



Colorado's READ Act ([HB12-1238](#))

Ensuring K-3 students reach academic benchmarks in literacy

Overview

The Reading to Ensure Academic Development Act (READ Act), which unanimously passed the Colorado legislature in 2012, was developed with the most essential academic benchmark in mind: early literacy. The ability to read proficiently by the time students leave third grade is a widely recognized indicator of success throughout a child's remaining years in school.

Students who struggle with reading in the early grades are four times more likely to drop out of high school before graduation. The READ Act improves early literacy outcomes by identifying our state's most struggling readers in grades K-3 and offering resources to schools and families to help students reach proficiency.

READ ACT Requirements

Through early identification of reading difficulties, high-quality intervention plans, and ongoing, targeted support, Colorado students have a greater chance of reaching proficiency by the time they complete third grade.

Identify Struggling Readers

Components of the READ Act are based in research and best practices in literacy development. It requires students in grades K-3 throughout Colorado to be evaluated by their teachers in the five essential domains of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension). These are the skill areas that students must master in order to become strong readers. Students who struggle with these skills are identified as having a Significant Reading Deficiency (SRD) under the READ Act [see sidebar].

Develop READ Plans

Through the READ Act, students with a SRD receive extra supports and interventions in order to help them develop and achieve proficiency. The first step of support is the creation of a READ Plan, an individualized intervention plan developed in partnership with teachers and the child's parents or guardians. Once teachers determine the areas where a student needs the most improvement, they are required to work collaboratively with parents to implement intervention strategies.

Provide Ongoing Support

Throughout the READ Plan process, school personnel must regularly communicate with parents by providing ongoing updates about the student's progress toward achieving reading competency. As the student progresses in school, each subsequent teacher must review the READ Plan and update or revise it as necessary until the child reaches grade-level proficiency. If a student still has a SRD by the time they finish third grade, a parent or the district superintendent can choose to retain the child for another year in third grade.

What is a Significant Reading Deficiency?

Students identified with a significant reading deficiency (SRD) are the most at-risk readers—that is, they have the furthest to go to reach grade-level proficiency.

It is important to point out, however, that having a SRD does not mean that a student has a learning disability.

An example of a student with a SRD is one who does not have the literacy skills to read *The Cat in the Hat* at the end of third grade.



State Support for Effective Implementation of the READ Act

Implementing the READ Act should not to be overly burdensome to schools. In fact, the state provides extra resources to schools that identify students with SRDs and take action to develop READ Plans. In the 2015-2016 school year, districts received \$905 for each student with a SRD, which ultimately totaled \$33 million in per-pupil funds. These dollars must be spent on proven strategies to help students read proficiently, including full-day kindergarten, scientifically or evidence based interventions, summer school, and tutoring services.