

System Alignment for Early Literacy

Review of Delaware's Prekindergarten to
Grade 3 Licensure and Certification
Landscape

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Executive Summary

Delaware is a changing state serving a diverse student body¹ with equally diverse needs and assets. Reaching the state’s vision of “every learner ready for success in college, career, and life” calls for bold actions to improve academic achievement. Released in 2019, Delaware’s Literacy Plan² aims to advance state goals for improving literacy for public-school students, who on average score at around 52% proficiency for language arts,³ with scores varying across racial and socioeconomic identifiers and across other identified needs. As stated in the plan and supported by current research, the earliest years of schooling—from prekindergarten to Grade 3—are the critical period for building strong readers for life. Additionally, research indicates that the teacher is the most significant factor in a child’s academic achievement,⁴ with the caveat that even the most talented of individual educators require strong preparation and support systems to reach their full potential in supporting young learners.

Direct student learning between teacher and student is at the center of every school system, and that learning is supported—or not—by nested layers starting with the teacher team within a school, school and district leadership, and all the way up to the state system of support for professional development, certification, and licensure. In theory, and at the highest possible potential, each system layer depends on the success of the others, and all rest upon a firm foundation of evidence-based practice.

¹ <https://reportcard.doe.k12.de.us/detail.html#aboutpage?scope=state&district=0&school=0>

² https://www.doe.k12.de.us/cms/lib/DE01922744/Centricity/Domain/167/literacy-5c-20s_6_24_19_final.pdf

³ Students in Grades 3–8 are annually assessed in ELA using the Smarter assessment and the SAT assessment in Grade 11. Current reporting shows a proficiency rate of 52.7%. State report card site accessed in May 2021. <https://reportcard.doe.k12.de.us/detail.html#aboutpage?scope=state&district=0&school=0>

⁴ <https://www.rand.org/education-and-labor/projects/measuring-teacher-effectiveness/teachers-matter.html>

Within the teacher and teacher-team layers of this system, research indicates that teacher growth and impact on student achievement are built upon a combination of job-embedded professional development, teacher collaboration, and direct incentives for advancement.⁵ This evidence base is reflected in the seven International Literacy Association (ILA) standards for teaching preparation, and especially through the focus of standard 6: "Candidates collaboratively participate in ongoing inquiry with colleagues and mentor teachers and participate in professional learning communities." To impact the literacy achievement of Delaware's students, teachers must be supported to grow, learn, and connect with each other in an ecosystem of literacy professionals within their school buildings and district communities.

To understand the structural dimensions of the ecosystem of Delaware's teacher certification and support system, the State Board of Education (SBE) invited WestEd to provide a high-level study of the landscape surrounding teachers from prekindergarten to Grade 3 focusing on certification, regulatory structures, and pathways for placement and growth and how these structures compare to practices in other states and countries. By examining the intersection points of each layer in the system, the research team aimed to identify where improvements could be made within the existing system of supports. The findings and recommendations of this report aim to guide the SBE and associated authorities, educators, and families to continue in the path set forth by the Literacy Plan and empower teachers to work in community for improved literacy outcomes

The following key research questions guided the study:

- Based on available data, what is the current landscape of Delaware's early childhood and early elementary teacher pool?
- What is the evidence base for current best practices preparing teachers and support staff for teaching literacy, and is this evidence base reflected in the standards for teaching in Delaware's classrooms?
- How do Delaware's current pathways for preparation and the current regulatory structure related to licensure and certification align to best practices for supporting literacy for young children, pre-K–Grade 3?
 - What is the regulatory structure for certification and ongoing professional development?

⁵ *Good to Great: Exemplary Teachers Share Perspectives on Improving Teacher Effectiveness Across the Career Continuum*, https://gtlcenter.org/sites/default/files/Good_to_Great_Report.pdf

- What are the teacher preparation and professional development pathways for current Delaware educators, and how are they prepared to support literacy development for children, pre-K–Grade 3?
- How does Delaware compare to states and countries that have seen increases in student achievement and growth in reading and literacy over time, in their regulatory structure, certification process, and preparation pathways for supporting literacy?
 - What are the regulatory structures and preparation pathways in place in model states and countries?
 - What are the recommendations based on this analysis?
- Each section of this report is anchored by a research question and includes results from interviews and review of the research literature and effective practices related specifically to (a) teacher certification to support early literacy in prekindergarten through Grade 3 and (b) an overview of the science of reading and evidence-based practices of reading instruction.

Summary of Considerations and Recommendations

Based on this analysis, the certified roles and pathways for advancement as well as the related standards and regulations in place in Delaware match model systems in the country and internationally. However, the state and country scan and stakeholder interviews surfaced the following considerations for improvement (For more information please refer to Appendix B & C):

- Identify and review the impact of current incentives for professional development through compensation and flexible use of time for collaboration for literacy across grade bands. Consider expanding incentives according to insights on impact.
- Improve strategic utilization of specialized literacy roles and teacher teams through site-based coordination of literacy teams. With further research and responsive implementation, this could improve student literacy performance.
- Consider incentives for schools and districts to examine their use of current literacy professionals and encourage (through grants and principal evaluations) the development of literacy teams.
- Complete further research on the utilization of literacy-focused roles across pre-K to the Grade 3 band.
- Examine the overlap between early childhood certification and elementary certification and analyze the literacy approach within preparation for the two different pathways.
- Consider adoption of a literacy-based assessment for teacher candidates before entering the workforce.

Methodology

This study used a mixed-methods approach with a document and data review, a review of the research literature, and an abbreviated interview series with key system stakeholders. To understand the gap between this regulatory and comparable model review and the identified priority for literacy improvement, the research team turned to stakeholders to share their perspectives and experiences. In interviews with stakeholders representing different layers, the research team for this report learned of the preparation of promising new programs in the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) and strong existing collaborations among the DDOE, State Board of Education (SBE), Professional Standards Board, and partner institutes. Each interview was scheduled for 60 minutes and followed a basic protocol that was tailored to match the unique positions of each stakeholder. While the specific identities of stakeholders are withheld for anonymity, interview participants were linked to the following entities within Delaware:

- Professional Standards Board
- P-20 Council
- Early Childhood Council
- Department of Education Office of Licensure and Certification; Office of Early Learning; and Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development
- Reading Assist intervention program
- Preschool and elementary site administrators

Input gathered in the interviews was used to inform the research team to internal resources (such as program descriptions, etc.) and check emerging findings for validity. All findings were previewed with stakeholders in advance of finalizing this report.

Data and Regulatory Review

The research team benefited from data reports provided by the DDOE related to the teacher labor pool and current placement. Queries included certification status, type, and employment status; years in the role; years in the profession; specializations; job titles; and other placement information. The regulatory review consisted of an analysis of publicly posted regulatory language.

State and International Comparisons

The research team selected a narrow set of states based on prominence in the literacy research for having strong models in place or promising practices, average test scores in Grade 3 with a focus on reading and language arts, and the existence of pathways for specialization (such as microcredentials). To select comparable states, the research team first looked at average test scores in Grade 3, relative to the U.S. average from Stanford's Educational Opportunity⁶ in the U.S. project. All data was pulled from Stanford Education Data Archive and spans from the 2009 SY to the 2018 SY, respectively. The exception is Arkansas, which is missing data from 2016-2018 SYs. Data pulled from Stanford's archives include district and county level average achievement (for all students and by race/ethnicity and gender), district and county level racial/ethnic and gender achievement gaps, and district level demographic/socioeconomic data.

In addition to average RLA (Reading and Language Arts) scores, states were identified based on their certification framework and a cursory review for alignment with best practices. States were also included in the review based on client interest as well as based on states with new and similar initiatives to Delaware. While some states identified may have lower achievement scores than the state of Delaware, they are at the forefront of the literacy reform movement and have seen sustained improvement since implementing new literacy initiatives. For example, Mississippi achievement is currently lower than Delaware, however, they hold the number one spot in the nation for gains on the National Assessment of Educational Progress and is the only state in the nation to show significant increases in three of the four core NAEP subjects in 2019.

