Delaware's Early Literacy Plan 2025–2028

Our Promise: Start with Students. Build for Impact.

Together, we're ensuring every Delaware child learns to read — and read well.

The Challenge & The Vision

The Challenge

Delaware faces an early literacy crisis. Too many children are not reading on grade level by third grade — a turning point for lifelong learning. Research shows that students who aren't proficient readers by Grade 3 are four times more likely to struggle in later grades.

"Delaware's future workforce, economy, and communities depend on what happens in elementary classrooms today."
- Governor Matt Meyer

"We are building from what is strong — our educators, our partnerships, and our shared belief that every child can and will learn to read."
- Secretary Cindy Marten

The Vision

Every child in Delaware reads on grade level by the end of third grade — supported by excellent instruction, strong leadership, and engaged families.

By 2028, Delaware will:

- Ensure more than 50% of third graders meet or exceed reading proficiency.
- Close opportunity gaps for multilingual learners, students with disabilities, and students experiencing poverty.
- Build a sustainable statewide early literacy system that endures beyond this plan.

Four Statewide Priorities

Delaware's plan focuses on four priorities proven to accelerate reading growth:

Access to Grade-Level Instruction
All K–3 students receive daily, evidence-based reading instruction using high-quality instructional materials.

Sustained, Job-Embedded Professional Learning
Educators and leaders engage in continuous, evidence-based professional learning aligned with the Science of Reading.

Strategic Staffing & Enabling Conditions
Schools organize time, people, and leadership to maximize literacy instruction and support.

Family Engagement & Student Supports
Families and communities are equipped to reinforce literacy at home and stay connected to student progress in school.

Priority 1: Access to Grade-Level Instruction

Goal: Every student receives grade-level reading instruction every day.

We'll know we've succeeded when:

- Third-grade reading proficiency increases from 38% (2025) to 53%+ (2028).
- Every K–3 classroom uses high-quality instructional materials aligned to the Science of Reading.
- Screeners and diagnostic assessments identify student needs early and effectively.

Who Must Do What:

- **State**: Approve and monitor high-quality instructional materials, screeners, and interventions.
- **Districts**: Ensure every K–3 classroom delivers Tier 1 instruction aligned to state standards.
- **Schools**: Protect daily foundational skills and knowledge building literacy blocks and use student data to drive instruction.

Priority 2: Sustained, Job-Embedded Professional Learning

Goal: Every educator is supported and skilled in teaching reading effectively.

We'll know we've succeeded when:

- 100% of K–3 teachers complete state approved professional learning aligned to the Science of Reading per Senate Bill 4.
- 100% of K-3 building leaders and their teams attend the Early Literacy Leadership Academy (ELLA).
- Coaching and collaborative planning time are built into every school week.
- Teacher confidence and retention in early grades increase statewide.

Who Must Do What:

- **State**: Fund and coordinate statewide professional learning and literacy coaching.
- **Districts**: Align training and mentoring systems to early literacy goals.
- **Schools**: Host weekly collaborative planning time focused on unit and lesson internalization and analyzing student data.
- **Educators**: Apply learning in classrooms and analyze student data to measure impact.

