

Early Literacy Act Concept Paper: November 2011

- The proposed policy will repeal and re-enact the "Colorado Basic Literacy Act" to become the "Early Literacy Act." It will strengthen the requirements for early interventions for students in kindergarten through third grade, including the requirement that schools provide research-based, data-driven interventions that are proven to increase student literacy proficiency.
- The policy will establish a statewide standard – an obligation on the part of the Colorado Department of Education, school districts, schools, educators and parents or legal guardians – that students who display a significant reading deficiency will no longer be advanced into fourth grade, where basic reading skills are essential to continued learning and academic achievement.
- The policy will take effect beginning with the 2013 cohort of kindergartners. This policy will not impact students who are already in the educational system. Assessments will be used for all students in kindergarten through third grade to screen for reading readiness and literacy skills. Parents will be notified very early (as early as kindergarten) of a child's increased risk of having a significant literacy deficiency and will be involved in creating a plan to address it.
- Identification of a student that has a significant literacy deficiency (when in third grade) or are at-risk (when in kindergarten, first, and second grade) will be based on multiple measures, including but not limited to the new statewide literacy assessment and a student portfolio.
- Assessments will align with those being developed as part of CAP4K. The intent is to streamline assessments and make the data obtained from assessments meaningful and credible.
- Teachers and schools will develop a Reading to Ensure Academic Development (READ) plan for students who are identified as at-risk for having a severe reading deficiency. The READ plan is intended to replace the current Individual Literacy Plan (ILP), the implementation of which varies widely among districts and has not been effective in ensuring that identified students reach proficiency.
- The school will use diagnostic information to develop and implement a READ plan that will be aligned with Response to Intervention efforts, if applicable. The student must receive instruction that uses scientifically-based reading curriculum that is supported by research and must receive ongoing progress monitoring.
- If, despite early intervention and aggressive literacy efforts by the schools and parents, a student is still displaying a significant reading deficiency by the end of third grade, the student will not advance to fourth grade. The school must provide that student with enhanced literacy interventions and cannot repeat the same program the student had in third grade.
- The policy will include good cause exemptions for students based on specific criteria.
- This proposed policy will require some reexamination and reprioritization of existing state, federal, local, and private funds to support full implementation.