

JULY 2017

NEVADA READ BY GRADE THREE: *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.



ExcelinEd.org



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



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.



RMCResearchCorporation.com



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



Facebook.com/RMCResearchCorporation

Acknowledgments

The research team wishes to thank Kevin Marie Laxalt, Tabetha Haley and staff of the Nevada Department of Education; the literacy leaders of the four 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

Archie Hill, Research Associate

Diana Sharp, Research Associate

Clarissa Hernandez, Administrative Assistant

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.

A Successful Future for Every Child

Learning to read by the end of third grade is the gateway to lifelong success. When students are not able to read by the end of third grade, their risk of falling behind grows exponentially. In fact, research shows that nearly 90 percent of high school dropouts were struggling readers in third grade, and below-basic readers are almost six times more likely than proficient readers to not finish high school on time.¹ In order to address this issue 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, including Nevada.

In 2015, Nevada's SB 391 established the Read by Three Act under the leadership of Governor Brian Sandoval and Senator Becky Harris. The Read by Three Act, now called Read by Grade Three, is a comprehensive reading law aimed at ensuring all students read on grade level by the end of third grade. Read by Grade Three focuses on early literacy development for all students, with special attention for students identified with a significant reading deficiency. In addition, the law requires:

- An early literacy assessment system in kindergarten through grade three that is valid and reliable.
- Identification of students with reading difficulties and intensive intervention for those students in the early grades.
- Parent notification each year, kindergarten through third grade, if the child is not reading on grade level.
- Progress monitoring plans for students identified with a reading deficiency, which prescribe the interventions that the school will provide to address their reading needs. The plans must be approved by the parents.
- Teachers are provided with support from Learning Strategists and professional development for additional instructional strategies for teaching students to read.
- Third graders demonstrate adequate proficiency through the state assessment, an alternative assessment of reading or a portfolio before moving to fourth grade.
- Retained third-grade students receive a different course of action with more intensive interventions.
- School districts and charter schools must submit local literacy plans to the state and report the number of students retained each year in third grade.
- The establishment of a competitive literacy grant process to support school-based efforts to implement Read by Grade Three.

About This Study

ExcelinEd contracted with RMC Research Corporation to conduct a study to better understand Nevada stakeholders' perceptions of and experiences with Read by Grade Three, including an analysis on initial impact of the policy on student reading achievement. In particular, the questions of interest were:

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

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

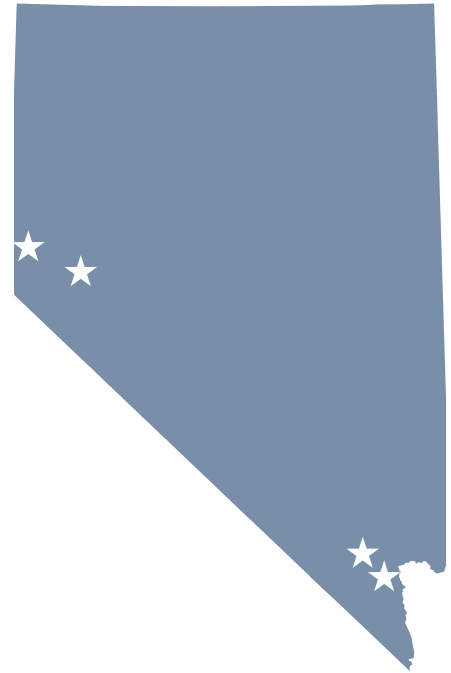
The Sample

A purposeful sample of various stakeholders was selected for this study. Eight persons, representing a cross-section of the Nevada Department of Education, provided a state-level view of Read by Grade Three. Included in this group were the two staff members who are the key program managers of Read by Grade Three. Ten literacy leaders located in four districts related their experiences in implementing Read by Grade Three across schools in their respective district. And, a total of 1,113 K-3 teachers in these four districts provided their perceptions of Read by Grade Three implementation in classrooms.