The primary resources included information from state websites on regulatory structures and certification pathways and peer-reviewed articles. International comparisons proved difficult due to limitations on available research aligning to specific queries and significant contextual differences limiting comparability. If there is further interest, the research team recommends a separate literature review to strengthen this segment of the analysis.

Limitations

This study was limited in scope as a desk audit of available data and information augmented by selected interviews. The interviews were not structured to adhere to qualitative research standards and were more informal and informative for the research team than representative of any specific stakeholder group or perspective. It is the research team's belief that a deeper analysis of the utilization of positions at the school

⁶ For more information visit <https://edopportunity.org/>

and district level would best inform any potential policy changes. This study was completed during the 2020–2021 COVID-19 pandemic and does not reflect the impact of the pandemic on literacy scores, teacher placements, or classroom practices.

Research Questions & Findings

RQ1. Based on available data, what is the current landscape of Delaware's early childhood and early elementary teacher pool?

Summary

In collaboration with Delaware's State Board of Education (SBE) and the Department of Education, WestEd processed and analyzed available data on the current status of the early childhood and early elementary teacher pool. Data trends and comparisons for current teacher certification and experience were reviewed in relation to the findings of the other research questions. With a clear understanding of Delaware's teacher pool, the research team was able to glean insights into early learning teacher certification alignment and effectiveness as well as potential implications for the prioritization of professional development support and recruitment from preparation institutions.

Key Data Findings

- More early childhood teachers are early in their careers compared to elementary teachers, which has resulted in both higher levels of turnover in this setting as well as an indication of a different approach to professional support that is needed than for more veteran educators.
- In recent years there have had fewer newly certified teachers entering the candidate pool, and roughly 20% of the current teacher pool is eligible to retire within the next 5 years, which indicates a need for more substantial recruitment and hiring in the field to maintain current staffing levels.
- The majority (65%) of the current teacher pool (for elementary and early childhood) is both experienced and ineligible to retire in the next 5 years, which makes professional development a priority to build new approaches to literacy.

Praxis Test Analysis

The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) found that clear oversight of teacher preparation programs, through program approval processes and licensing, has a positive impact on teacher candidate knowledge. NCTQ found that the Praxis Content Knowledge for Teaching Reading and Language Arts subtest (7802) and the Praxis Multiple Subjects Reading Language Arts subtest (5002) do not do a good job of measuring teacher knowledge of reading instruction.⁷ Currently, Delaware is utilizing both exams to assess knowledge of early literacy certification candidates.

⁷ National Council on Teacher Quality. (2019). Teaching Reading: Delaware results. *State Teacher Policy Database*. [Data set]. Retrieved from <https://www.nctq.org/yearbook/state/DE-Teaching-Reading-75>.

Table 1
Delaware's Current Praxis Test Outcomes

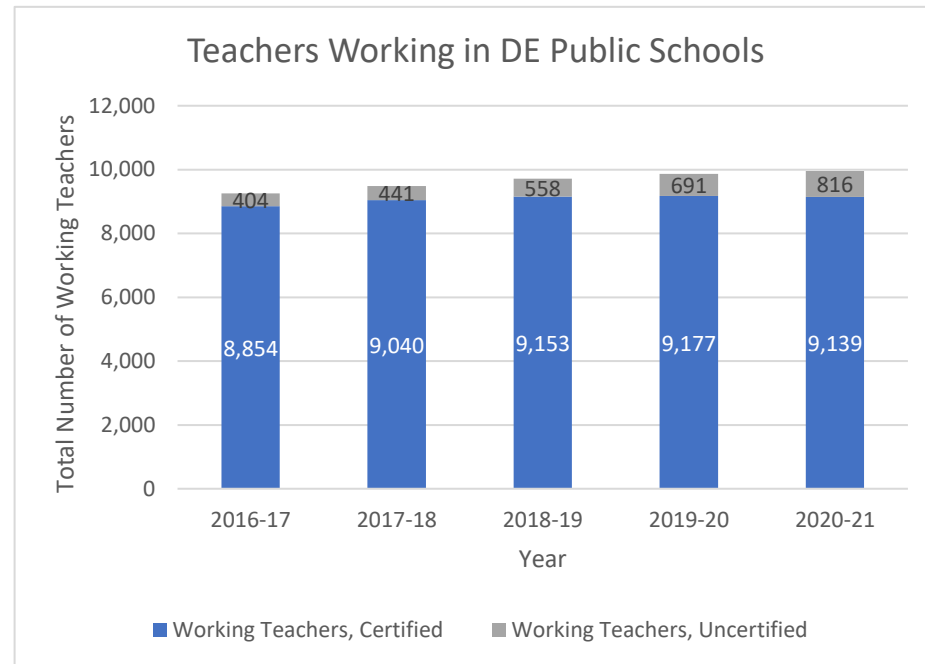
Type	Test	Number of takers	Percentage passed first time
PK–K	5024	370	69.5
Elem. ELA	5002	1,431	76.2
Elem. ELA	7802	254	71.3
Elem. ELA	7812	85	60.0
TESOL	5362	250	97.2
Special ed. K–12	5354	1,485	95.1

Certification Analysis

Figure 1

Total Delaware K–12 Workforce, 2016–2021

There are an increasing number of both certified and uncertified teachers working in Delaware public schools year over year.



Note. All certified: For example, someone retired or working in another state but still be certified in Delaware in a specific content area. Certified and employed in Delaware in any position: For example, someone certified as a math teacher but working as a curriculum director or assistant principal. There is an increasing number of both certified and uncertified teachers working in Delaware public schools year-over-year.

Figure 2

Newly Certified Delaware K–12 Workforce, 2016–2021

Even as there are more teachers working in the state, the future of that trend is in jeopardy because of the significant decline in the number of newly certified teachers. In the past 3 years, the state has seen fewer new teachers each year.

