

JUNE 2017

# COLORADO READ ACT: *An Inside Look*

Prepared by:

RMC Research Corporation  
Tampa, Florida





### About ExcelinEd

Founded by former Florida Governor Jeb Bush, the Foundation for Excellence in Education (ExcelinEd) is igniting a movement of reform, state by state, to transform education for the 21st century economy by working with lawmakers, policymakers, educators and parents to advance education reform across America. Learn more at [ExcelinEd.org](http://ExcelinEd.org).



[ExcelinEd.org](http://ExcelinEd.org)



[@ExcelinEd](https://twitter.com/ExcelinEd)



[Facebook.com/ExcelinEd](https://Facebook.com/ExcelinEd)



### About RMC Research

With decades of experience in education, arts, humanities and healthcare, RMC Research engages with clients to measure their effectiveness and meet their goals to create opportunities for families, schools and communities. Learn more at [RMCResearchCorporation.com](http://RMCResearchCorporation.com).



[RMCResearchCorporation.com](http://RMCResearchCorporation.com)



[@RMCResearch](https://twitter.com/RMCResearch)



[Facebook.com/RMCResearchCorporation](https://Facebook.com/RMCResearchCorporation)

### Acknowledgments

The research team wishes to thank Alisa Dorman and the staff of the Colorado Department of Education, the literacy leaders of the school districts and the K-3 teachers who participated in this study.

RMC Research Corporation Research Team:

Trudy Hensley, Vice President

Sheryl Turner, Senior Research Associate

Karen Drill, Research Associate

Archie Hill, Research Associate

Diana Sharp, Research Associate

This Research was funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Annie E. Casey Foundation. We thank them for their support but acknowledge that the findings and conclusions presented in this report are those of the author(s) alone, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of these foundations.

# Reading is More than an Act

Learning to read by the end of third grade is critical for future educational success. Research shows that 88 percent of students who fail to graduate from high school were struggling readers in third grade.<sup>1</sup> The lack of a high school education has a direct negative impact on the economy, as high school dropouts make up 75 percent of citizens receiving food stamps and 90 percent of Americans on welfare.<sup>2</sup> In addition, seven out of every ten prison inmates are unable to read above a fourth-grade level.<sup>3</sup> To cut off this pipeline and ensure that all students become competent readers by the end of third grade, a number of states have passed a Comprehensive K-3 Reading Policy.

In 2012, Colorado's HB 12-1238 established the Reading to Ensure Academic Development Act (the READ Act) with the purpose of ensuring all students in Colorado read on grade level by the end of third grade. Replacing the Colorado Basic Literacy Act (CBLA), the READ Act focuses on early literacy development for all students, with special attention for students identified with a significant reading deficiency. In addition, the law:

- Requires early identification of students with significant reading deficiencies using an assessment approved by the state. Districts must report annually the number and percentage of K-3 students identified with significant reading deficiencies.
- Provides funding, based on the districts' annual reports, to support evidence-based interventions for those students most at-risk.
- Mandates that if a student is identified with a significant reading deficiency, parents are notified and engaged in the development of an individual reading improvement plan that prescribes the intervention services that will be provided to their child. The reading improvement plan is to continue until the student achieves reading competency.
- Creates a process for parents and educators to determine if an individual third grade student should advance to the next grade level, with this joint decision subject to approval of the school district superintendent beginning in the 2016-2017 school year.
- Requires that if the student does not advance to the next grade level, the district must provide more rigorous instructional services to the student in the retained year. A student can be exempt from this process with good cause exceptions that recognize the special needs of some students.
- Establishes the Early Literacy Grant program (ELG), a competitive grant designed to distribute funds to Local Education Agencies (LEAs). This grant provides LEAs with per-pupil funding for programs aimed at meeting the needs of students with a significant reading deficiency. This three-year grant took full effect during the 2014-2015 school year. During the current grant cycle, 16 grant awards were made to 30 schools in 15 districts totaling \$4 million.<sup>4</sup>

The READ Act was implemented for the first time during the 2012-2013 school year. Since the first year of implementation, many schools have seen a significant reduction in the number of students identified with a significant reading deficiency.<sup>5</sup> In fact, a recent report issued by the Colorado Department of Education found that 6,059 fewer students were identified

---

1 Annie E. Casey Foundation, [Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation](#), 2011

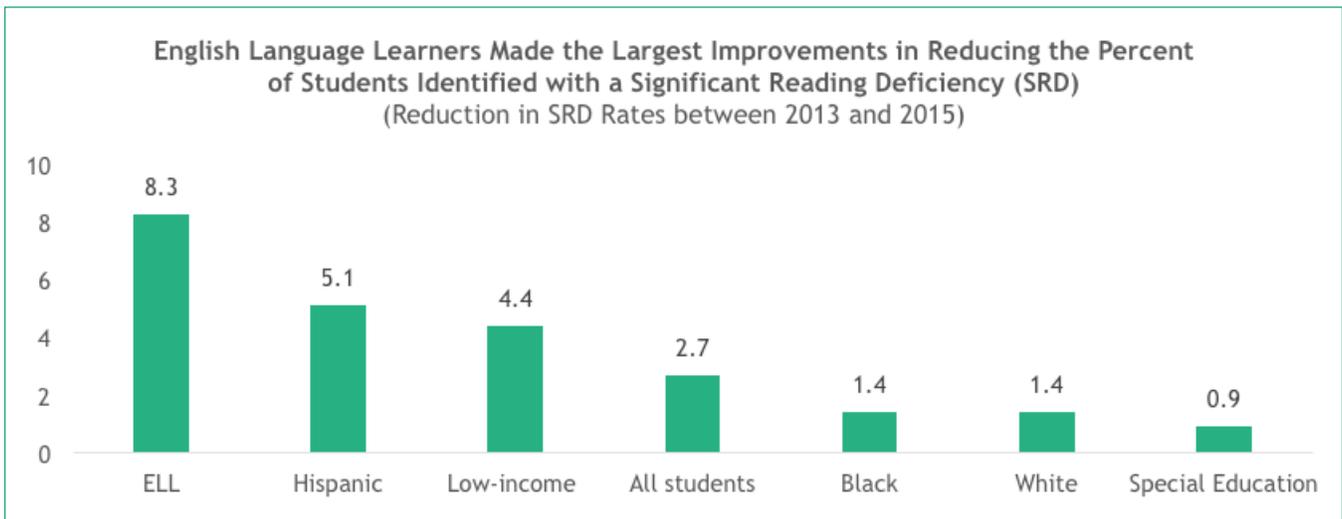
2 Begin to Read, [Literacy Statistics](#), 2014

