

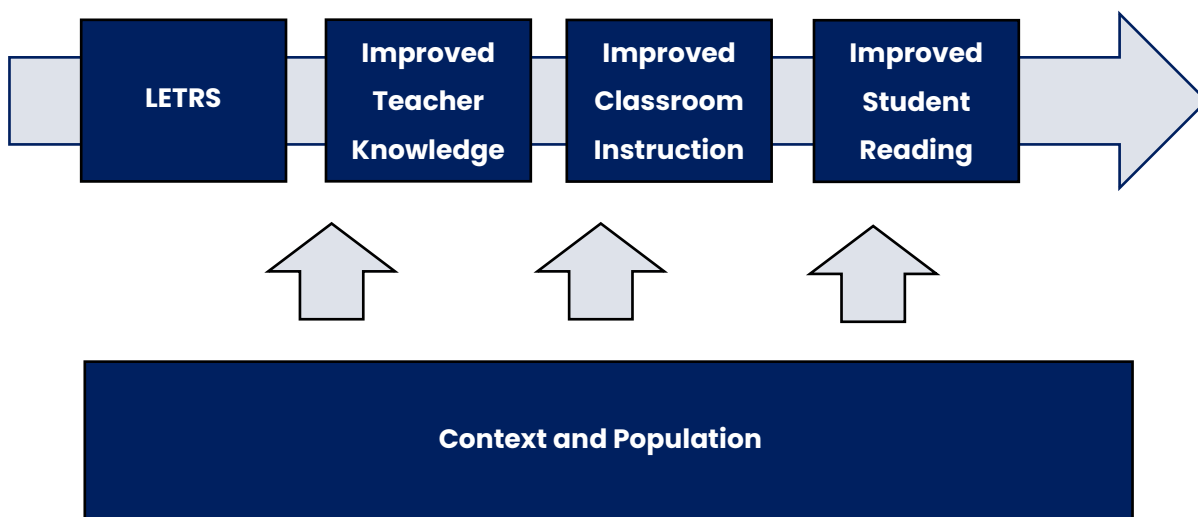
Implementation of LETRS in State-Level Initiatives



Lexia® Language Essentials for Teaching Reading and Spelling (LETRS®) is a professional learning program designed to support educators teaching children to become proficient readers. The program teaches the skills needed to master the fundamentals of reading instruction — phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, writing, and language. Educators who complete LETRS gain the deep knowledge needed to be language and literacy experts based on the science of reading. As Illustrated in the LETRS Logic Model, LETRS was developed to improve educator knowledge, instructional practice, and ultimately, student reading performance ([LETRS Logic Model](#)).

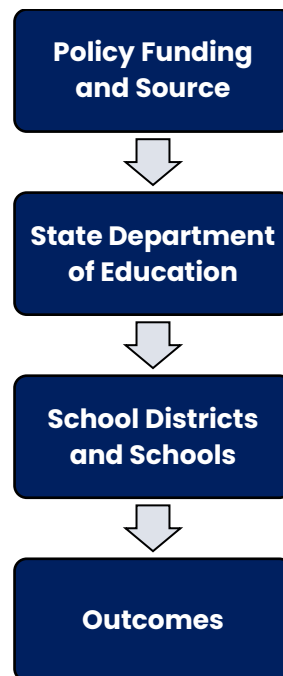
This document synthesizes and describes six state-level initiatives aimed at improving reading instruction in elementary schools through a large-scale LETRS implementation. A central goal of these initiatives was to utilize evidence-based literacy practices – In conjunction with professional development – to advance reading outcomes for children, including those with disabilities.