To identify school districts to participate in this study, K-3 assessment data from Fall 2016 to Winter 2017 were collected and analyzed. A list of districts showing overall improvement, including subgroups of English Language Learners, students with special needs and students receiving free/reduced price lunch was created. The Nevada Department of Education staff members reviewed the list and selected four districts using the following criteria:

- A mix of rural and urban districts;
- A sample of public school districts and public charter districts;
- Regional representation;
- Enrollment of at least 100 third-grade students in the district; and
- Stability of district leadership since enactment of Read by Grade Three.

Three public school districts and one public charter district were selected and agreed to participate in interviews with the research team. The districts also agreed to disseminate an online survey to all their K-3 teachers.



The Methodology

Nevada Department of Education staff members were asked a series of questions about the structure of state-level support and strategies, state-level communication strategies, recommendations for other states that may enact similar legislation and the impacts of the legislation. Both an interview and a focus group were 90-minute, face-to-face sessions. Protocol for the key state staff interview is located in Appendix A; 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 four 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 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.

Teacher surveys were aggregated across the four 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 Nevada Read by Grade Three Act passed in July 2015 and included funding for state-level personnel. Because of legislative policy, the Nevada Department of Education could not hire staff until after the first 90 days of the law. This did not deter the Department from moving forward with creating guidance documents and formalizing a competitive grant process to award funds by December 2015. Three staff members of the Striving Readers program took the lead and issued a call for support from their colleagues across other programs including Title I, early childhood, assessment and communications. This early collaboration among program leaders built a sense of ownership for Read by Grade Three across the Nevada Department of Education. Currently, there are two full-time staff members who manage the Read by Grade Three initiative — one in the Las Vegas area and one in Carson City.

All Nevada districts and schools must comply with two key statewide mandates. Districts must develop and implement a K-3 literacy plan. A state staff member commented that the plans "marked a historic development for early literacy across Nevada...a uniform network that includes a commonality of language, approach, programs and services." And, districts must designate a "Learning Strategist" to support teachers. Competitive grants are awarded to provide additional support to districts and schools to implement the actions identified within their local literacy plans. There are 315 schools located in 15 school districts and 8 charter districts that receive grant funds.

State Support Strategies for Read by Grade Three

Evidence from state and district interviews, a focus group and a teacher survey points to building relationships as the cornerstone of the support that the Department provides to districts and schools. The school districts and state program leaders who participated in this study place trust in the Read by Grade Three staff for their expertise in literacy and their willingness to "be there" for them. Leaders remarked on the importance of having a person to turn to for answers to their pressing questions. The district literacy leaders expressed satisfaction with the accessibility of Read by Grade Three staff, their helpfulness and their willingness to listen. In turn, the Read by Grade Three staff members stressed the importance of identifying district program leads and Learning Strategists who are key players and soliciting their feedback to make decisions. For example, the content of the Read by Grade Three webinars was based on feedback from Learning Strategists. Feedback from a district survey led to the Department's development of a budget report to help districts know they are on track with



Data Sources

Interview with
two key Nevada
Department of
Education leaders

Focus group of six
Nevada Department
of Education staff

Telephone
interviews with ten
literacy leaders in
four districts

Online survey of
1,113 K-3 teachers
in four districts



A program is only
as good as the
relationships you
form.

Department of
Education Staff

their grant expenditures. They also issue open invitations to district staff and teachers to be “advisors” to the Department on topics such as assessment, parent engagement and training resources.

District leaders described several types of support provided by the Read by Grade Three staff, in collaboration with other programs leaders within the Department, that they viewed positively and reported to be impactful. This support includes the following:

- **Guidance document.** The guidance document is a simple explanation of the main provisions of Read by Grade Three. It identifies the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders and key dates. The districts reported this document was their primary resource in understanding the legislation and explaining it to their principals and teachers. To accompany the guidance document and further clarify requirements, the Read by Grade Three staff developed one-page flyers explaining the role and responsibilities of the Learning Strategist and the role and responsibilities of K-3 classroom teachers. They also created a table of required training for the Learning Strategists and a table of required training for teachers. A sample parent letter in dual languages provides a common message and aids district in explaining the legislation. The plan for this summer is to develop documents concerning retention.
- **Webinars.** Monthly webinars were conducted to disseminate information directly to district staff. Initially, the webinars provided further clarification of Read by Grade Three. Then, they were used to provide up-to-date resources and to deliver professional development. The webinars are open to all district staff and are archived on the Department of Education’s website. Often the webinars are followed up with newsletters to expand the information. The districts reported that the webinars were very helpful in building their understanding of the legislation and increasing their knowledge of research-based reading.
- **Site visits.** The Read by Grade Three staff make an effort to visit each school district at least once. They conduct “portfolio visits” and use these visits to help Learning Strategists and school district administrators understand what to look for in classrooms and how to provide one-on-one assistance to teachers. The districts that participated in this study expressed appreciation that the Read by Grade Three staff engage with them locally to solve problems and improve what they are doing. A district literacy staff stated, “This has been true support from the State Department. It has been systematic and well-thought out.” Another district staff commented that they valued having Read by Grade Three staff make presentations to their teachers and visit classrooms. The Read by Grade Three funding does not include travel, so often travel is conducted jointly with other Department program managers.
- **Opportunities to network across districts and schools.** The Department encourages collaboration among the districts at statewide and regional meetings. These meetings enable sharing of literacy plans and best practices. The charter school staff members who participated in this study found these opportunities to collaborate with other charter and public schools particularly beneficial. The first summer, the Department pooled funds from various programs to convene a Summer Institute on Literacy that was attended by more than 400 educators.



District Support Strategies for Read by Grade Three

The three public school districts and the charter school district that participated in this study followed the state’s lead to support Read by Grade Three locally. Their districts’ literacy plans mirrored the state’s literacy plan. They created one- or two-page flyers to highlight key points of the law for greater teacher understanding. They disseminated monthly newsletters incorporating pertinent information from the state’s monthly newsletters. The districts used the state-developed parent letter to create their own parent letters. The districts’ Learning Strategists adapted the professional development they received from the state webinars and regional meetings to meet the needs of their teachers. Examples of the variety of support strategies that these districts implemented to customize support to their schools are displayed in the box below.



I think for the first time, we have a comprehensive plan.

District Literacy Leader

School District Strategies to Support Read by Grade Three

- ✓ A step-by-step guide illustrating what the teacher does if a student is reading at a certain level. The strategies feed into the individual student progress monitoring plan.
- ✓ Videos of step-by-step directions for complex tasks such as the process of parent notification and the creation of individual student progress monitoring plans.
- ✓ Timelines to include year-round schools.
- ✓ Multiple professional development modules for Learning Strategists to receive training in and to deliver to their schools.
- ✓ Additional time for collaborations and professional development. For example, one district added 64 minutes weekly for these activities. Another district designates five days yearly for leadership team meetings. And one district has teachers report two weeks prior to the start of school.
- ✓ An electronic “Student Literacy Performance Plan” that follows the student if the student relocates within the district.
- ✓ A Learning Strategist position that is shared between two professionals. Their time is split between teaching and coaching, giving them more credibility with their peers.
- ✓ Teacher access to video recordings of their lessons for self-reflection.
- ✓ School-wide focus on literacy. Several districts expanded the program to include the upper grades.
- ✓ Partnerships and outreach with community resources such as local libraries, Boys and Girls Clubs and United Way.

Teachers’ Perceptions of Read by Grade Three

The researchers asked the three public school districts and the public charter district to disseminate an electronic survey to their K-3 teachers. One thousand one hundred thirteen (1,113) teachers responded to the survey. The majority of teachers responded very positively to all survey items as displayed in the table that follows. The highest areas of agreement (81 percent) relate to the support they receive for implementing Read by Grade Three, analyzing student assessment data and instructional decision-making. The areas with least agreement (64 percent) relate to professional development for improving their knowledge and skill of providing effective interventions, and to teachers’ confidence level in identifying and addressing reading difficulties. Not surprisingly, these two areas appeared in teachers’ recommendations for improving

Read by Grade Three. About 25 percent of the teachers responded that they needed additional professional development in several areas, including training in implementing interventions successfully, meeting the needs of students who enter classrooms mid-year and helping students with dyslexia.