3 National Center for Education Statistics, [National Assessment of Adult Literacy](#), 1998

4 Colorado Department of Education, [Improving Early Literacy: 2016 Annual Report on the Colorado READ Act](#), 2016

5 Colorado Succeeds, [The Colorado READ Act: An Evaluation of Implementation and Outcomes After Year One](#), 2015

with a significant reading deficiency from spring 2013 to 2015.<sup>6</sup> As displayed on the chart below, this trend has continued for many student subgroups, the largest being English Language Learners (ELLs) with an eight percentage point decrease in identification.

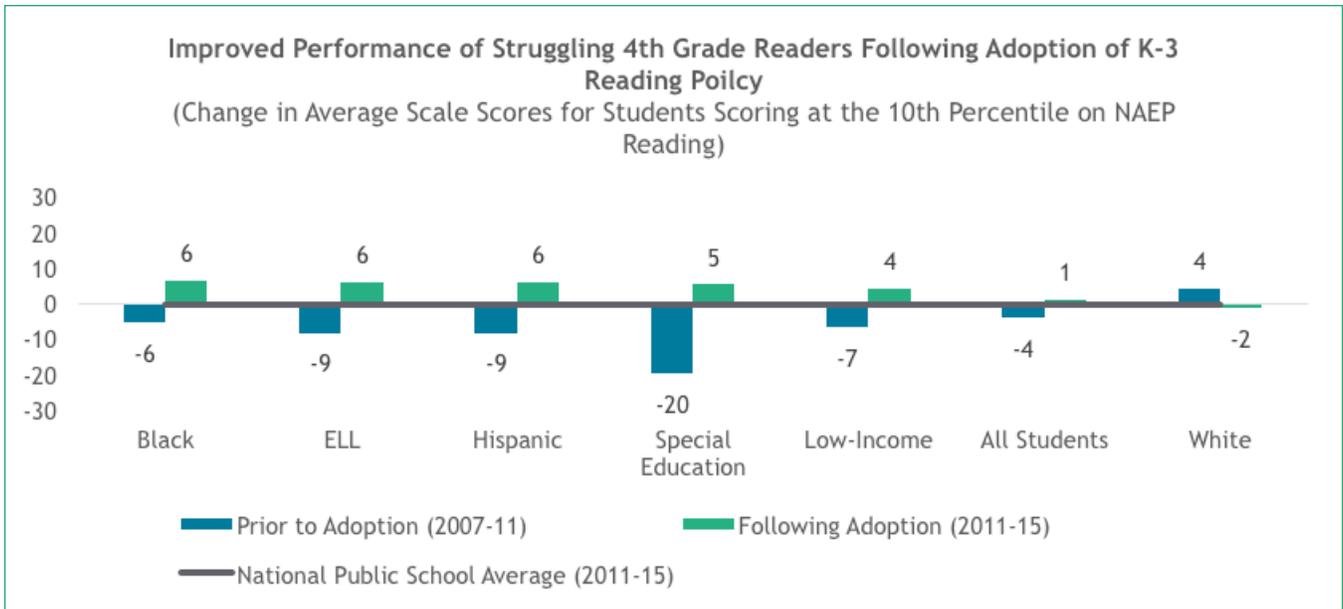


In 2014 and 2015, ELLs in Denver who received instruction in English and Spanish participated in a pilot study where they took the reading assessment in Spanish instead of English. Since a significant portion of ELLs were enrolled in Denver, this pilot program likely contributed to the decline in the state average of English Language Learners identified with a significant reading deficiency between 2013 and 2015.

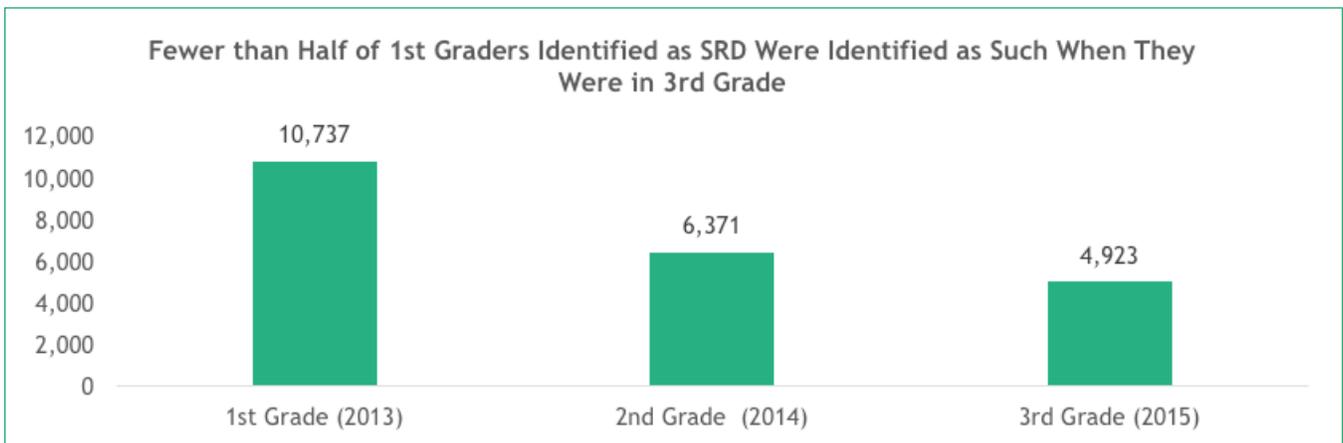
While the Denver pilot program may explain some of the decrease in the state average of ELLs being identified with a significant reading deficiency, there is evidence that the READ Act had a significant impact on the decline as well. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for fourth grade reading provides further evidence that ELLs, and almost all other subgroups, likely benefit from the READ Act. Specifically, the chart that follows shows that low-performing ELLs improved their reading performance by approximately a half a year following the adoption of the READ Act compared to losing nearly a year of learning prior to adoption. Similar results were found for other traditionally disadvantaged student groups providing evidence that the READ Act has made a significant positive impact.