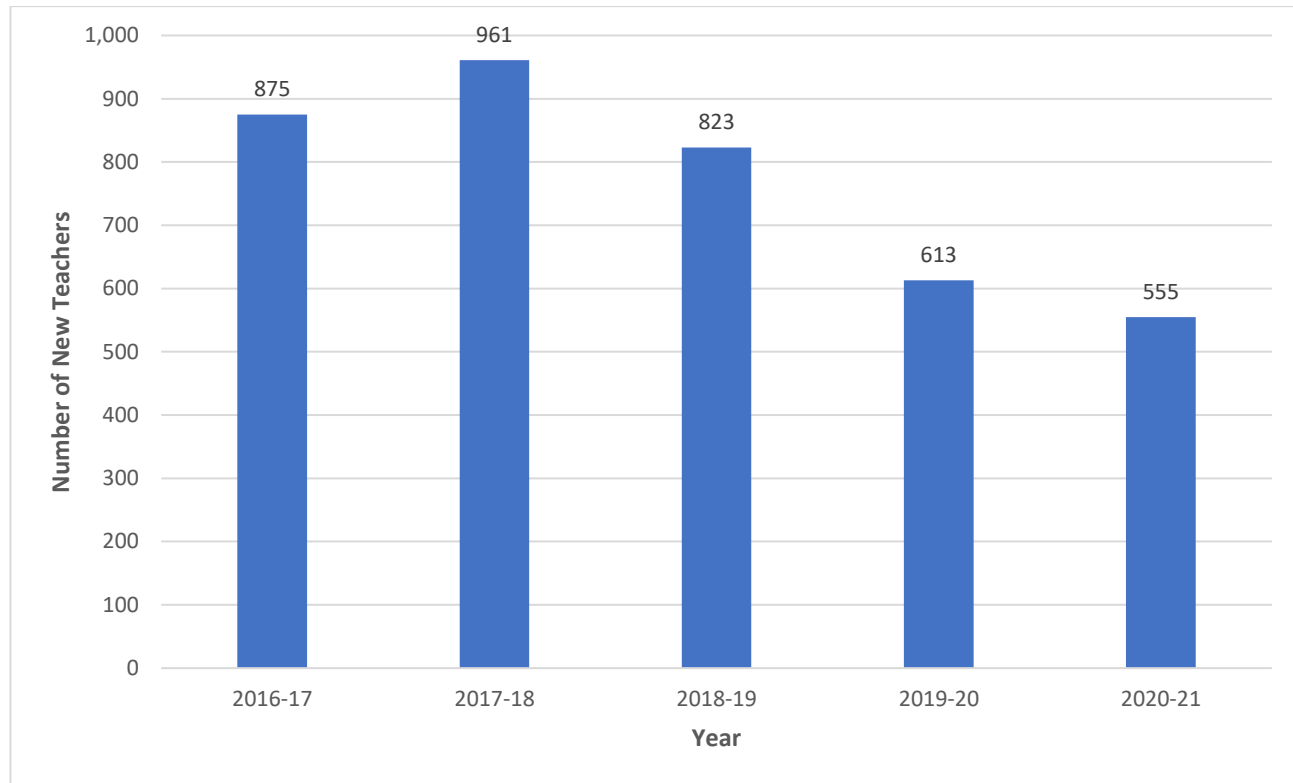


Figure 3

Certified Early Childhood Workforce

There is an increasing number of professionals certified to work in early childhood settings. In particular, the number of professionals *exclusively* certified to work in early childhood settings has risen 56%. The early childhood standard certificate is required for birth–Grade 2 in Delaware public schools. There are separate requirements for Delaware’s early care and education centers (e.g., child care centers, family child care, etc.) that are not included in this analysis.

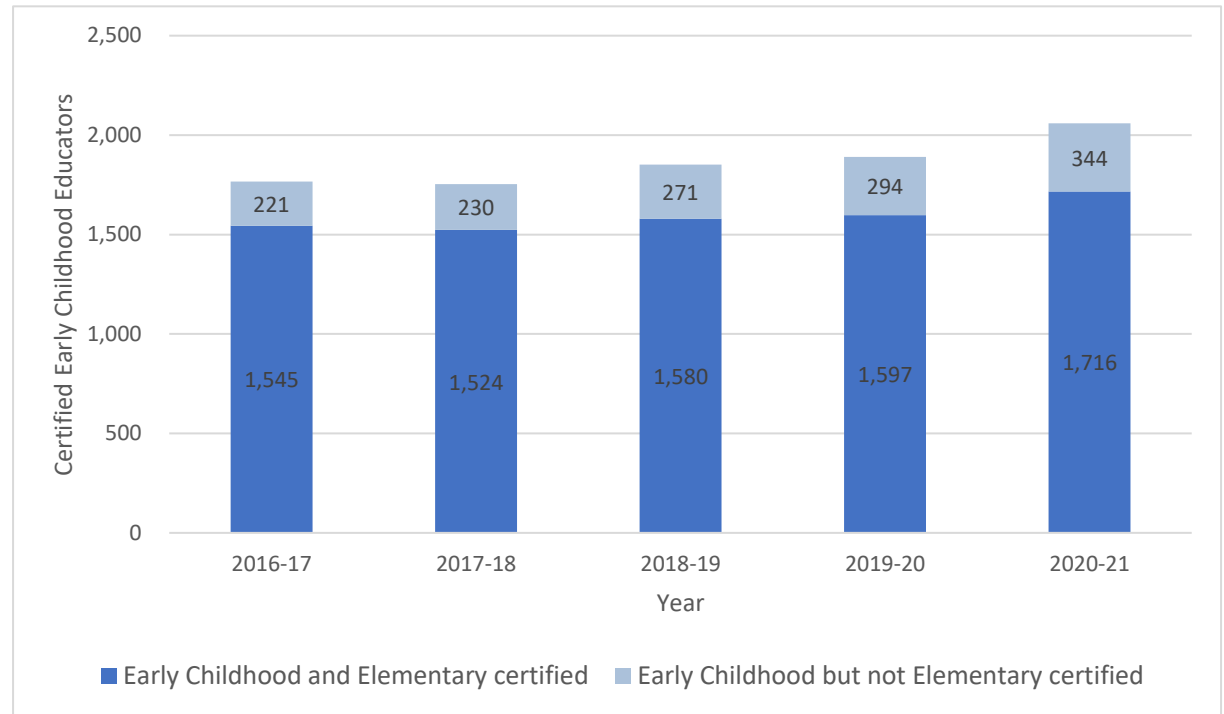


Figure 4

Employment Location of Early-Childhood-Only Certified Professionals

About one-fifth of certified early childhood teachers work with birth–Grade 3 students. Almost half work for a school district—either in a district-run early childhood program or in Grades K–2. Historically, there is a sizable share of teachers whose teaching location is unmonitored; this trend is more pronounced when including certified elementary teachers.

