



Delaware's Birth Through Grade 3 Early Literacy Plan 2025–2028

Our Promise: Start with Students. Build for Impact.

Together, we're ensuring every child in Delaware develops the language, literacy, and foundational skills needed to enter kindergarten ready to learn and become a confident reader by the end of third grade.



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“ We are building from what is strong, our educators, our families, our partnerships, and our shared belief that every child can and will learn to read.

– Governor Matt Meyer



BIRTH TO AGE 3



PRESCHOOL



KINDERGARTEN



GRADES 1 – 3



THE CHALLENGE

Language and literacy development begins at birth. The earliest interactions with caring adults, conversations, songs, and play lay the foundation for future reading success. By the time children enter kindergarten, many of the building blocks for literacy are already in place.

Yet too many Delaware children begin school without the language and early literacy skills they need, and too many students are not reading proficiently by the end of the third grade. Closing these gaps requires more than strong elementary instruction. It requires one aligned system that supports children, families, educators, and communities birth through grade 3.



THE VISION

Every child in Delaware enters kindergarten ready to learn and reads proficiently by the end of the third grade, supported by strong families, excellent educators, aligned systems, and evidence based instruction across the Birth through Grade 3 continuum.

By 2028, Delaware will:

Ensure every child has access to high quality, developmentally appropriate language and literacy experiences from birth through grade 3.

Support educators across early learning and elementary settings through aligned professional learning, coaching, and evidence based instructional resources.

Strengthen transitions into kindergarten through shared expectations, coordinated supports, and collaborative partnerships.

Empower families as active partners in their child's language and literacy development from birth through grade 3.

Build a sustainable statewide Birth through Grade 3 literacy system that improves outcomes for every child.

OUR FOUR PRIORITIES

1



**ACCESS TO AGE (BIRTH-5)/
GRADE (K-3) INSTRUCTION**

2



**SUSTAINED JOB EMBEDDED
PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**

3



**STRATEGIC STAFFING AND
ENABLING CONDITIONS**

4



**FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND
STUDENT SUPPORTS**

Priority 1: Access to Age Level (Birth–5)/Grade Level (K–3) Instruction FROM BIRTH TO THIRD GRADE



Goal: Every child has access to high quality, developmentally appropriate language and literacy experiences from birth through grade 3.

FOUNDATION: BIRTH TO FIVE

Every child from birth to five is in the care of adults who understand language and literacy development and provide rich, responsive, and engaging language and literacy experiences every day.

We'll know we've succeeded when:

- 85% of DE children will be on-level in literacy on kindergarten literacy screens.
- Birth to five programs understand and use the language and literacy components of Head Start's Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF), which Delaware has adopted as its Early Childhood Outcomes Framework.
- At least 85% of B to 5 programs participate in DE's Quality Improvement System (QIS).
- DOE's Developmental Screening system identifies children in need of additional assessment and/or supports early and effectively.

BUILDING THROUGH GRADE 3

Every child receives grade-level reading instruction every day that builds strong foundational skills and knowledge for lifelong learning.

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.
- All educators who support early literacy instruction have been trained in HQIM and the science of Reading.



THE BRIDGE: CONTINUITY ACROSS BIRTH TO GRADE 3

Strong early language and literacy experiences create the foundation for children to succeed in K–3 classrooms. Through aligned systems, shared data, and family partnerships, we ensure a seamless path from early childhood settings into elementary school and on to third grade reading success.



Shared Responsibilities Across Birth through Grade 3



FOUNDATION: BIRTH TO FIVE

State:

- Approve and monitor high-quality instructional materials, developmental screeners, and interventions.
- Support professional learning across early childhood settings.
- Support professional learning, high quality resources, and implementation with fidelity.
- Use program, professional, and child data to improve outcomes.

Early Learning Programs:

- Provide developmentally appropriate language and literacy experiences every day.

Families:

- Engage in everyday language and literacy activities at home.



THE TRANSITION

A strong transition into kindergarten begins with shared expectations, aligned professional learning, common language, and coordinated supports for children and families.