6 Colorado Department of Education, [Improving Early Literacy: 2016 Annual Report on the Colorado READ Act](#), 2016



The positive impact of the READ Act is likely to continue as students with a significant reading deficiency are being identified as early as kindergarten, and they are given the resources and support needed to improve their reading skills to read on grade-level by the end of third grade. The chart below depicts performance of a cohort of students after the enactment of the READ Act over the course of first, second and third grade. Fewer than half of the first graders identified with a significant reading deficiency (SRD) were identified as such when they were in third grade.



# About This Study

ExcelinEd contracted with RMC Research Corporation to conduct a study to better understand Colorado stakeholders' perceptions of and experiences with the READ Act. The questions of interest were:

- What support strategies and technical assistance did the Colorado Department of Education and school districts provide?
- How was information about the READ Act shared with districts, schools, teachers, parents and communities?
- What recommendations do stakeholders have for improving the implementation process?
- What impact has the READ Act had on districts and schools?

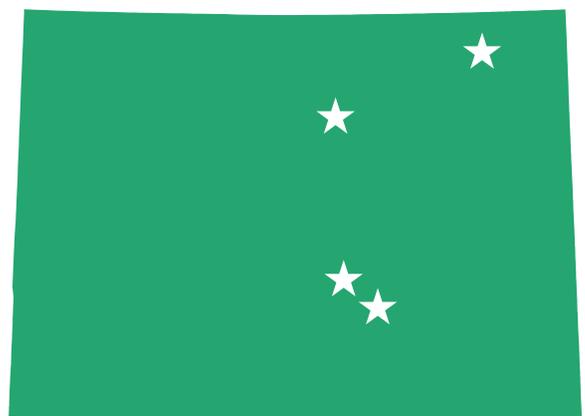
## The Sample

A purposeful sample of various stakeholders was selected for this study. The Colorado Department of Education's Executive Director of the Office of Literacy, the Lead Manager for the Early Literacy Assessment Tool Project, the Manager of Early Literacy Grants, two Senior Literacy Consultants, the READ Act Data Collection Manager and the Literacy Projects Coordinator provided a state-level view of the READ Act. In addition, 14 district-level literacy leaders related their experiences in implementing the READ Act across schools in their respective district. A total of 219 K-3 teachers in four districts provided their perceptions of the READ Act implementation in classrooms.

To identify school districts to participate in this study, state assessment data of third grade students were collected and analyzed prior to the implementation of the READ Act and for the two years after implementation. School districts were selected to participate in the study based on these primary criteria:

- Decrease in the percent of third grade students scoring at the lowest achievement level on the state assessment.
- Increase in the percent of third grade students scoring at or above grade level on the state assessment.
- Participation of at least 100 third grade students in the state assessment.

After identifying a pool of eligible districts, the researchers consulted with the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to assist in selecting districts that had experienced stable leadership since enactment of the READ Act and represented a mix of rural and urban locations. Four school districts were selected and agreed to participate in interviews with the research team. The districts also agreed to disseminate an online survey to their K-3 teachers.



## The Methodology

Colorado Department of Education staff members were asked a series of questions about the structure of state-level support and strategies, state-level communication strategies, impacts of the legislation and recommendations for other states that may enact similar legislation. An interview with key state leaders and a focus group with additional staff members were conducted as 90-minute, face-to-face sessions. The protocol for the key state staff interview is located in Appendix A; the protocol for the focus group is located in Appendix B. One RMC Research team member facilitated the sessions, and another RMC Research team member took notes. All sessions were recorded and transcribed.

The interviews of the district-level literacy leaders were conducted via conference calls. RMC Research team members followed the same procedures as in the state sessions. The protocol for the district interviews is located in Appendix C.

Following the district interviews, the district literacy leader disseminated an electronic link to a teacher survey to all K-3 teachers in the district. The survey contained both Likert-scale statements and open-ended questions. A copy of the survey is located in Appendix D.

The interviews and focus group data were reviewed and analyzed immediately after each event. Notes were reviewed in relation to the recorded transcription. Themes and patterns were identified. Summaries were reviewed by two RMC Research team members for accuracy.

The teacher surveys were aggregated across the four school districts. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize teachers' responses to the Likert-scale statements. The two open-ended questions were analyzed for emerging themes and patterns.

## Research Findings

The information gleaned from stakeholders at the state, district and school levels provides a glimpse into the changes that have occurred since the READ Act was implemented in Colorado schools. The findings are organized by:

- the state organizational structure and strategies that provide support to schools and districts,
- the practices in districts that support the READ Act,
- perceptions of the impact that the READ Act has made on education in Colorado and
- recommendations that Colorado educators wish to share with others.