Abbreviated LETRS Logic Model



The initiatives summarized in this research synthesis were identified through a Google search of reports that have been published on state-level LETRS implementations. Although the reports had different purposes, their main goal was to inform federal and state funding agencies and other groups about how the initiatives were carried out and how effective they were. The reports synthesized here reflect the following initiatives: Michigan’s Reading First ([Michigan](#)), Ohio’s Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement ([Ohio](#)), Mississippi’s K-3 Early Literacy Professional Development Initiative ([Mississippi](#)), Pennsylvania Dyslexia Screening and Early Literacy Intervention Pilot Program ([Pennsylvania](#)), LETRS Implementation & Impacts in Multnomah County ([Oregon](#)), and South Carolina LETRS Training Implementation: 2023-24 ([South Carolina](#)). All reports summarized in this document were conducted by external parties, independent of Lexia.

Below, we review the steps involved in enacting a state-level LETRS initiative. The process begins with the introduction of state or federal policies, followed by efforts of state Departments of Education (DOE), school districts and schools to implement the policy. The process concludes with a policy evaluation using teacher and/or student outcome measures. For details about these steps, see the full reports (links above).



Policy and Funding Source

Implementation of state-level initiatives typically begins with the enactment of a policy or law coupled with a funding source. Two of the state-level initiatives that used LETRS made use of federal funds. The first initiative was conducted between 2002–2004 in Michigan. It drew on federal funds from the Reading First policy, which was part of the “No Child Left Behind Act.” To obtain Reading First funds, school districts were required to provide professional development for teachers and use instructional materials shown to be effective as result of scientifically based research studies.

A second federally funded initiative using LETRS occurred between 2015–2019. The State of Ohio obtained two large grants from the United States Department of Education: Comprehensive Literacy State Development grant and Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy grant. The former initiative was geared toward improving language and literacy development of children up to Grade 12. The latter Initiative focused on increasing literacy achievement for Ohio’s most vulnerable students.

In some cases, initiatives stem from a policy or law enacted by the state. The Mississippi initiative conducted in 2014–2015 was based on Mississippi’s Literacy-Based Promotion Act, which was signed into law with a goal of having every student read at/above grade level by end of Grade 3. As a result of this law, early literacy professional development was provided to all K–3 educators using LETRS.

Another example of a state-based initiative occurred in Oregon. Portland Public School District submitted a proposal to the Oregon DOE requesting use of Governor’s Emergency Education Relief (GEER II) dollars to fund an evaluation of LETRS training to improved student outcomes in reading. The proposal was accepted and LETRS was implemented during the 2022–2023 school year.

The state of South Carolina also produced legislation resulting in the implementation of LETRS training. In 2023–24 a General Appropriations Bill required the Department of Education to provide training in foundational literacy skills to every educator certified in early childhood, elementary, or special education who works with students in Grades K–3. In response to this legislation, the Lexia LETRS® Suite was selected as the professional development course for the educators.

State Department of Education (DOE)

Generally, state DOEs were responsible for overseeing the implementation of the policy initiatives. In most cases oversight included selecting or approving the professional learning program, providing educators with training, and evaluating the

effects of training on teachers and/or students. This section of the report describes how the state DOEs carried out the initiatives.

[Ohio](#). Using federal funds from the Comprehensive Literacy State Development and Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy grants, the Ohio DOE conducted an analysis of various evidence-based practices and chose LETRS as the primary professional learning program. The Ohio DOE offered professional learning sessions for two cohorts of K–3 educators, and additional LETRS training for literacy specialists and coaches. Overall, 584 educators received LETRS training. The Ohio DOE also oversaw evaluations of educator knowledge, instructional practices and student reading skills as part of the funded initiative.

[Mississippi](#). In accordance with its Literacy-Based Promotion Act, the Mississippi DOE implemented LETRS on a large-scale basis. The DOE offered trainings to all K–3 educators (teachers, literacy coaches, and administrators). Training took place in two phases – the first occurred in one academic year and the second in the next academic year. Each phase included six weeks of online coursework and three days of face-to-face workshops. Overall, LETRS training was provided to 7,638 educators. As part of the initiative, the Mississippi DOE oversaw evaluations of educator knowledge and instructional practices.