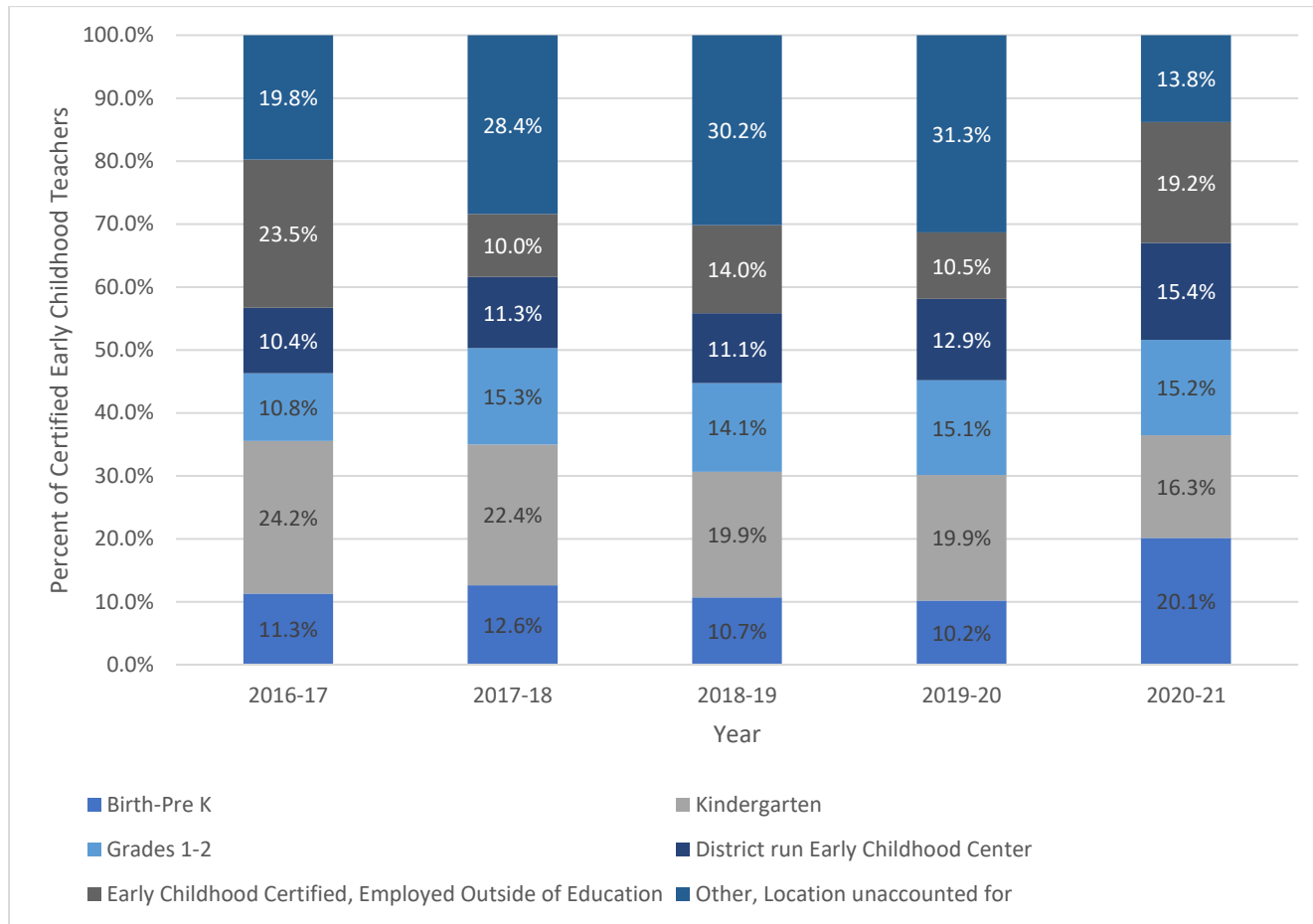


Figure 5

Experience Levels of Delaware Teachers

About 65% of teachers are experienced, meaning they are in their 5th year of teaching or later. Early childhood teachers who are teaching preschool, instead of the other grades for which they are eligible, are more likely to be in their early career as compared with all early childhood teachers, many of whom are teaching in elementary grades. By contrast, all early childhood teachers, regardless of the grade they are teaching, are more likely to be eligible to retire in the next 5 years as compared with their similarly certified counterparts teaching preschool.

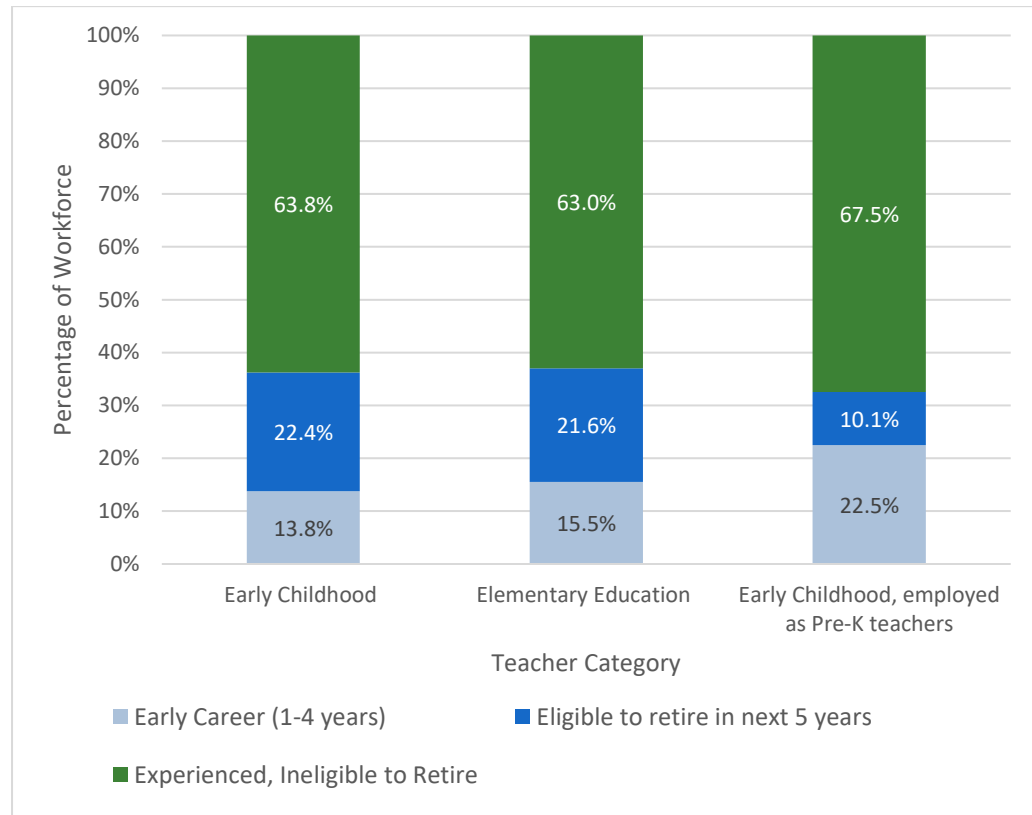
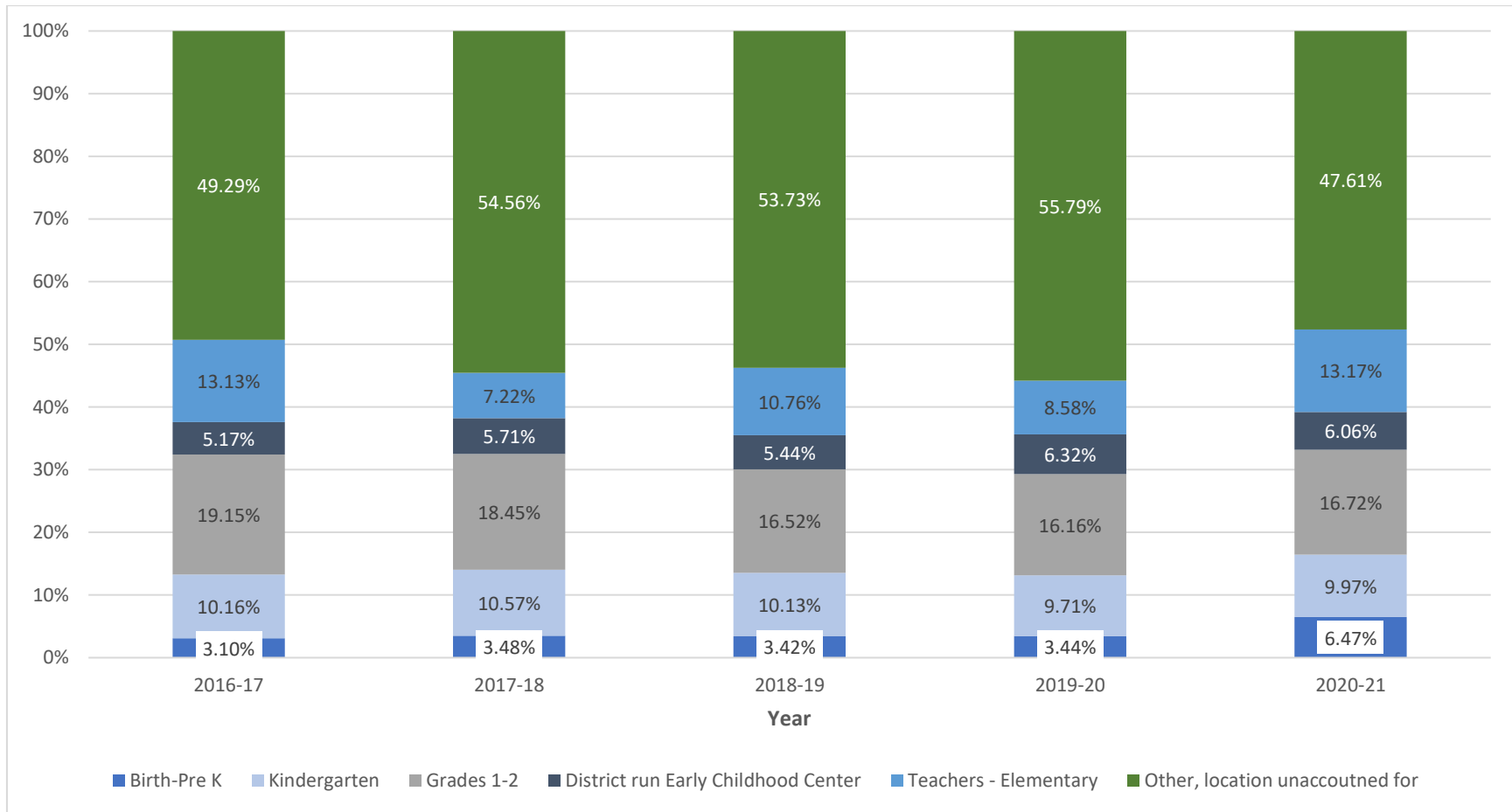


Figure 6
Location of Current Certified Early Childhood and Elementary Teachers



Currently, across Delaware, the majority of those in the teaching pool hold either a certificate in early childhood and elementary, while the teaching pool certified specifically in early childhood is much smaller.