ELEMENTARY: K-3

State:

- Approve and monitor high-quality instructional materials, screeners, and interventions.
- Support LEA to build capacity and sustainable systems in early literacy.

Districts:

- Ensure every K-3 classroom delivers Tier 1 instruction aligned to state standards.

Schools:

- Protect daily foundational skills and knowledge building blocks.

Families:

- Partner with educators to understand your child's progress.

Priority 2: Sustained, Job Embedded Professional Learning FROM BIRTH TO THIRD GRADE



Goal: Every educator who supports children from birth through grade 3 engages in continuous professional learning that strengthens literacy instruction and improves outcomes for children.

FOUNDATION: BIRTH TO FIVE

Educators understand child development, language development, and early literacy. Through rigorous professional learning and coaching, educators strengthen the daily interactions that build the foundation for lifelong reading success.

We'll know we've succeeded when:

- Birth to Five educators participate in DOE approved foundational language and literacy professional learning, as part of their program's Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).
- Practice Based Coaching (PBC) is used with fidelity to strengthen educator practices across early learning settings.
- Early learning programs engage in Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) via the QIS to improve children's language and literacy development and outcomes.
- Retention of Birth to Five educators increases statewide.

BUILDING THROUGH GRADE 3

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 and 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.
- All educators who support early literacy instruction have been trained in HQIM and the science of reading.



THE BRIDGE: CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Strong literacy experiences and instruction begin before kindergarten and continue through third grade. Shared professional learning, coaching, and continuous improvement create a seamless system that strengthens educator practice and supports every child across the birth through Grade 3 continuum.



Shared Responsibilities Across Birth through Grade 3



FOUNDATION: BIRTH TO FIVE

State:

- Fund and coordinate statewide professional learning and Practice-Based Coaching.
- Support high quality language and literacy professional learning via the QIS.
- Use statewide data to strengthen implementation and improve outcomes.

Early Learning Programs:

- Build staff capacity through coaching and ongoing professional learning.
- Engage in Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) via the QIS.
- Support evidence based language and literacy practices throughout the day.

Birth to Five Professionals:

- Participate in ongoing professional learning and apply new learning to daily interactions with children.
- Use observation and formative assessments to strengthen instruction.



THE TRANSITION

A strong transition into kindergarten begins with educators who share common language, aligned instructional practices, and a commitment to continuous learning across early childhood and elementary settings.



ELEMENTARY: K-3

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.
- Dedicate time for educator collaboration.

Educators:

- Apply learning in classrooms and analyze student data to measure impact.

Priority 3: Strategic Staffing and Enabling Conditions

FROM BIRTH TO THIRD GRADE



Goal: Schools and early learning programs have the people, structures, and time needed for effective language and literacy experiences, instruction, and support.

FOUNDATION: BIRTH TO FIVE

Early learning programs have adequate resources and intentional structures to ensure children have consistent access to rich language and literacy experiences from the earliest years.

We'll know we've succeeded when:

- Early learning programs have the staff capacity, materials, and time to support language and literacy development.
- Children have access to stable, high-quality early learning environments.
- 85% of programs participate in the QIS.
- Programs use data to inform decisions about staffing, scheduling, and resources.
- Supports are in place to meet the needs of multilingual learners, children with disabilities, and children experiencing poverty.

BUILDING THROUGH GRADE 3

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.
- Resources are aligned to prioritize early literacy.

THE BRIDGE: STRONG SYSTEMS, STRONGER READERS



Effective language development and literacy instruction depend on aligned resources, intentional structures, and the right people in the right roles from Birth through Grade 3. When systems remove barriers and create the conditions for success, educators can focus on what matters most: supporting every child's language and literacy growth.



Shared Responsibilities Across Birth through Grade 3



FOUNDATION: BIRTH TO FIVE

State:

- Provide funding and resources to support quality early learning environments.
- Support programs in building capacity and meeting quality standards.
- Use data to inform policy, resources, and continuous improvement.