[Pennsylvania](#). The Pennsylvania Dyslexia Screening and Early Literacy Intervention Pilot Program was implemented by the Pennsylvania DOE to offer evidence-based early literacy instruction and intervention for K–2 students during the 2015–16 and 2016–17 school years. Included in the Pilot Program were efforts to support interventionists in the schools working with students who had lower levels of literacy skills. The interventionists often employed Multisensory Structured Language techniques with their students. As part of the initiative, the Pennsylvania DOE provided 160 educators with four days of LETRS training and oversaw the evaluation of student reading skills.

Oregon. The Oregon DOE utilized GEER II funds to offer LETRS training to educators in early grades. Overall, LETRS training was provided to 1,094 educators across five school districts. The Oregon DOE also used the funds to commission a third-party researcher team to conduct educator surveys and focus groups and to evaluate whether state investment in LETRS training could lead to improved student reading skills.

South Carolina. Based on a South Carolina General Appropriations Bill, the South Carolina DOE provided training in foundational literacy skills to early childhood and elementary educators and administrators. Schools were selected for training based on having high percentages of Grade 3 students performing below standards on the state English Language Arts exam. To support these schools the South Carolina DOE decided to align classroom instruction with the science of reading and offered LETRS training to its educators. LETRS training was provided to educators in 265 schools.

School Districts and Schools

This section of the report describes the roles played by school districts and schools in the context of the state-level initiatives. The main roles include establishing qualifications for training, selecting educators to participate in training, and regulating implementation of training. The roles assigned to districts and schools differed across initiatives, and in some cases, a full description of their roles were not provided in the state-level reports. The Pennsylvania report did not include substantive information about the roles assigned to districts and schools.

In Ohio, school districts and charter schools were required to submit Reading Achievement Plans to demonstrate they met criteria as low-performing schools in the areas of ELA and literacy. The selected districts and schools were then required to ensure that their K–3 educators received LETRS training as part of the initiative.

In Mississippi, schools were eligible for LETRS training if they had high percentages of students in the lowest two achievement levels on the state literacy tests. The

Mississippi DOE provided mandatory LETRS training for educators in these schools. Training was not mandatory for educators in other Mississippi schools. However, districts were directed by the Mississippi DOE to encourage educators to participate. In Michigan districts were chosen to be part of the Reading First initiative if they served students from poor families who also had low reading achievement scores. Once selected for the initiative, schools in the districts were required to provide LETRS training to their general and special education teachers.

In Oregon the five school districts chosen by the Oregon DOE offered LETRS training to educators over two years. Most educators who received LETRS training were classroom teachers. However, training was also provided to instructional coaches, speech-language pathologists and administrators. Within each district, educators were asked to respond to surveys and participate in focus groups regarding their experiences with LETRS. The educators indicated that LETRS training had given them a better understanding of the science of reading which led to enhanced application in the classroom.

In South Carolina schools were selected for LETRS training based on having high percentages of Grade 3 students performing at the “Does Not Meet” standards level on the state English Language Arts exam. LETRS training was provided to early childhood and elementary educators and administrators at these schools. As part of the initiative researchers conducted interviews and focus groups with literacy specialists and educators at the schools. It was reported that LETRS was most successful when reading coaches were an integral part of training and when administrators served as instructional leaders.

Outcomes

In terms of assessing outcomes tied to the initiatives, independent third-party researchers were hired to conduct each evaluation. Three main areas were assessed – **educator knowledge**, **instructional practice** and **student reading skills**. It should be noted there was a great deal of variability across initiatives in terms of what was

assessed. All three areas were assessed in the Ohio initiative, while in other cases only one or two areas were assessed. To our knowledge, an evaluation of South Carolina's implementation has not yet been published. The timelines for assessments also varied across initiatives. General information about timelines is described below. Overall, the assessments revealed some evidence of improvements following LETRS training. Here we highlight instances in which the initiatives were found to contribute to improved outcomes.