Figure 7
Location of Certified Early-Childhood-Only Teachers

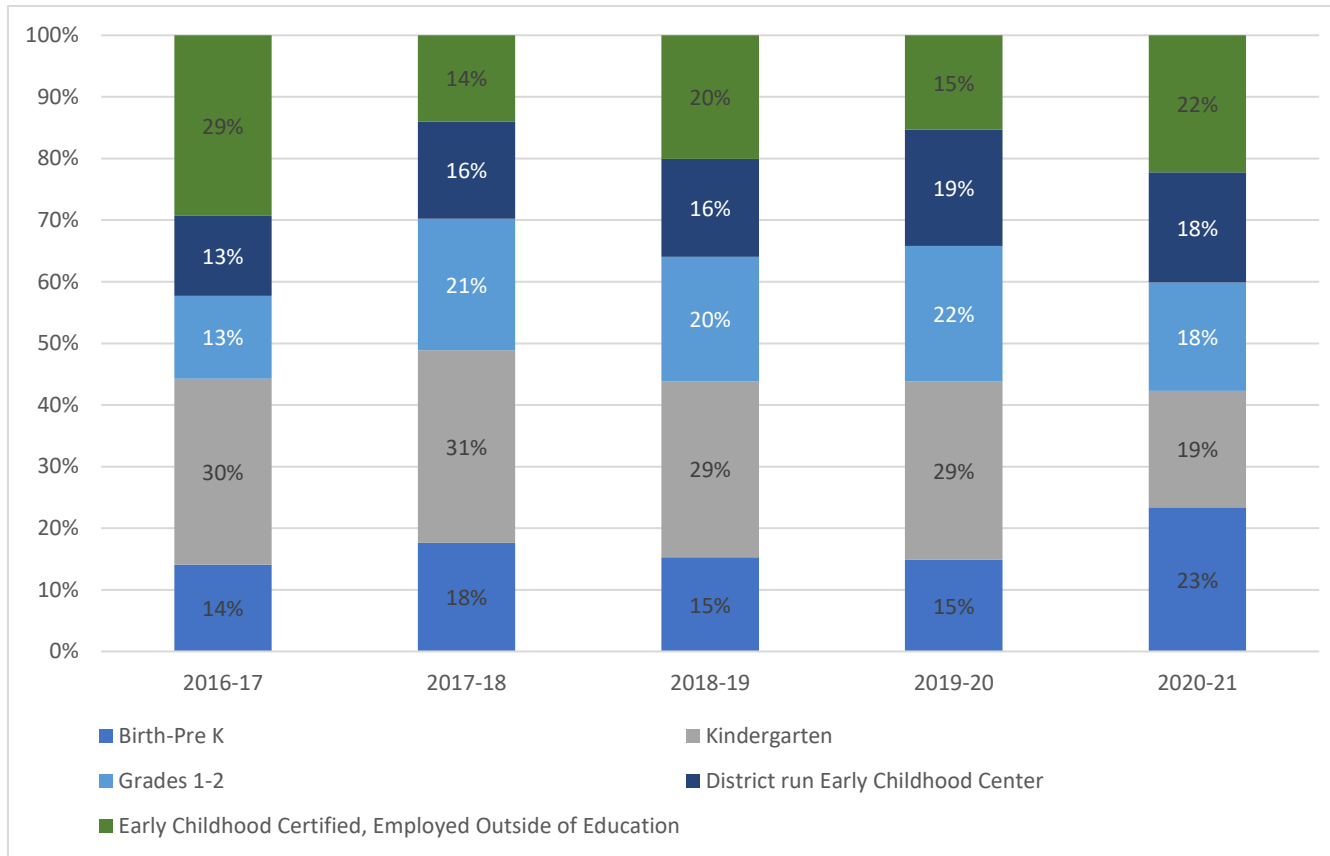


Figure 8

Current Reading Specialist Utilization

The number of total certified reading specialists has increased over time. But many are serving in roles other than reading specialists. Of all individuals working as reading specialists, there is an increasing reliance on noncertified reading staff members.

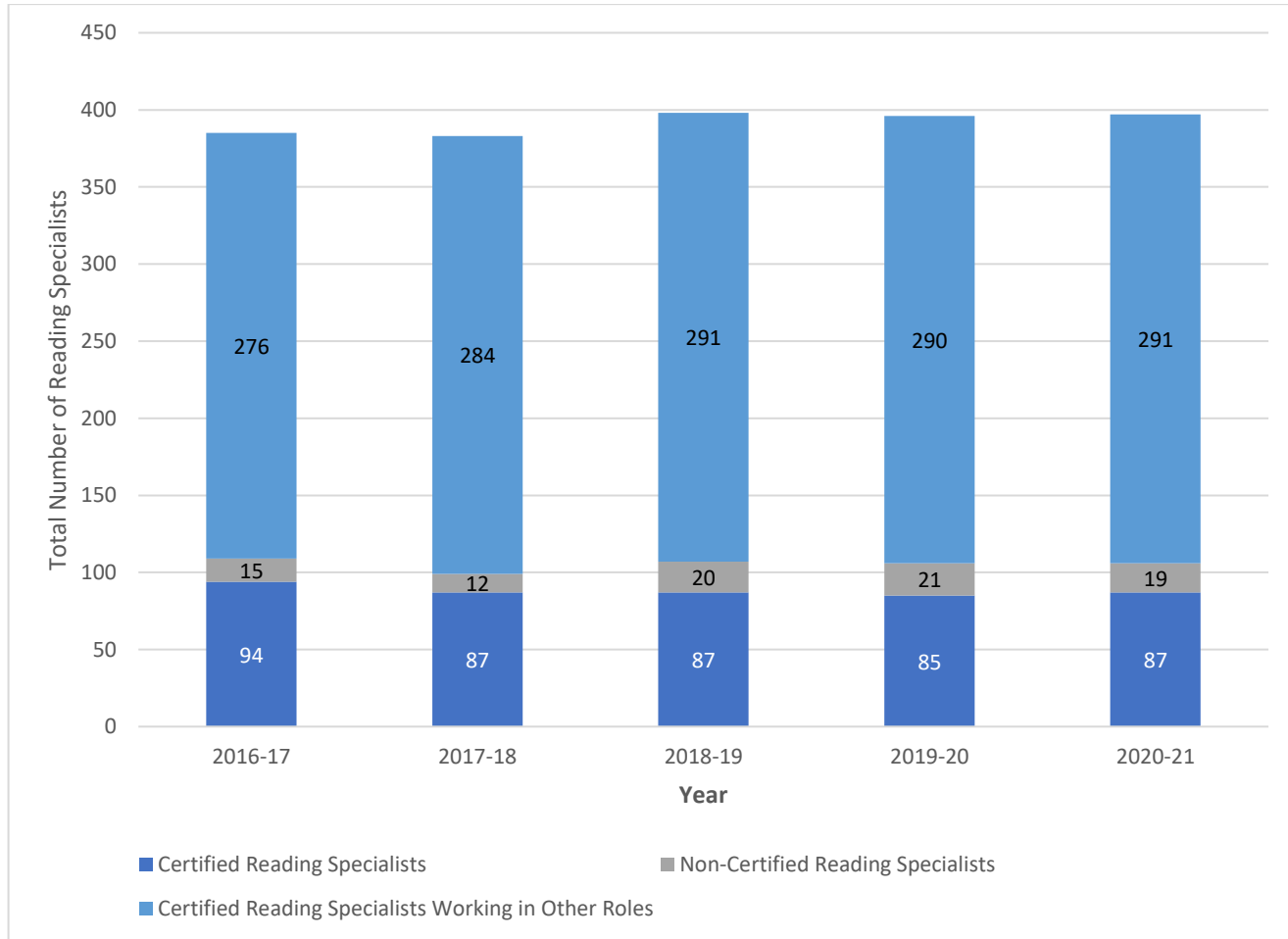


Figure 9
Reading Specialist Employment

Currently, 81% of reading specialist are not employed as reading specialist in Delaware Public Schools.