Early Learning Programs:

- Ensure adequate staffing, materials, and time for effective language and literacy experiences.
- Use data to inform decisions through staffing, scheduling, allocating resources, and meeting children's needs.

Families:

- Access resources and information to support their child's learning and development.
- Partner with programs to ensure children have what they need to thrive.
- Advocate for high-quality early learning opportunities.

THE TRANSITION

Strong transitions are built on aligned expectations, communication, and shared understanding of each child's strengths and needs.



ELEMENTARY: K-3

State:

- Ensure funding and policies support effective early literacy staffing and structures.
- Provide resources and guidance to strengthen local systems.

Districts:

- Design staffing models that support high-quality K-3 instruction.
- Allocate resources to prioritize early literacy.
- Align systems to support data-driven decisions.

Schools:

- Protect daily foundational skills and knowledge-building literacy time.
- Ensure staff have the time and resources to collaborate and use data.

Educators:

- Use data to understand student needs.
- Collaborate to adjust instruction and supports.
- Advocate for the resources needed to support every learner.



Priority 4: Family Engagement and Student Supports

FROM BIRTH TO THIRD GRADE



Goal: Families and communities are equipped to reinforce literacy at home and stay connected to children's progress in school.

FOUNDATION: BIRTH TO FIVE

Families, community partners, and early learning programs have strong relationships that build the foundation for early language and literacy. Families are partners in their children's learning from the very beginning.

We'll know we've succeeded when:

- Families have access to resources and information to support early language and literacy development at home.
- Families are engaged in their child's learning through regular communication and meaningful partnerships with early learning programs and community partners.
- Early learning programs connect families to community resources and supports.
- Children enter kindergarten with the language, social-emotional, and early literacy skills they need to succeed.

BUILDING THROUGH GRADE 3

Families and communities are equipped to reinforce literacy at home and stay connected to student progress in school.

We'll know we've succeeded when:

- Families receive information and tools to support learning at home.
- Schools engage families as partners in their child's reading growth.
- Students have access to supports that address their academic, social-emotional, and wellness needs.
- Community partnerships expand learning opportunities for students and families.

THE BRIDGE: PARTNERS IN EVERY STEP



When families, schools, early learning programs, and communities work together, children thrive. Strong partnerships create consistent support, build confidence, and help every child become a successful reader from Birth through Grade 3.



Shared Responsibilities Across Birth through Grade 3



FOUNDATION: BIRTH TO FIVE

State:

- Provide resources and information to help families support early language and literacy.
- Partner with community organizations to connect families to needed services.
- Use data to identify needs and improve family and community supports.

Early Learning Programs:

- Build strong relationships with families.
- Use data to inform decisions about staffing, scheduling, allocating resources, and meeting children's needs.

Families:

- Engage in everyday language and literacy activities at home.
- Communicate with educators about their child's learning.
- Advocate for and access available supports and resources.



THE TRANSITION

Strong transitions are built on welcoming relationships, shared information, and a commitment to supporting each child's social-emotional and literacy growth.



ELEMENTARY: K-3

State:

- Provide resources and information to help families support learning at home.
- Partner with communities to support students and families.

Districts:

- Communicate regularly with families about student progress.
- Connect families to supports and services.

Schools:

- Engage families as partners in their child's reading growth.
- Use multiple ways to communicate with families about learning.

Families:

- Share strategies and resources for learning at home.
- Build positive relationships with families.

MEASURING SUCCESS AND THE ROAD AHEAD

OUR COMMITMENT TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT FROM BIRTH THROUGH GRADE 3

Our vision is ambitious, and our progress will be measured across the Birth through Grade 3 continuum. These outcomes guide our work and help ensure that every child in Delaware has the opportunity to become a confident reader and lifelong learner.

OUR TARGETS BY 2028



BIRTH TO AGE 5

Building the earliest foundation for language and literacy.

Early Language:

Increase the percent of children demonstrating age-appropriate language skills at program entry.

School Readiness:

Increase the percent of children entering kindergarten ready in literacy.

Quality Early Learning:

At least 85% of early learning programs participate in the QIS.