Percentage of Teachers Agreeing with Statements About Read by Grade Three

| | % Agreement |
|--|-------------|
| I received adequate support from my school administration that assisted me in implementing Read by Grade Three. | 81 |
| I receive adequate support that helps me analyze student assessment data and make instructional decisions based on the data. | 81 |
| I received information and guidance documents that increased my knowledge of the requirements of Read by Grade Three. | 79 |
| Since implementation of the Read by Grade Three initiative, my school has increased its efforts to engage parents and guardians of struggling readers in a timely fashion. | 77 |
| The assessments that we use help me improve my instruction to meet the needs of all students. | 75 |
| I received adequate support from my school district and/or the Nevada Department of Education that assisted me in implementing Read by Grade Three. | 74 |
| I support the Nevada Read by Grade Three requirement to eliminate social promotion to help ensure that struggling readers get the time they need with intensive interventions to be successful in fourth grade and beyond. | 74 |
| My reading coach/Read by Grade Three Learning Strategist provides support that helps me improve my reading instruction. | 72 |
| The Read by Grade Three guidance documents provided information that was useful to me. | 70 |
| The summer reading program is achieving its purpose of accelerating reading progress for struggling readers. | 69 |
| Because of the Nevada Read by Grade Three initiative, my school has provided increased learning time for struggling readers. | 68 |
| Because of the Nevada Read by Grade Three initiative, I have changed my instructional practices to teach reading to all students, including students with severe reading difficulties. | 68 |
| The Nevada Read by Grade Three initiative has a positive impact on improving K-3 reading outcomes in my school. | 68 |
| The professional development that I received from my school district and/or the Nevada Department of Education improved my knowledge and skill of research-based reading instruction. | 67 |
| The professional development that I received from my school district and/or the Nevada Department of Education improved my knowledge and skill of assessments and their use to drive instruction. | 67 |
| The Nevada Read by Grade Three initiative was communicated to parents and guardians in a way that was easy for them to understand. | 67 |
| The professional development that I received from my school district and/or the Nevada Department of Education improved my knowledge and skill of providing effective interventions. | 64 |
| The Nevada Read by Grade Three initiative has helped me identify and address reading difficulties early. | 64 |

When asked the open-ended question, “From your perspective, what are the most positive aspects of Read by Grade Three?”, more than a fourth (28 percent) of the teachers’ comments focused on identifying and intervening early with

struggling students. A fifth (20 percent) of teachers reported an increase in engagement and communication with parents as the most positive aspects. A tenth (10 percent) of teachers commented that mandatory retention was the most positive aspect.

The following comments further highlight Nevada teachers' positive perceptions:

"I feel that the overall structure of accountability is very beneficial."

"Poring over the data gave me more insight into what my students as a whole were lacking so I could address their needs in upcoming lessons."

"I think it has shined a light on students that may have in the past slid by into the next grade level. It has also encouraged more parent communication."

"Teachers are encouraged to collaborate to reach a common goal."

"I think this initiative has helped schools be more aware of the struggles teachers have from day to day with the diversity of our learners and has at least started a new conversation of teaching reading to these learners."

"I believe this initiative is forcing schools to find ways not only better for the kids, but also better for the teachers to spread the responsibility."

"By getting professional development on how to properly conduct assessments and choose strategies, it has positively impacted all students in my classroom, but especially the students performing below grade level expectations."

"I think any time we can give parents more information so they can advocate for their student, that is the best thing we can do."