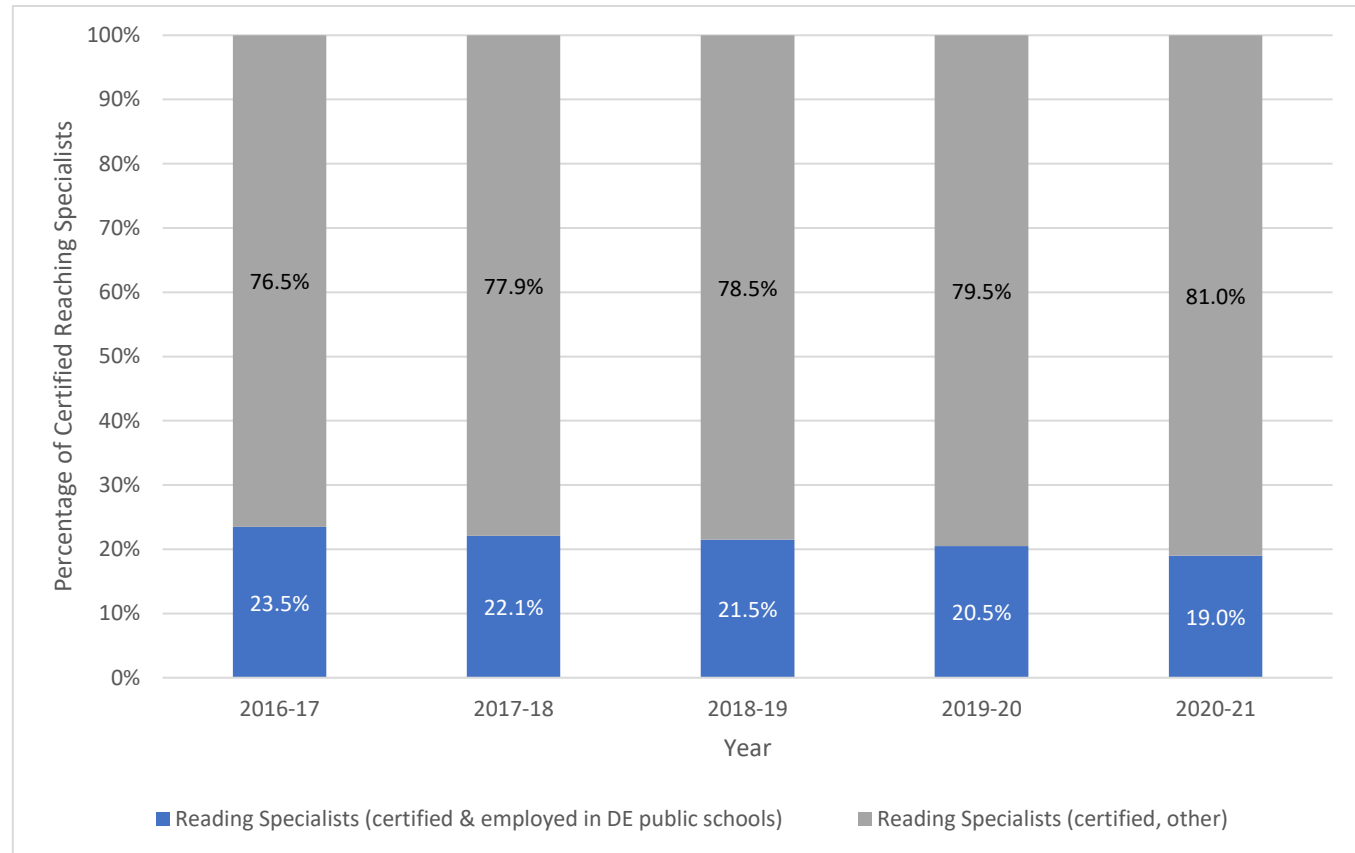


Figure 10
Certified Teachers of English Learners

The total supply of certified teachers of English learners has doubled since 2016–2017, though only a fraction of these teachers is serving early elementary grades. Though certifications are lifetime, this still suggests that supply is increasing rapidly.

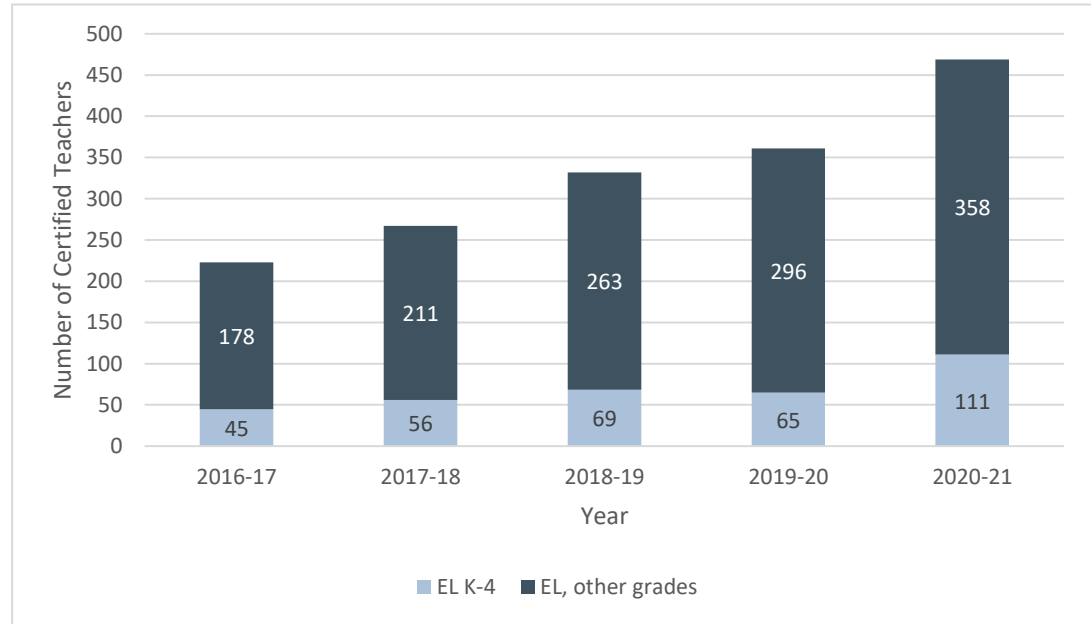


Figure 11

Certified Teachers of Special Education Learners

The number of teachers certified in special education continues to increase year to year; however, only a small percentage of those certified in special education hold the Early Childhood Exceptional Children Special Education Teacher certificate.

