of funds.
- Reporting requirements for the READ Act make it challenging to identify instructional programming and interventions effective in reducing the number of students identified with SRDs.
- The need for increasing teacher knowledge on evidence-based practices for teaching reading.

The State Board of Education and Colorado legislature worked together on several updates to the READ Act through Senate Bill 19-199 (SB 19-199) to address the implementation challenges the state faces. The updates emphasize the importance of using evidence-based instructional practices to achieve the original goal of the READ Act – teaching all students to read by third grade.

The Colorado Department of Education is renewing its commitment to supporting districts, schools, teachers and families as we work together to help students read at grade level by the end of third grade. While doing this, we also need to look deeply into outcomes of the READ Act so far and listen to the wisdom of teachers, school leaders and parents to better understand why we are not making as much progress as we have hoped to see.

#### Updated allowable uses of Per-Pupil Intervention Funds

C.R.S 22-7-1210.5

- Operate a summer school literacy program.
- Purchase core reading instructional programs that are included on the READ Act advisory list.
- Purchase and/or provide approved targeted, evidence-based or scientifically based intervention services to students which may include services provided by a reading interventionist.
- Purchase tutoring services.
- Provide technology, including software that is on the advisory list of instructional programming; may include professional development for use of technology.
- Purchase from a BOCES the services of a reading specialist or reading interventionist.
- Provide professional development programming to support K – 3 educators in teaching reading.

## Strengthening the READ Act: SB 19-199

The updates to the READ Act emphasize the importance of using evidence-based instructional practices through changes to improvement planning, external program evaluation, accountability for fund usage, and teacher training.

SB 19-199 also creates a public information campaign, increases the Early Literacy Grant program by \$2.5 million, and specifies that all students who read below grade level receive a daily literacy block for the length of time indicated by research.

### Unified Improvement Planning

- Unified improvement plans must include information about the district's reading assessments, curriculum and instructional programs, as well as their intervention services. Districts that receive per-pupil intervention funds or Early Literacy Grant program funds must also include their plans for providing professional development to teachers prior to receiving funds.

### External Evaluation

- The Colorado Department of Education must hire an outside evaluator to conduct a multiyear evaluation to measure the effectiveness of READ Act implementation in all districts. This includes the use of per-pupil funds and early literacy grant funds.

### Per-Pupil Intervention Fund Distribution and Use

- Districts must submit an annual budget and narrative prior to receiving per-pupil intervention funds.
- The allowable uses of the per-pupil intervention money expands to include purchasing CDE approved core reading instructional programs and purchasing technology, including software, to assist in assessing and monitoring student progress.
- The department is required to monitor and, if necessary, audit district use of the money throughout the budget year.
- The amount of per-pupil intervention money a district may retain from year to year is capped at 15 percent.
- Some of the READ intervention funds are redirected to the external program evaluation, state provided teacher training, public information campaign, and early literacy grant program, thereby reducing the per-pupil distribution to districts.

### K-3 Teacher Training

- Beginning with the 2021-22 school year, each district that receives per-pupil or early literacy grant funding must annually ensure that all K – 3 teachers have completed evidence-based training in teaching reading.
- Districts must submit evidence that each teacher has completed and passed an end-of-course assessment of learning in evidence-based reading training that is:
  - Included as a course in an approved educator preparation or alternate teacher program, or
  - Included as a course in a post-graduate degree program in teaching reading or literacy, or
  - Provided by CDE or included on the CDE advisory list of professional development programs, or
  - Provided by a district and is appropriate for license renewal.
- A teacher is determined to have successfully completed evidence-based training in teaching reading if the district submits evidence to CDE that the teacher passed an end-of-course assessment of learning at the completion of the training.
- The department must provide no-cost training, when requested by local education providers, on evidence-based reading instruction.
- A local education provider that is not in compliance may request a one-year extension from CDE based on a demonstration of good cause for inability to comply.