Communicating the Importance of Literacy

After the Read by Grade Three law was enacted, many conversations centered on the retention mandate. The Read by Grade Three staff and their colleagues across the Nevada Department of Education worked to change negative perceptions. They credit their focus on evidence-based instruction and data-informed decision making as contributors to changing the conversation. The shift in viewing the retention mandate as positive is reflected in Nevada teachers' responses on this study's survey. Seventy-four percent of the 1,113 teachers who responded to the survey support the mandate.

Within the Department, the Read by Grade Three staff engage other program leaders to build awareness of literacy and to create a consistent message.



Struggling readers will stop being promoted when they are not ready which hinders them academically in all subjects, putting them even further behind their peers.

Nevada Teacher



We redirected everyone's energy around instruction, early literacy, intervention and support.

Department of Education Staff

Profile: Charter School Perspective

Read by Grade Three explicitly addresses education in every Nevada public school district and charter school that serves students in grades K-3. Many charter schools saw this mandate as an opportunity. There are eight charter districts that currently receive funds through competitive Read by Grade Three grants. One of these funded charter districts participated in this study and shared insights into what Read by Grade Three has meant for them. Here are some of the benefits they shared:

- District leaders collaborated with leaders in other districts at statewide meetings to develop their plan. Having the opportunity to share best practices with colleagues at regional meetings was most helpful. They request more of these opportunities to collaborate and learn from peers.
- Across their campuses, there is consistency in expectations, accountability, screening and progress monitoring.
- They are seeing success in providing interventions for struggling students. In the past, interventions were often seen as a gateway to special education. Now, teachers are using interventions to “exit students” from that pathway.
- Funding made it possible to have a Literacy Strategist. Having funds for personnel was viewed as invaluable. The Learning Strategist is helping teachers feel supported, which previously has been a challenge. For example, to reduce their loads, teachers are now developing lesson plans together with the assistance of the Learning Strategist.

When asked what advice they would offer to their peers, the charter’s literacy leader remarked, “I think the biggest piece of advice is the transparency. We are not going to have a change without setting expectations, setting data points. If our kids can’t read, it affects everything. The Read by Grade Three legislation says what we did was not working — let’s look at what is working...Push forward. Know how you will hold yourself accountable.”

This is helping to incorporate literacy components into all programs and is building an understanding that collaboration across programs can have a larger impact on student learning. The Read by Grade Three staff remarked that they are a “connector” with the programs and state-wide players.

In addition to the usual dissemination strategies such as newsletters, websites and electronic messaging, the Read by Grade Three staff travel the state to meet with stakeholders. They conduct workshops at events such as parent meetings, school trustee meetings, the annual conference for educators of special needs students and the American Indian Summit, which includes high school students and parents in the audience.

The Department’s Public Information Officer described how he communicates success stories about the program that are highlighted in local media sources. This strategy has been effective in informing communities and local governments. The Department’s website also hosts a blog. The district leaders who participated in this study would like the state to expand their communication strategies to provide even more positive publicity and more resources for communicating with parents, which they described as one of their challenges.

Additional communication strategies at the state level include the use of a legislative team at the Department to prepare material for law makers that emphasizes early literacy. The Department staff also work with the United Way to expand literacy across the state, and they work with the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading in Las Vegas.

The efforts to communicate the positive aspects of Read by Grade Three are paying off. The message of early literacy has spread across the Nevada State Department of Education, school districts, schools and communities. The following responses from teachers to the open-ended survey question about the most positive aspects of Read by Grade Three exemplify that there is awareness of this message beyond the classroom.

“The governor realizes that students must be able to read on grade level by the end of third grade.”

“Reading is made important to all stakeholders.”

“The most positive aspect of Read by Grade Three is the expectation it creates among teachers, but especially parents, that ALL students MUST be reading by grade three.”

“Read by Grade Three is finally showing others the importance of early intervention in the primary grades.”

“The most positive aspects of Read by Grade Three are accountability for the entire state of Nevada, transparency between schools and families and stress on the importance of early intervention.”

Lessons Learned from Nevada Educators

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

Recommendations for Legislators, State Departments of Education and District Leaders

Communicate the positive intent of the law — ensuring a successful future for every child.