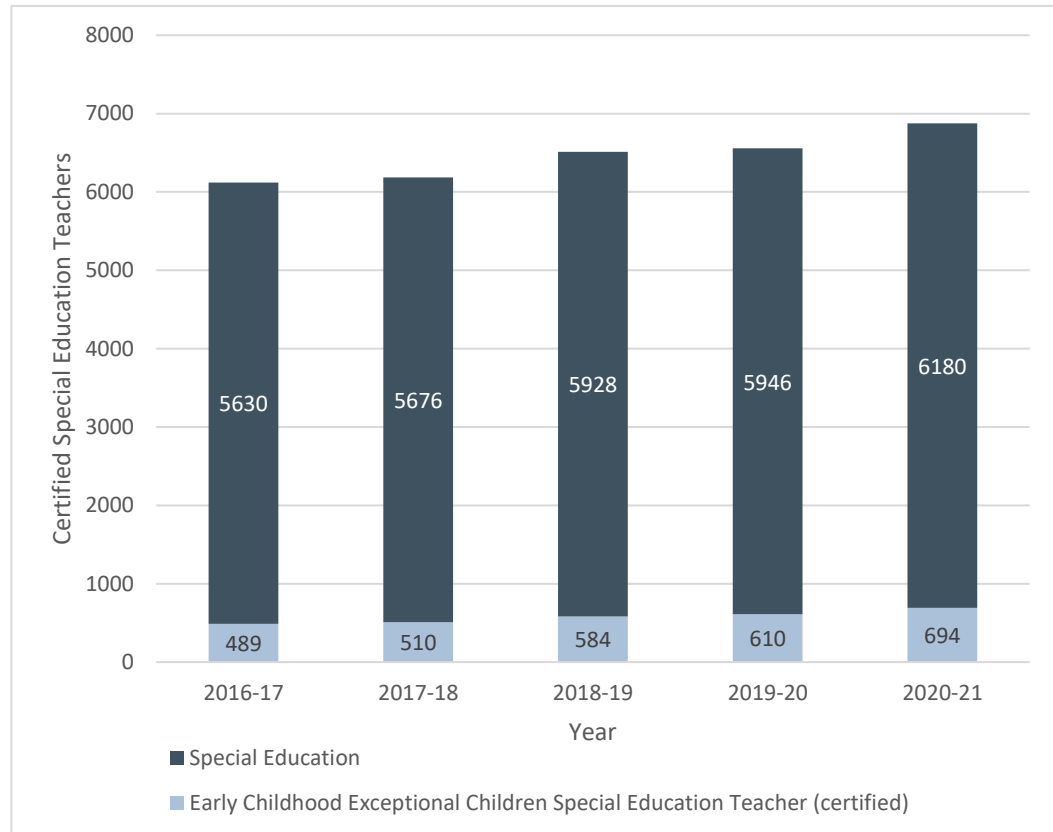
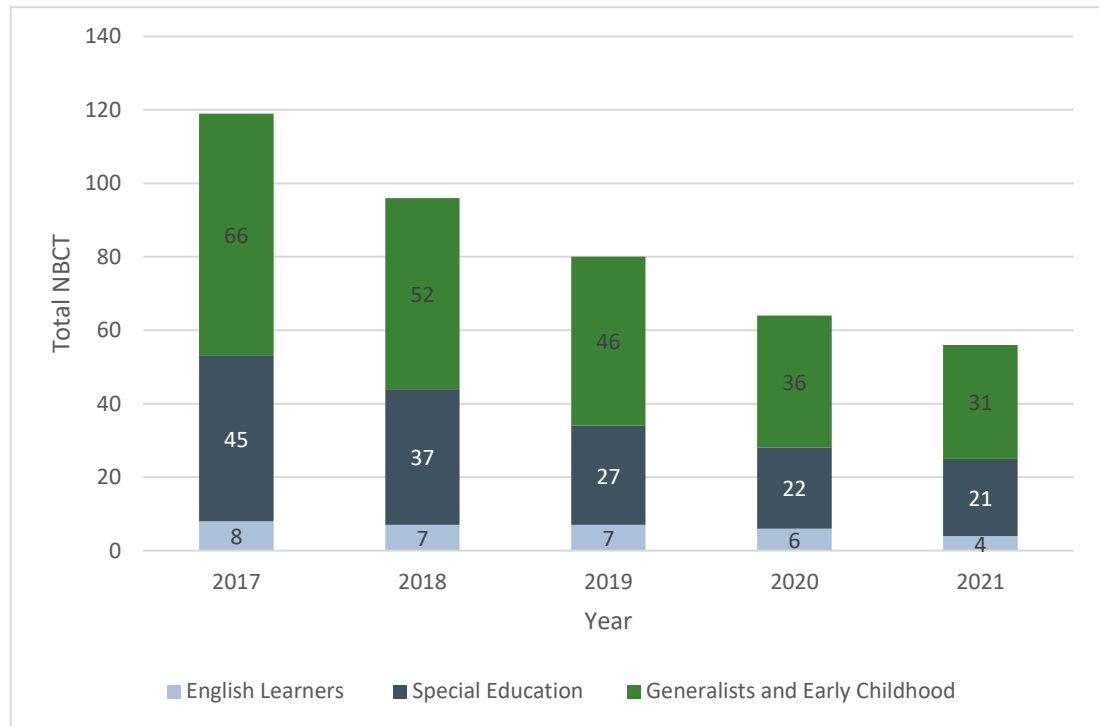


Figure 12

New Nationally Board-Certified Teachers by Category

Fewer Delaware teachers are gaining their National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certificate over time, which suggests that other incentives may be necessary to demonstrate mastery of pedagogy.



RQ2. What is the evidence base for current best practices in preparing teachers and support staff for teaching literacy?

Key Findings

- There is clear research consensus on best practices for teaching literacy based on the science of reading, and those components are appropriately reflected in the Delaware state standards for the grade bands analyzed.
- There is strong research support for job-embedded professional development (which includes a range of practice and learning opportunities) to positively impact teacher practice. There is not clear consensus on the impact of professional development types on practice such as the duration of professional development engagements and the types of coursework included.

Much of the prevailing view on what competencies enable students to become strong readers comes from two reports resulting from the assessment completed by the 2000 National Reading Panel⁸ and the 2008 National Early Literacy Panel, which, taken together, build a consensus for what constitutes effective reading instruction for young people. The set of skills outlined **in the following section** are grounded in the evidence presented by the National Reading Panel in addition to studies and syntheses that have been published since the release of the panel's findings.

Reading Skills and Competencies

This section provides a high-level summary of current research on the teaching of reading and related reading skills and competencies for literacy.⁹ The empirical research on elementary and adolescent reading instruction recommends explicit teaching of the literacy practices, including text and engagement structures that support intentional development of ways of thinking, speaking, reading,

⁸ <https://www.nichd.nih.gov/sites/default/files/publications/pubs/nrp/Documents/report.pdf>

⁹ This is not intended to be an exhaustive review and was narrowly focused on the parameters of the scope.

and writing.^{10 11 12 13 14}A notable force in the field, the National Early Literacy Panel published landmark reports noting the severe downstream impacts of inadequate literacy instruction: “[t]hose who are low in literacy are paid less, are more often out of work, are less likely to vote, are less informed about civic affairs, are less able to meet the health-care needs of their families, are more likely to have trouble with the law or become ensnared in other socially harmful activities.” Moreover, when the Early Literacy Panel’s report was released in 2008, “74% of children who perform poorly in reading in 3rd grade continued to do so in high school.”

The Early Literacy Panel distinguishes between *conventional* literacy skills—those that are covered in the following section and are considered the focus of elementary instruction, such as decoding text, oral reading fluency, reading comprehension, writing, and spelling—and *early* literacy skills—those that are precursor, predictive, foundational, or emergent skills. This research literature review begins by briefly outlining some of the precursor literacy skills before diving into a more comprehensive look at some of the foundational literacy skills.

Such precursor literacy skills typically help students develop “reading readiness.” To create a bridge to conventional reading skills, students become familiar with the alphabet—letter names and sounds—and must be able to rapidly and automatically name the letters. Students should further familiarize themselves with how print is organized: its components, features, and purposes, including the front and back of print texts as well as captions, paragraphs, and other ways that writers assemble their messages. Students’ ability to process the symbols on these pages as well as their speaking abilities are additional foundational skills that help students become successful readers. This package of prerequisite skills prepares students to learn these five “conventional” literacy skills that the National Reading Panel comprehensively studied.