Educator Knowledge. Two of the initiatives – Ohio and Mississippi – included an assessment of educator knowledge. In both cases, comparisons were made in educator knowledge from before to after participating in LETRS training. The Ohio initiative showed gains in educator knowledge for both cohorts. Most notably were improvements by educators in the second cohort. Their knowledge of oral vocabulary, text-level reading comprehension and the reading-writing connection showed an increase of 14%, which was statistically significant. In Mississippi, average knowledge of early literacy skills for educators increased from the 48th to 59th percentile.

Instructional Practice. The same two initiatives – Ohio and Mississippi – included an assessment of instructional practices. In Ohio, outcomes were collected at multiple time points across four years of the initiative. Measures from Tier 1 of the Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory and its four subscales (Team, Implementation, Resources, Evaluation) were reported. For the first cohort, the Tier 1 score and all subscale scores increased from baseline across four time points. For the second cohort, the Tier 1 score and all subscale scores increased from baseline to the second timepoint. These outcomes show continued improvements in various areas of instructional practices for teachers who received LETRS training.

In Mississippi, instructional practices were assessed from before to after participating in LETRS training using the Coach's Classroom Observation Tool. Average rating of quality of instruction increased from 31st to 58th percentile. There were also increases from 37th to 53rd percentile and 30th to 44th percentile in the areas of student

engagement and teacher competencies, respectively. Overall, these findings reveal benefits of LETRS training in the classroom.

Student Reading Skills. Four of the initiatives assessed student reading skills. In Ohio, student reading skills were assessed at multiple time points. Students in primary grades showed improvements on early reading measures, which are precursors to later reading comprehension and achievement. More specifically, two cohorts of kindergartners showed increases in Phoneme Segmentation Fluency, and kindergartners in one cohort improved in Nonsense Word Fluency. For one cohort, students in Grades 1 and 2 showed increases in Oral Reading Fluency. It was also found that, for one cohort, the percentage of students with disabilities who scored proficient on Ohio's English Language Arts test improved over three years.

In Pennsylvania, measures of reading fluency were collected before and after students participated in the MSL intervention. Significant relationships were found between the amount of intervention time and fluency scores. For kindergartners, an added hour of intervention time was associated with an increase in Letter Naming Fluency in two cohorts and an increase in Nonsense Word Fluency and Phoneme Segmentation Fluency in one cohort. For students In Grade 1, an added hour of intervention time was associated with an increase in Nonsense Word Fluency.

In Michigan, student reading skills were assessed at multiple time points over two school years. It was found that students with or without a specific learning disability made significant progress in Word Attack, Listening Comprehension and Reading Comprehension in one school year, and in Oral Reading Fluency over two school years. In the case of Reading Comprehension, students with a specific learning disability made progress comparable to students without a disability.

In Oregon, student reading skills were assessed at the end of LETRS training. In one school district, it was found that students with LETRS-trained teachers were 1.7 times more likely to have scores at/above benchmark on Acadience Reading than students of non-LETRS-trained teachers. English Learners (ELs) in the district showed an even

stronger outcome. ELs with LETRS-trained teachers were 2.7 times more likely to have scores at/above benchmark than ELs of non-LETRS-trained teachers.

Conclusions

In this report we reviewed six state-level initiatives funded by federal and/or state agencies over the past 20 years in which LETRS training has been offered to educators. Evaluations of these initiatives have shown promising outcomes in terms of educator knowledge and instructional practices, as well as student reading performance. Given the continued need to bolster students' reading skills backed by the science of reading, LETRS training should be on the forefront for years to come. The more teachers who complete LETRS and apply its pedagogical tools in reading instruction, the more likely we should see improved outcomes in students.

Want to Learn More?

For additional information or updates on research, please contact research@lexialearning.com.

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