Priority 3: Strategic Staffing & Enabling Conditions

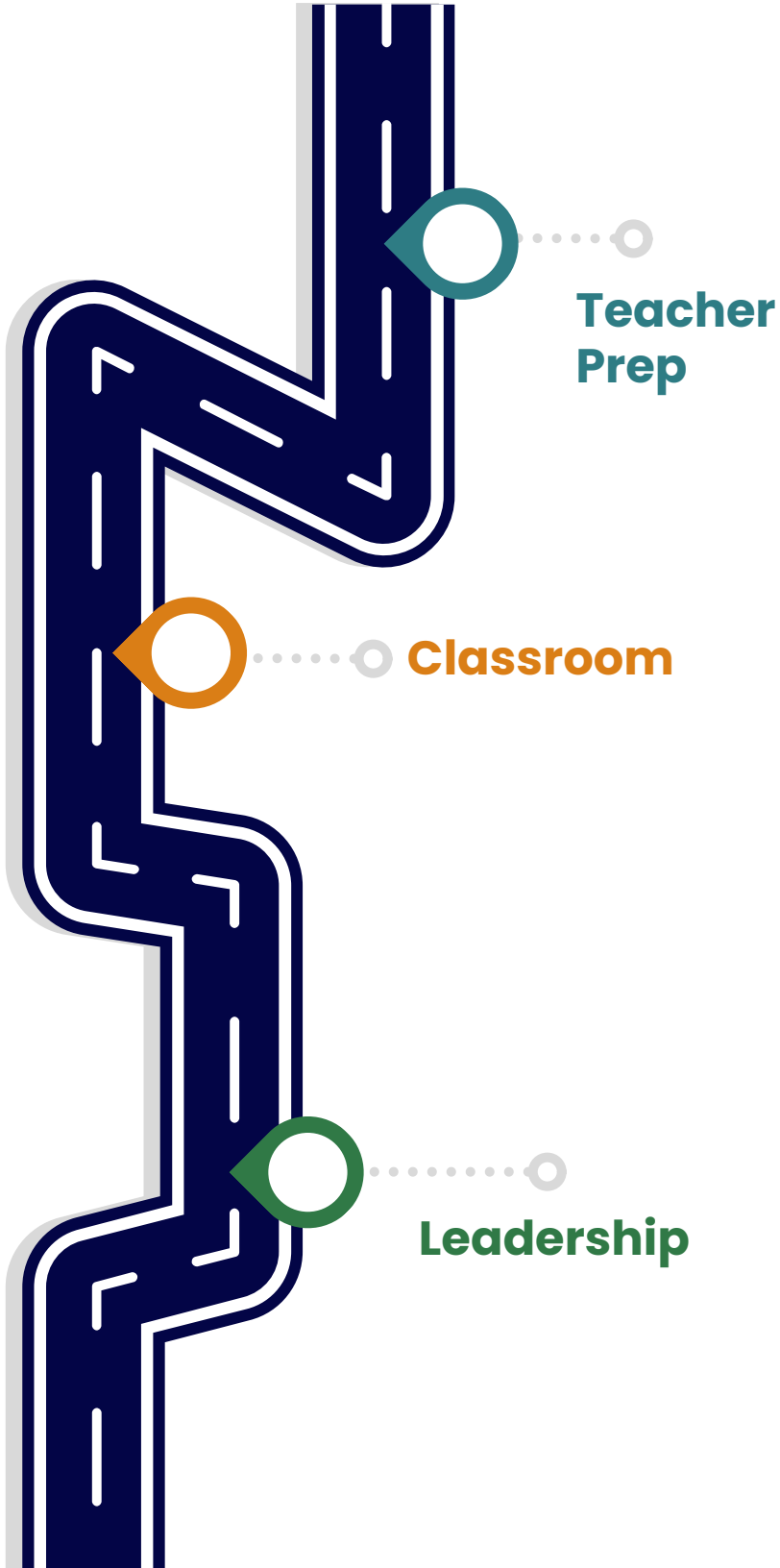
Goal: Schools have the people, structures, and time needed for effective reading instruction.

We'll know we've succeeded when:

- Every K-3 school protects daily foundational skills and knowledge-building literacy time and uses student data to drive instruction.
- Educator Preparation Programs fully align with Science of Reading as outlined in Senate Bill 133 and House Bill 252.
- New staffing models expand teacher expertise and student support.

Who Must Do What:

- **State**: Incentivize innovative staffing models through grants and pilot programs.
- **Districts**: Build residencies and team-based staffing pipelines.
- **Schools**: Align schedules and leadership walkthroughs to literacy goals.
- **Educators**: Collaborate with colleagues across grade levels to meet student needs.



Priority 4: Family Engagement & Student Supports

Goal: Families are empowered as partners in literacy success.

We'll know we've succeeded when:

- Families receive clear progress updates and access to toolkits that support early literacy.
- Absenteeism and student mobility decline in early grades.
- Schools and communities partner to promote reading at home.

Who Must Do What:

- **State**: Lead public awareness campaigns and provide resources.
- **Districts**: Offer workshops, translated materials, and community events.
- **Schools**: Send home regular literacy progress reports.
- **Families**: Read daily and engage in at-home literacy activities.

When schools and families read together, students soar.

Measuring Success & the Road Ahead

How We'll Measure Progress

- Increase third-grade reading proficiency from 38% to 53%+ by 2028.
- Narrow achievement gaps for multilingual learners, students with disabilities, and students experiencing poverty.
- Train 100% of K–3 educators in evidence-based reading instruction.
- Publish quarterly progress updates and an annual State of Literacy report.

Progress Tools

- Public Early Literacy Dashboard
- Annual updates shared with schools, families, and partners

Our Commitment

This plan is not a new initiative — it's the foundation of how Delaware will ensure that every child learns to read.

Together, educators, leaders, and families will make literacy a shared reality for all.

"Every child deserves to be reading on grade level by the end of third grade. As a former elementary teacher, I understand the critical kindergarten-to-third-grade continuum and what it takes to support students who need us most. With the right instruction, strong partnerships, and a shared commitment, we will get our students there."

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Secretary Cindy Marten

Delaware
Department of Education

de.gov/literacy

Follow our progress. Share our promise.