Workforce Stability:

Increase retention of Birth to Five educators statewide.



KINDERGARTEN

Ensuring every child begins school ready to learn.

Kindergarten Readiness:

85% of children entering kindergarten ready in literacy.

Early Literacy Screening:

90% of kindergarten students are screened within the first 45 days.

On Track in Literacy:

80% of kindergarten students are on track in early literacy by year end.



GRADES 1 - 3

Ensuring all students build strong foundational reading skills.

Grade 3 Reading Proficiency:

53% of students will read at above proficiency by the end of Grade 3.

Reading Growth:

Increase average student growth in reading each year.

High Quality Instruction:

100% of K-3 classrooms implement high-quality, evidence-based instruction with fidelity.



CROSS-CUTTING OUTCOMES

Creating the conditions where children, educators, and families thrive.

Educator Effectiveness:

100% of educators teaching in early learning and K-3 have access to high-quality professional learning and coaching.

Equity Outcomes:

Close achievement gaps so all children experience growth and success.



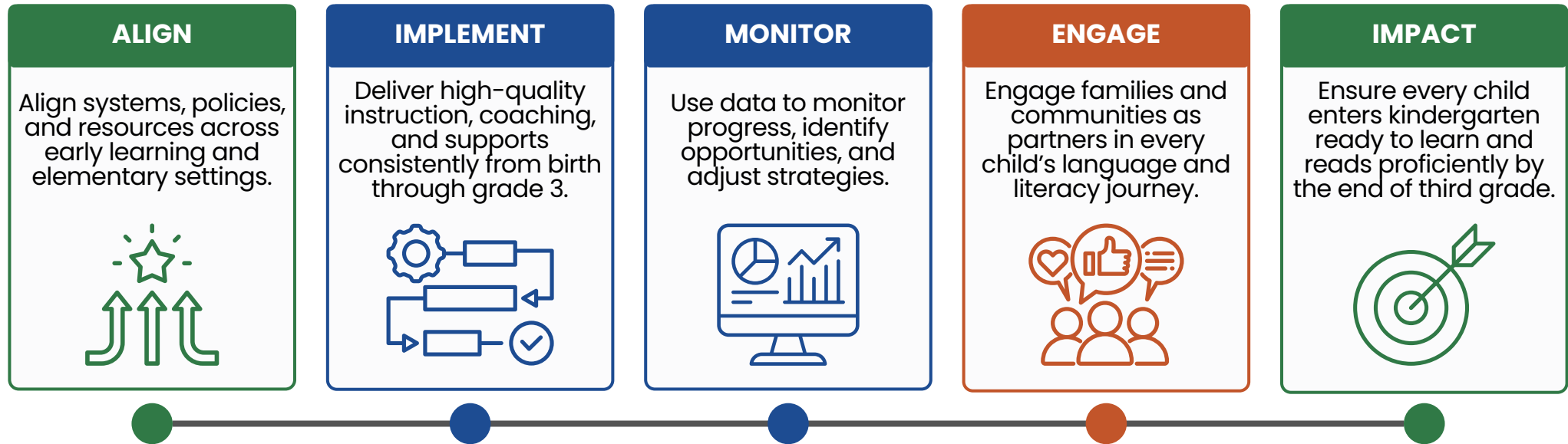
DATA THAT DRIVES IMPACT

We will use high-quality data across early learning and elementary systems to monitor progress, celebrate success, identify needs, and make informed decisions that improve outcomes for every child.



The Road Ahead

Together, we will build a seamless Birth through Grade 3 literacy system that prepares every child to learn, supports every educator to grow, and empowers every family to thrive.



OUR PROMISE

We are committed to, **Start with Students. Build for impact.**

By working together from Birth through Grade 3, we will build a stronger Delaware where every child can read, learn, and lead with confidence.



“Delaware’s future workforce, economy, and communities depend on what happens in our earliest learning environments and elementary classrooms today.

– Secretary Cindy Marten



de.gov/literacy



Follow our progress. Share our promise.