- ✓ Develop a communication plan to promote a consistent message and understanding of the law’s intent.
- ✓ Allocate resources for communication. Consider stakeholders, their languages and cultures and their access to technology.
- ✓ Seek out success stories to publicize.

Build collaborations and partnerships.

- ✓ Create a multi-tiered system of collaboration and strategic connections. Consider how to engage with policymakers, other student support programs, early childhood organizations and other literacy entities both within the state and nationally.
- ✓ Seek opportunities to share best practices within schools, districts and across the state.
- ✓ Do not try to do it alone. Reach out to other states for resources, such as guidance documents and strategies that have been successful.

Plan for success.

- ✓ Develop a concise state literacy plan that is easy to understand and is the model for district literacy plans.
- ✓ Spend time researching and planning to build an effective system. Time spent upfront will pay off later.
- ✓ Communicate with lawmakers the time and costs needed to build an effective support system for districts to be successful.
- ✓ Make funding decisions early so that districts have time to recruit and hire highly-competent literacy staff.
- ✓ Listen and learn throughout the process. Use feedback to think about how to adjust midstream or in the future.
- ✓ Plan for sustainability at the beginning and advocate for continuation.
- ✓ Be transparent and hold yourself accountable.

The Read by Grade Three staff, their colleagues at the Department and district literacy leaders also reflected on recommendations for improving Read by Grade Three in Nevada. They shared two areas for improvement:

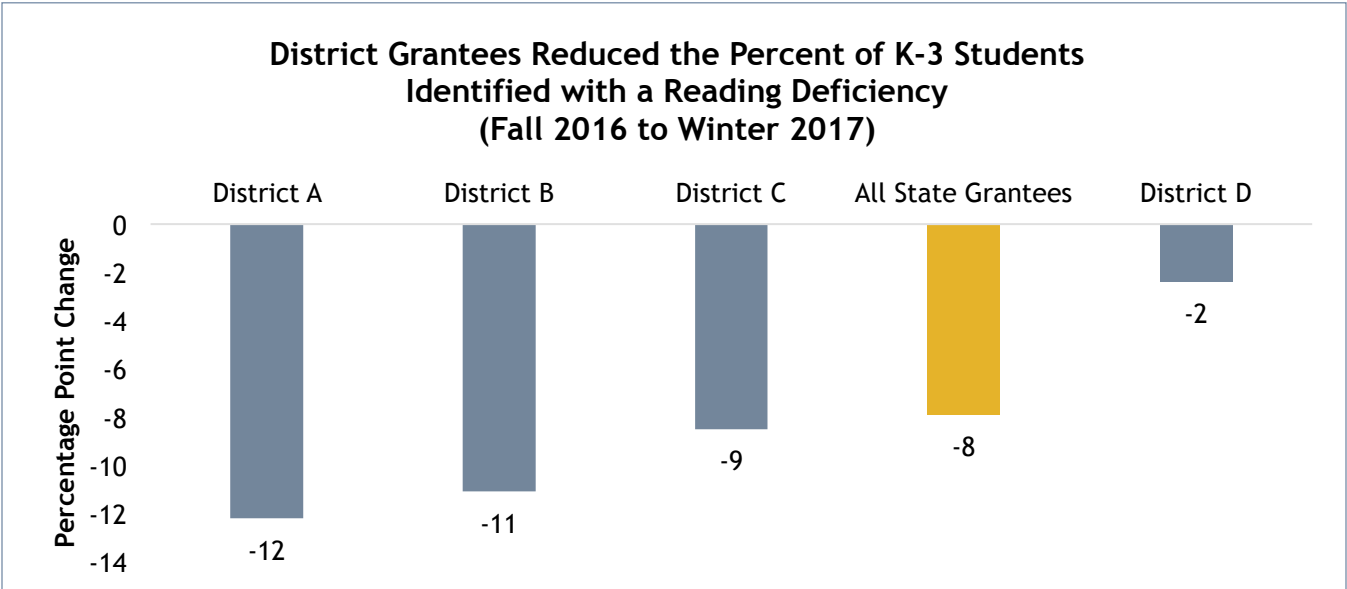
- **Professional development.** Teachers and Learning Strategists need additional training in research-based literacy strategies. In particular, teachers need assistance in providing interventions for struggling readers. In the first year, the emphasis was on Tier I interventions. While survey responders favorably rated their professional development, they recognize the need to intensify interventions and requested additional professional development.
- **Communication.** Legislators need more detailed information on what it takes to make Read by Grade Three successful. This includes information on the importance of finding additional funds for a common assessment (MAP), rather than using the funds from grants. Additional information that will benefit the program are detailing the costs associated with providing support to districts and the impact on districts concerning the timing of legislative decisions.