### Data Sources

Face-to-face interview with two key Colorado Department of Education leaders

Focus group of five Colorado Department of Education staff

Telephone interviews with 14 literacy leaders in four districts

Online survey of 219 K-3 teachers in four districts

## State Support Strategies for the READ Act

After the READ Act legislation passed in 2012, the Office of Literacy was created to support the policy's requirements. Initially, the office included an Executive Director, Assistant Director and five regional field staff. Over time, the office has grown to 10 full-time staff and 2 part-time staff. The Office of Literacy administers and supports the two funding components of the READ Act: the Early Literacy Fund and the Early Literacy Grant. The Early Literacy Fund provides districts with per-pupil funding to meet the needs of students identified with a significant reading deficiency. The Early Literacy Grant program is a competitive grant designed to distribute funds to local education agencies to ensure the implementation of scientifically based reading research in all aspects of K-3 literacy instruction, including universal, targeted and intensive interventions.

In addition to these funding streams in the READ Act, the 2012 School Finance Act provided funds to support the Early Literacy Assessment Tool (ELAT) project to purchase a READ Act assessment on a mobile platform. Through a competitive bid process, the contract was awarded in 2013 to Amplify for its DIBELS Next Assessment system. Participation in the ELAT project has increased each year, and almost 50 percent of K-3 students statewide are being assessed in this system.

After the READ Act was passed, the Office of Literacy began creating guidance documents to distinguish how the READ Act differed from the Colorado Basic Literacy Act. Regional meetings were held, and the feedback from stakeholders influenced the development of these guidance documents. The content includes guidance on the requirements of the new legislation, professional development on the assessment system and information on scientifically based or evidence-based instructional practices. The state spent the first two years focusing on assessments. State staff created documents and provided technical support detailing how to administer assessments, the timelines for assessments, the meaning of assessment data, how to identify at-risk students and what to do once students have been identified. The districts in this study commented that the guidance documents were "right on," "helpful," "very useful," "well-thought out" and "broke down the law and what it means."

The state hired Regional Consultants who "onboarded people" to the READ Act. This was helpful in getting districts and schools to implement the required elements of the READ Act. The Regional Consultants adopted a partnership approach intended to strengthen practices that were already in place. They responded to questions about READ plans, increased stakeholders' knowledge about the legislation, conducted training for teachers, supported data analyses, conducted instructional walk-throughs to identify areas for support and helped schools "get on the right path." The Regional Consultants commented that the reading coaches in rural districts tended to be the ones who reached out most often. Typically, these coaches had fewer resources and support systems available, primarily because of their district's size and remoteness.

The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) provided targeted professional development on literacy foundation skills to teachers across the state. The CDE selected a publisher to create a K-3 course tied to standards in comprehension and trained about 20 trainers to facilitate the course. In the first year, more than 900 teachers received the training. Nearly 500 teachers were trained in the second year. Additional professional development was offered through a free conference, termed the READING Conference. In 2015, READING Conference registration was capped at 350 spaces and was filled within two weeks. In 2016, the number of spaces was increased to 600 seats, which were filled within two weeks. The focus of the READING Conference is research-based reading instruction, interventions and assessments.



We [Regional Consultants] see coaches in rural districts as the keepers of knowledge...we feed them so they can feed their staff.

CO Regional Consultant

The READ Act calls for the CDE to create an advisory list of assessments, instructional programming and professional development programs. Schools that receive funding through the Early Literacy Grant are required to use instructional programs from the advisory list. Seven English and three Spanish interim assessment tools provide options for identifying students most at-risk. Instructional practices for English Language Learners have been part of the ongoing discussion regarding student progression through the grades. Many districts have options for dual-language, bilingual instruction and transitional language programs. Throughout the development of the advisory list, the CDE involved stakeholders in programmatic decisions.

Perhaps the most difficult challenge that the Office of Literacy has faced in implementing the requirements of the READ Act is the knowledge gap about research on how to intervene with young readers. Many schools assume that a commercial program will be a complete intervention package for all students. Or, some schools try to create their own intervention supports. Many teachers, in general, leave their degree programs unprepared and may not be getting the professional development at their schools to learn how to deliver interventions. And often, the role of interventionist is not given to the most highly qualified staff member.

## District Support Strategies for the READ Act

The four school districts that participated in this study enthusiastically embraced the tenets of the READ Act. They applied for and received an Early Literacy Grant and received the ELAT funds. One district staff member remarked, “Our district goal is to never just satisfy the letter of the law, but to go above and beyond.” This section gives a summary of practices in these districts that led to their successful implementation of the READ Act.

**Human capital resources.** The school districts invested in creating district- and school-level organizational structures to support teachers. For example, one district has a Literacy Coordinator who facilitates district-wide professional development training events and is the point person for the READ Act. Another district created a Literacy Team to manage the implementation of the READ Act across schools. At the school level, the most valued positions are the interventionists and the literacy coordinators/coaches. Some districts leverage funds, such as Title I, to create these positions. Interventionists collaborate closely with the classroom teachers to integrate intervention with classroom instruction. Literacy coordinators/coaches model lessons and conduct walk-throughs. They usually meet monthly, or more often, with district office staff to build their knowledge and coaching skills. Professional learning communities are formed to “share ideas, strategies, frustrations and solutions so they can go back and be a leader in the building.” About 75 percent of the teachers who responded to the survey indicated that their reading coach helps them improve their reading instruction.

Some districts schedule time for teachers to participate in weekly grade-level collaborations, which help to ensure data are being used to identify student needs and plan for effective instruction and interventions. In one district, tutoring funds are used to provide additional support to students with reading difficulties.



We have been sensitive to respect local control and district options to decide the best programming.

CO Department of Education Staff



[Coaches] provide a pipeline of contact for everyone.

CO District Staff

There is strong agreement among teachers, as noted by the following survey items and percentages, that they are receiving support from state, district and school levels.

- I receive adequate support from my school administration. (80%)
- I receive adequate support that helps me analyze student assessment data and make instructional decisions. (78%)
- I receive adequate support from the school district and/or Colorado Department of Education. (74%)

**Timely communication.** Districts responded that the CDE communications they received were useful in communicating with administrators and teachers and, to a lesser extent, parents. Districts and schools have employed a variety of strategies to inform parents of the implications of the READ Act. Schools hold literacy nights and provide parents with resources; teachers make phone calls and conduct one-on-one conferences; and letters are sent to parents of students before they receive intervention services and after students successfully exit intervention status. One district takes the approach that the earlier communication begins, the better. They begin the year with a meeting of kindergarten students’ parents so they are aware of the READ Act. All four districts agree that face-to-face meetings between the teacher and the parents are the most effective strategy. As one district staff said, “That is why we invest heavily in communication with our teachers. They are the best resource for speaking with the parent.”

**Data-based decisions.** These districts credit ELAT funding for making assessments easier, more frequent and more useful. The assessments have helped them to be more intentional with identifying students’ weaknesses and to monitor progress toward getting students “back on track.” Through the ELAT funding source, the districts receive assessment materials, an online platform and training from the state on implementation. The districts receive support through a state-selected vendor and participate in weekly or monthly calls when they need help. The professional development and mentoring that teachers receive increases their knowledge about looking at data and planning instruction based on data. Teachers and coaches can attend summer trainings or online training. The districts review data three times a year and can compare their results to similar cohorts across the nation. District leaders described the assessment support as the “biggest bang for the buck.” Because of the assessments, teachers are aware of students’ data points, have ownership of the data and know where their students are struggling and succeeding. The data have increased the conversations about literacy among teachers and school leaders.



The READ Act shifted assessment from a compliance practice to a more useful, thoughtful practice.

CO District Staff

## Impact of the READ Act

Study participants were asked about the impact of the legislation on areas other than student outcomes. Their responses primarily related to the improvement of teacher knowledge and skills.

**State perspectives.** State staff responded that since the READ Act has been implemented, there has been a shift in teacher knowledge and their skills toward being proactive about students’ reading development, instead of reactive. The READ Act has raised awareness of the importance of early literacy skills and the importance of early monitoring of student instructional needs. Colorado has also changed its licensure procedures for preservice teachers. The licensure rules were revised to include teacher knowledge of the READ Act, including knowledge about scientifically based and evidence-based practices for supporting students’ reading development.

**District perspectives.** District staff members agreed that the READ Act has increased teachers' understanding of literacy and the importance of using data to systematically plan instruction to meet the needs of all students. The districts are now more intentional about progress monitoring and providing interventions to students who are struggling. They also are including and informing parents on an ongoing basis.

**Teacher perspectives.** Many teacher survey respondents indicated that the greatest impact of the READ Act has been in their own professional growth. More than half of the teachers responded that the professional development they received improved their knowledge of and skill in these areas:

- Understanding research-based reading instruction (59%)
- Providing effective interventions (58%)
- Using assessments to drive instruction (63%)

While many teachers indicated that they were more skilled in providing effective interventions, there is still a need to provide additional professional development in that area. Almost a third of teachers requested additional professional development and training in providing effective interventions.

When asked the open-ended question, “From your perspective, what are the most positive aspects of the READ Act?” almost half of the teachers mentioned the help that struggling readers receive. About a fourth of teachers provided comments on the value of the assessments and use of data. And, about a fourth of teachers indicated that communications with parents are improved because of the READ Act.

The following teacher responses further highlight the benefits of the READ Act at the classroom level:

“Our testing gives us a good indication of where to begin with each student and [helps us] help struggling readers right away when school begins.”

“We are more intentionally tracking student progress.”

“The parent communication piece is wonderful.”

“It keeps struggling readers on the radar and helps with communication with parents about the child’s needs.”

“These prescribed interventions move students!”

“I believe we are more focused now. Our school looks at data in a more purposeful manner.”



## Lessons Learned From Colorado Educators

Based on their experiences with the READ Act, Colorado’s literacy leaders at the state and district level, along with classroom teachers, provided constructive advice for legislators, state departments of education, district leaders and schools in other states that may be considering similar literacy initiatives.

### Recommendations to Legislators, State Departments of Education and District Leaders

#### Prepare successful legislation

- ✔ Distribute funds through competitive grants to ensure accountability and strengthen buy in. The grant districts and schools have achieved greater impact.
- ✔ Mandate requirements or use stronger language than “advisory list” and “encourage use” in the legislation. While such language is intended to respect local control, the vagueness can be challenging from an implementation perspective. Having one common assessment allows for more consistent progress monitoring.
- ✔ Create opportunities for dialogue between the Department of Education and legislators to talk about pitfalls and successes.
- ✔ Be proactive. Put a positive, not punitive, spin on the legislation.

#### Consider next steps and extensions of the legislation

- ✔ Keep the focus on the lowest-performing readers, but also include students who are marginally at-risk, just above the cutoff or have learning disabilities, such as dyslexia.
- ✔ Align preservice programs with the requirements of the READ Act so new teachers are better prepared.

#### Plan for implementation

- ✔ “Go slow to go fast.” Take time to gain buy-in. Use the first year to learn so changes can be made the following year.
- ✔ Set a three-year goal, map backward and be transparent about what is coming. Make sure to develop realistic timelines.
- ✔ Instead of adding on, be thoughtful about how the legislation can complement programs that are already part of the system. Determine if there are ineffective programs that should be discontinued.
- ✔ Find the balance between compliance monitoring and support for implementation.
- ✔ Provide the time and resources for trainings to explain the legislation and to provide teachers with effective literacy instructional practices.