Impact of Read by Grade Three

Even though Read by Grade Three is in its infancy, there are other areas being affected by this law. For example, there is a collaboration with the early childhood office to establish a continuous literacy progression from PK to grade 12. In addition, the Nevada literacy plan was disseminated to colleges to use in their preservice programs. Read by Grade Three staff also point to the success with being able to offer more help for English Language Learners and students identified for special education services. The public charter district commented that being able to apply for the competitive funds is “historic.” They appreciate being “brought to the table” and have built networks with other districts. Perhaps the impact that is most obvious is what teachers shared in this study’s survey. Teachers are in high agreement with the components of Read by Grade Three, and they are seeing improvements in their classrooms. Preliminary student outcome data, using fall and winter assessment points, indicate that students are showing progress.

I feel that the extra Read by Grade Three student support had a great impact on my students’ accomplishments this year.

Nevada Teacher



Summary

Nevada's Read by Grade Three is on a solid foundation with a common mission across the state to ensure student success. There is common language and understanding concerning literacy. A district literacy leader commented that Read by Grade Three has created an urgency for everyone to be accountable for student learning. A survey responder stated, "No longer are districts and schools left to try to figure it out for themselves." Schools and districts have the support of the state and of each other. Teachers are no longer isolated in their classrooms. They have the support of their district, their Learning Strategists and other teachers. Parents are more engaged because teachers are reaching out to them to be partners in helping their children. As one of this study's interviewees stated, "The legislation solidified everything we were doing with our parents, community and fellow educators. It has been huge to know the state is backing what we are doing....If we stay true to this, we will see progress....When you start getting results, people want to be a part."





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 Read by Grade Three 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 by Grade Three, 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 Read by Grade Three 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 Read by Grade Three. The Nevada 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 Read by Grade Three. 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 additional 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 Nevada Read by Grade Three 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 by Grade Three 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 Nevada Department of Education that assisted me in implementing Read by Grade Three.
2. I received adequate support from my school administration that assisted me in implementing Read by Grade Three.
3. I receive adequate support that helps me analyze student assessment data and make instructional decisions based on the data.
4. My reading coach/Read by Grade Three Learning Strategist provides support that helps me improve my reading instruction.
5. I received information and guidance documents that increased my knowledge of the requirements of Read by Grade Three.
6. The Read by Grade Three guidance documents provided information that was useful to me.
7. The professional development that I received from my school district and/or the Nevada 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 Nevada 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 Nevada Department of Education improved my knowledge of and skill with assessments and their use to drive instruction.
10. The Read by Grade Three 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 Read by Grade Three, my school has provided increased learning time for struggling readers.
13. Because of Read by Grade Three, I have changed my instructional practices to teach reading to all students, including students with severe reading difficulties.
14. Read by Grade Three has a positive impact on improving K-3 reading outcomes in my school.
15. Read by Grade Three has helped me identify and address reading difficulties early.
16. Read by Grade Three was communicated to parents in a way that was easy for them to understand.

17. Since implementation of Read by Grade Three, my school has increased its efforts to engage parents of struggling readers in a timely fashion.
18. I support the Read by Grade Three 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 Read by Grade Three?
20. What advice do you have to improve the implementation of Read by Grade Three?

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