#### Ensure funding for critical components and support

- ✔ Continue funding the Early Literacy Assessment Tool Project (ELAT) and the state-level support for assessments.
- ✔ Fund a state-level project coordinator who is the “go-to” person to assist districts in implementing the legislation.
- ✔ Continue funding to support students who have significant reading deficiencies.
- ✔ Continue funding personnel such as the literacy consultants, interventionists and literacy coaches who are available to model instructional practices and support teachers in their continued professional learning.
- ✔ Provide more funding for opportunities like the READing Conference and other professional development opportunities to increase teacher knowledge and skills.

#### Develop distributed leadership

- ✔ Create a district team that knows “the ins and outs,” has taken time to understand the legislation and respects teachers’ knowledge and contributions.
- ✔ Invest time, effort and energy into building leadership. Have enough “leadership density” at the building level to get traction.
- ✔ Provide more leadership training for district leaders, principals and teacher leaders.

## Summary

Colorado’s READ Act legislation was enacted to ensure that all students are reading at or above grade level by the end of third grade. Reaching that goal requires collaboration, coordination and concerted efforts of all stakeholders—the Colorado Department of Education, school districts, classroom teachers, families and communities. This study investigated the perceptions of stakeholders who have insight into the successes and challenges that Colorado educators have encountered in pursuit of the READ Act vision.

Overall, perceptions of the participants in this study are positive toward the READ Act. The Colorado Department of Education and districts are seeing results in the improvement of teacher knowledge and skills and their ability to identify struggling readers. It is important to note that the districts and schools that participated in this study received grant funding to implement the legislation. Thus, their results and perceptions may differ from other districts who did not receive assessment grants and additional support through professional development to enable them to more fully implement the intent of the READ Act. Full implementation of all the components of the READ Act is ongoing. There are still questions surrounding the scheduling of interventions and which intervention strategies are most effective. Teachers are requesting additional professional development and guidance in meeting student needs. And, districts are struggling to fund positions they deem necessary to ensure that all students are being successful.



A photograph of two women sitting in chairs and talking. The woman on the left has long dark hair and is wearing a dark top with a patterned scarf. The woman on the right is smiling and wearing a dark top and jeans. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter. The word "APPENDICES" is written in white, bold, uppercase letters in the lower-left quadrant of the image.

# APPENDICES

# Appendix A: State Literacy Leader Interview

## Moderator Introduction

Good [morning/afternoon/evening]. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and this is my colleague \_\_\_\_\_. We are with RMC Research Corporation. As you know, RMC is collecting information on the Colorado READ Act for a study being conducted by the Foundation for Excellence in Education, headquartered in Tallahassee, Florida.

For our study, we will be gathering the perceptions of state education leaders like you about a range of policies related to reading instruction in kindergarten through third grade. We will also be gathering the perceptions of SEA staff members whom you have identified, and later, district literacy leaders and teachers. The information that we gather and analyze will be summarized in a report. Your input is extremely valuable for this project and for determining future research projects in this area.

We will have 90 minutes for our discussion. [name] will be taking notes and will be responsible for keeping us on track with the suggested times. I will be facilitating our discussion. We ask that you make your comments as concise as possible and as directly focused on the topic as possible. This will help us make the best use of our limited time.

While your comments will not be directly linked to your name, because you are the state literacy leader, your comments cannot be considered anonymous. We will be audio recording this session, but the recording will only be used by RMC Research Corporation staff for this project and will not be shared with any other organization. Do you have any questions before we begin?

## Agenda

Topic Area	Time
1. Structure of State-Level Support	10 minutes
2. State-Level Support Strategies	45 minutes
3. State-Level Communication Strategies	15 minutes
4. Recommendations	15 minutes
5. Impacts of the Legislation	5 minutes

## Interview Questions

### Topic Area 1: Structure of State-Level Support

1.1. After the passage of Read to Achieve, describe the organizational structure (or office) that was tasked to support the implementation of the legislation and how this structure facilitated implementation of the legislation.

- If this structure existed prior to the legislation: What changes were made to the structure to facilitate implementation of the legislation?

1.2. In what ways do you think this structure has been effective in implementing the legislation and promoting student reading achievement?

### Topic Area 2: State-Level Support Strategies

2.1. After passage of the legislation, what guidance did the state provide to districts and schools to help all K-3 students read at grade level? What formats and dissemination methods did you use? Were some formats and methods more effective than others?

2.2. Describe the technical assistance that the state provided to districts, schools and reading coaches. How effective do you think the assistance has been?

2.3. Describe the professional development support that the state provided to K-3 teachers and reading coaches. How effective has this professional development been in increasing knowledge and skills in reading instruction?

2.4. What guidance did the state provide to districts and schools in selecting instructional resources (e.g., research-based textbooks, software and other materials)?

2.5. What is the state's role in providing K-3 reading assessments, such as screeners, progress monitoring tools, diagnostic assessments and summative assessments? How successful has this been?

2.6. How do you support and provide guidance to help schools intensify interventions for K-3 students identified with a reading deficiency? Students retained in third grade? Students in English language programs? What are the challenges you encountered and how did you address them?

2.7. Which of the state-provided supports—including guidance, technical assistance, professional development, instructional resources, assessment systems and interventions support—do you believe have been the most helpful to districts and schools in implementing the requirements in the legislation to improve student reading achievement? Why do you think that?

### **Topic Area 3: State-Level Communication Strategies**

- 3.1. What strategies were used to inform different stakeholders, including parents, about the new legislation?
- 3.2. What did the state do to help districts and schools communicate with parents about the reading performance of K-3 students having reading difficulties?
- 3.3. Since passage of the legislation, what strategies have been used to raise public awareness of literacy statewide?
- 3.4. How would you describe the effectiveness of all of these communication strategies? Which strategies were most successful and why?

### **Topic Area 4: Recommendations**

- 4.1. What advice would you want to share with other state departments if they are charged with implementing similar legislation?
- 4.2. How could lawmakers continue to support you in reaching the goals of this legislation?

### **Topic Area 5: Impacts of the Legislation**

- 5.1. What impact has the legislation had on other areas in your state, such as Pre-K and preservice education?
- 5.2. Is there anything else you want to tell us about how this legislation has impacted your state?

## **Closing**

This concludes our questions for this interview. As we noted earlier, our purpose for this interview was to gather your perceptions about a range of policies related to reading instruction in kindergarten through third grade.

Do you have any final questions for us?

Thank you again for your participation.

# Appendix B: Key SEA Staff Members Focus Group

## Moderator Introduction

Good [morning/afternoon/evening]. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and this is my colleague \_\_\_\_\_. We are with RMC Research Corporation. RMC is collecting information on the Colorado READ Act for a study requested by the Foundation for Excellence in Education, headquartered in Tallahassee, Florida.

Before we start, I want to thank you for participating in this focus group and sharing your perceptions.

For our study, we will be gathering the perceptions of key SEA staff members about a range of policies related to reading instruction in kindergarten through third grade. We will also be gathering the perceptions of your state literacy leader, district literacy leaders and teachers. The information that we gather and analyze will be summarized in a report. Your input is extremely valuable for this project and for determining future research projects in this area.

We have 90 minutes for our discussion. [name] will be taking notes and will be responsible for keeping us on track with the suggested times and ensuring that everyone has a chance to share their comments. I will be facilitating our discussion. We ask that you make your comments as concise as possible and as directly focused on the topic as possible. This will help us make the best use of our limited time.

Your comments will be confidential, and no names will be used. All of your responses will be summarized and reported anonymously. We will be audio recording this session, but the recording will only be used by RMC Research Corporation staff for this project and will not be shared with any other organization. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Let's begin by sharing your names and your roles at the agency. Would you [point to person] like to start for us?

## Agenda

Topic Area	Time
1. Structure of State-Level Support	10 minutes
2. State-Level Support Strategies	45 minutes
3. State-Level Communication Strategies	10 minutes
4. Recommendations	15 minutes
5. Impacts of the Legislation	10 minutes

## Focus Group Questions

### Topic Area 1: Structure of State-Level Support

1.1. What are your perceptions about the organizational structure (or office) that was tasked to support the implementation of the legislation? How has this structure facilitated implementation of the legislation and promoted student reading achievement?

### Topic Area 2: State-Level Support Strategies

2.1. How effective was the SEA guidance in helping schools and districts understand the new legislation?

2.2. What are some of the challenges and successes you experienced in providing technical assistance to districts, schools and reading coaches to support implementation of the legislation?

2.3. What professional development do you provide? How is it delivered? How effective do you feel the professional development has been in ensuring all K-3 teachers have the knowledge and skills to teach reading to all students, including students with severe reading difficulties?

2.4. What successes have you experienced in providing support to reading coaches?

2.5. What challenges have you experienced in providing support to reading coaches?

2.6. What key resources provided by the state to districts and schools have been most valuable and why?

2.7. How have the K-3 reading assessments (e.g., screeners, progress monitoring tools, diagnostics and summative assessments) implemented in schools and districts made a difference?

2.8. What are the successes you have experienced in supporting schools to implement K-3 interventions and to intensify those interventions for students retained in third grade?

2.9. What challenges have you experienced in supporting schools to implement K-3 interventions and to intensify those interventions for students retained in third grade?

2.10. Which of your state-provided supports—including guidance, technical assistance, professional development, assessment systems, instructional resources and interventions support—do you believe have been the most helpful to districts and schools in implementing the requirements in the legislation? Why do you think that?

### Topic Area 3: State-Level Communication Strategies

3.1. How would you describe the effectiveness of the state’s communication strategies to inform different stakeholders, including parents, about the legislation and awareness of literacy?

### Topic Area 4: Recommendations

4.1. What advice would you want to share with your same-role peers in other state departments if they are charged with implementing similar legislation?

4.2. How could lawmakers continue to support your work in reaching the goals of this legislation?

## Topic Area 5: Impacts of the Legislation

5.1. Is there anything else you want to tell us about how this legislation has impacted schools and districts in your state?

## Closing

This concludes our questions for this focus group. As we noted earlier, our purpose was to gather the perceptions of state education staff like you about a range of policies related to reading instruction in kindergarten through third grade.

Does anyone have any final questions for us?

Thank you again for your participation in this focus group.

# Appendix C: District Literacy Leader Interview (via telephone)

## Moderator Introduction

Good [morning/afternoon/evening]. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and on the phone with me is my colleague \_\_\_\_\_. We are with RMC Research Corporation. RMC, in partnership with the Foundation for Excellence in Education, is conducting a study on the Colorado READ Act. The Colorado Department of Education agreed to participate in the study and recommended your district for this interview.

Before we start, I want to thank you for participating in this telephone interview and sharing your perceptions.

For our study, we will be gathering the perceptions of district literacy leaders and teachers and key SEA staff members about a range of practices related to reading instruction in kindergarten through third grade since the enactment of Colorado READ. The information that we gather and analyze will be summarized in a report. Your input is extremely valuable for this project and for determining future research projects in this area.

We have 90 minutes for our discussion. [name] will be taking notes and will be responsible for keeping us on track with the suggested times and ensuring that we cover all the questions. I will be facilitating our discussion. We ask that you make your comments as concise as possible and as directly focused on the topic as possible. This will help us make the best use of our limited time.

Your comments will be confidential, and no names will be used. Your responses will be summarized and reported anonymously. We will be audio recording this session, but the recording will only be used by RMC Research Corporation staff for this project and will not be shared with any other organization. Do you have any questions before we begin?

## Agenda

Topic Area	Time
1. State-Level Support Strategies	10 minutes
2. District-Level Support Strategies	45 minutes
3. District-Level Communication Strategies	10 minutes
4. Recommendations	15 minutes
5. Impacts of the Legislation	10 minutes

## Interview Questions

### Topic Area 1: State-Level Support Strategies

- 1.1. How effective was the SEA guidance in helping schools and districts understand the new legislation?
- 1.2. What types of technical assistance did the state provide to districts and schools, and how effective was it in helping the teachers implement the legislation?
- 1.3. How did the professional development provided by the state increase district leaders' knowledge and skills in literacy? Coaches' literacy knowledge and skills? Teachers' literacy knowledge and skills?
- 1.4. What key resources did the state provide to districts and schools? Which have been the most valuable and why?

### Topic Area 2: District-Level Support Strategies

- 2.1. Did your district provide guidelines or guidance documents in addition to the state-issued guidance documents? If so, what were the particular areas of the legislation that the district needed to clarify further?
- 2.2. What are some of the challenges and successes that your district experienced in providing technical assistance to schools to support implementation of the legislation?
- 2.3. In addition to state-provided professional development for K-3 teachers and school-based literacy leaders, what professional development do you provide? How is it delivered? How effective do you feel the professional development has been in ensuring all K-3 teachers have the knowledge and skills to teach reading to all students, including students with severe reading difficulties?
- 2.4. How does your district support school-based literacy leaders? What successes have you experienced in providing support to literacy leaders?
- 2.5. What challenges have you experienced in providing this support to school-based literacy leaders?
- 2.6. How are your school-based literacy leaders supporting teachers? What strategies are most successful?
- 2.7. What key resources, in addition to those provided by the state, has your district provided to schools that have been most valuable and why?
- 2.8. How have the K-3 reading assessments (e.g., screeners, progress monitoring tools, diagnostics and summative assessments) implemented in schools and districts made a difference?
- 2.9. What are the successes you have experienced in supporting schools to implement K-3 interventions and to intensify those interventions for students retained in third grade?
- 2.10. What challenges have you experienced in supporting schools to implement K-3 interventions and to intensify those interventions for students retained in third grade?
- 2.11. Which of your district-provided supports—including guidance, technical assistance, professional development, assessment systems, instructional resources and interventions support—do you believe have been the most helpful to schools in implementing the requirements in the legislation? Why do you think that?

### **Topic Area 3: District-Level Communication Strategies**

3.1. How would you describe the effectiveness of the state’s communication strategies to inform different stakeholders, including parents, about the legislation and awareness of literacy?

3.2 What communication strategies did your district employ to inform different stakeholders, including parents, about the legislation and awareness of literacy? Which strategies do you think were most effective and why?

### **Topic Area 4: Recommendations**

4.1. What advice would you want to share with literacy leaders in other districts and states if they are charged with implementing similar legislation?

4.2. How could the state department of education continue to support your work in reaching the goals of this legislation?

4.3. How could lawmakers continue to support your work in reaching the goals of this legislation?

### **Topic Area 5: Impacts of the Legislation**

5.1. What changes in your district and schools can be attributed to the implementation of this legislation?

5.2 Is there anything else you want to tell us about how this legislation has impacted schools and your district?

## **Closing**

This concludes our questions for this interview. As we noted earlier, our purpose was to gather the perceptions of district literacy leaders like you about a range of policies related to reading instruction in kindergarten through third grade.

Do you have any final questions for us?

Thank you again for your participation in this interview.

## Appendix D: Teacher Survey

This survey is part of a study of the Colorado READ Act initiative. Your responses are voluntary and will be reported only in combination with responses of other teachers from across the state. Please answer the questions in relation to the READ Act initiative.

This survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Thank you – we value your input.

**Scale: Strongly Agree - Somewhat Agree - Somewhat Disagree - Strongly Disagree - N/A.**

1. I received adequate support from my school district and/or the Colorado Department of Education that assisted me in implementing the READ Act.
2. I received adequate support from my school administration that assisted me in implementing the READ Act.
3. I receive adequate support that helps me analyze student assessment data and make instructional decisions based on the data.
4. My reading coach provides support that helps me improve my reading instruction.
5. I received information and guidance documents that increased my knowledge of the requirements of the READ Act.
6. The READ Act guidance documents provided information that was useful to me.
7. The professional development that I received from my school district and/or the Colorado Department of Education improved my knowledge of and skill in research-based reading instruction.
8. The professional development that I received from my school district and/or the Colorado Department of Education improved my knowledge of and skill in providing effective interventions.
9. The professional development that I received from my school district and/or the Colorado Department of Education improved my knowledge of and skill with assessments and their use to drive instruction.
10. The READ Act assessments that we use help me improve my instruction to meet the needs of all students.
11. The third grade summer reading camp is achieving the purpose of accelerating reading progress for struggling readers.
12. Because of the READ Act initiative, my school has provided increased learning time for struggling readers.
13. Because of the READ Act initiative, I have changed my instructional practices to teach reading to all students, including students with severe reading difficulties.
14. The READ Act initiative has a positive impact on improving K-3 reading outcomes in my school.
15. The READ Act initiative has helped me identify and address reading difficulties early.
16. The READ Act initiative was communicated to parents in a way that was easy for them to understand.
17. Since implementation of the READ Act initiative, my school has increased its efforts to engage parents of struggling readers in a timely fashion.

18. I support the READ Act requirement to eliminate social promotion to help ensure struggling readers get the time they need with intensive interventions to be successful in fourth grade and beyond.

**Open Ended:**

19. From your perspective, what are the most positive aspects of the READ Act?
20. What advice do you have to improve the implementation of the READ Act?

Please indicate the school district in which you teach. (list of four districts)