First, students must possess *phonological awareness*, meaning that the readers can recognize, differentiate, and manipulate the individual sounds, known as phonemes, that together compose words. Recognizing words’ subcomponents—even apart from understanding the meaning of the words in their

¹⁰ Catterson, A. K. (2017). Close Reading in Secondary Classrooms: A 21st-Century Update for a 20th-Century Practice. *UC Berkeley*. ProQuest ID: Catterson_berkeley_0028E_16975. Merritt ID: ark:/13030/m5wm687c. Retrieved from <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/26k3t6g0>

¹¹ Cervetti, G. N., Pearson, P. D., Palincsar, A. S., Afflerbach, P., Kendeou, P., Biancarosa, G., Higgs, J., Fitzgerald, M. S., & Berman, A. I. (2020). How the Reading for Understanding Initiative’s Research Complicates the Simple View of Reading Invoked in the Science of Reading. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 55(S1). <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.343>

¹² Foorman, B., Herrera, S., Dombek, J., Schatschneider, C., & Petscher, Y. (2017). The relative effectiveness of two approaches to early literacy intervention in grades K–2 (REL 2017–251), Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast. That report is available at <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?projectId=4504>

¹³ Susan R. Goldman, M. Anne Britt, Willard Brown, Gayle Cribb, MariAnne George, Cynthia Greenleaf, Carol D. Lee, Cynthia Shanahan & Project READI (2016): Disciplinary Literacies and Learning to Read for Understanding: A Conceptual Framework for Disciplinary Literacy, *Educational Psychologist*, DOI: 10.1080/00461520.2016.1168741

¹⁴ Sabatini, J., Wang, Z., & O’Reilly, T. (2018). Relating Reading Comprehension to Oral Reading Performance in the NAEP Fourth-Grade Special Study of Oral Reading. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 54(2), 253–271. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.226>

entirety—is an important predictor of students' later success in reading. Phonological awareness also encompasses readers' identification of the syllables and rhymes included in words. Culturally responsive instruction in phonological awareness should point to how phonemes might be different in other languages that are common in the school community.

Students with lower phonological awareness find themselves at risk of not reaching reading proficiency, and explicit interventions that help students become more aware of phonemes have helped them become better readers. These interventions tend to be most effective in the pre-elementary years, in an effort to prepare students for the phonics instruction that typically occurs in early elementary grades and later for reading comprehension.

Second, young readers must have a firm grasp of *phonics*, meaning that they must understand the relationship between words' sounds, known as phonemes, and words' written letters and groups of letters, known as graphemes. Students demonstrate this comprehension through decoding words: sounding out their parts and bringing together these parts to pronounce full words. Students can do so through learning about the relationships between single and multiple consonants, single and multiple vowels, as well as the base words and their associated parts. These processes and others help students become familiar with spelling and letter sequences for the English language, known as orthography, as well as with how different components of words are represented in print, known as morphemes. When students have a proficient grasp of phonics, they begin to read words automatically; words that students can read effortlessly join their "sight vocabulary," and the familiarity that phonics builds with these words makes them as a closely related concept to automatic word recognition. Students who struggle with phonics experience difficulty moving to more advanced stages in the reading sequences, including comprehending text, and their struggles can be remediated with proven, explicit, and systematic interventions, which tend to be most effective in Grades 1 and 2; at this age, students are still "learning to read," and it is important for students to have a solid grasp of the mechanics because they transition to "reading to learn" in Grade 3, making the early years of literacy foundational to future academic achievement

Third, *fluency* describes how students leverage their automatic word recognition capacities to easily, accurately, and quickly identify words out of context and understand their meanings. Greater levels of fluency allow students to devote their cognitive attention and energy to comprehending, rather than decoding, words and their structure. Fluency is evidenced when students can read with expression and appropriate volume, as if they are talking to a friend; smoothly, with vacillations in intonation and stress where warranted; and at an appropriate speed. Fluent readers are confident readers.

Fourth, *vocabulary* consists of a student's "mental dictionary," the size and contents of which plays an important role in determining what children can comprehend. Students can read better when they attach meaning to the words in front of them. Put differently, the more words that students know, the better they can read what is in front of them; by converse, it is very difficult to understand the meaning of the text if many of the words do not resonate in one's head. The words that a person can produce in written or oral format form one's *expressive vocabulary*. Even if students cannot produce a word, they may still be able to respond to and engage with the word if it is in their *receptive vocabulary*. Teachers

can help students build both expressive and receptive vocabularies through teaching definitions explicitly and helping students derive meaning from context.

Fifth, all the aforementioned reading skills contribute to helping students find meaning in—or *comprehend*—what they read, so that they understand the ideas that the author is communicating. Comprehension means that students can take the author's ideas and connect them with previous knowledge. Comprehending texts also equips students with new knowledge to apply in future situations. According to Gough and Tunmer's "simple view," reading is a product of, first, decoding ability and, second, linguistic comprehension, which refers to a student's ability to understand spoken words and sentences.¹⁵ Other important contributors to comprehension include metacognition, motivation, inference capacities, background knowledge, and the sociocultural context in which reading takes place. Around Grade 3, students move from learning to read to reading to learn new knowledge and connections. Thus, interventions focused on building comprehension capacities are most effective and appropriate starting in Grade 3.

Students' ability to *write* is distinct from this suite of skills but still related to their ability to read. Writing starts with individual letters and short letters, including one's name. Writing can help students demonstrate their reading comprehension, summarize and synthesize texts, and connect the ideas from a text with their previous knowledge. Overall, writing helps students articulate the mental model that they are creating, which is an important strategy for demonstrating comprehension. Though the process of learning to write comes with its own set of skills, it is nonetheless intricately related to reading.

With an understanding of the key skills in hand, we should now ask, what literacy concepts are addressed in states' early learning standards, including Delaware's?

Evidence Base for Literacy Instruction as Reflected in Standards

The following is a high-level review of the standards for pre-K and early childhood settings (Early Learning Foundations, or ELFs) and the Delaware state standards for the elementary level. In this limited analysis based on key terms, both sets of standards broadly reflect the current evidence base for the components of strong literacy instruction and are aligned to standards in place across most of the country. A high-level scan (key terms only) of state standards indicates that 50 states include receptive language, 50 include standards related to writing, 49 include standards related to print concepts, 48 include standards related to expressive language, 48 include standards related to phonological awareness, 47 include standards related to alphabetic or letter-sound knowledge, 47 include standards related to comprehension, 25 include standards related to word recognition, and 25 include standards related to interest in books.

¹⁵ Dickinson, D. K., & Brady, J. P. (2006). Toward effective support for language and literacy through professional development. In M. Zaslow & I. Martinez-Beck (Eds.), *Critical issues in early childhood professional development* (pp. 141–170). Paul H Brookes Publishing.

For early childhood settings, licensed programs adhere to the ELFs to guide professional development and curriculum design. The ELFs include a “Language and Literacy” section with subdomains focused on emergent reading and emergent writing as well as subdomains focused on communication. While these are broadly in line with the “precursor” skills outlined in the evidence base section, a further review of the ELFs alignment and utilization in teacher preparation and development would be beneficial. At a high-level review, the standards for both elementary and the ELFs are aligned, with the possible exception of word recognition, which is not explicitly listed. In other words, the state includes “receptive communication, comprehension alphabetic sound knowledge, print concepts, phonological language, books interest, and writing in its standards.”¹⁶

When thinking about these reading domains, the Delaware Council of State Chief School Officers concluded: “It is important to note that recent research tells us that these domains all involve language learning processes that interact with and reinforce one another. An integrated lesson plan and comprehensive program needs to address them all explicitly—in an interactive way—with the emphasis and time allocation that are appropriate for each student’s phase of reading development and mastery (or lack thereof) of component skills.”¹⁷ The Common Core State Standards Initiative—which Delaware has adopted—incentivizes teaching critical skills outlined in the National Reading Panel provided by No Child Left Behind’s “Reading First” grants, but these grants were targeted more toward the discrete skills outlined in the Reading Skills Section above than on more holistic engagement with print. The more recent Common Core State Standards, by contrast, emphasize comprehension across multiple forms of media, including close reading and exposure to complex, nonnarrative text at an early age. The standards also emphasize the need to practice working with advanced vocabulary and words in their context.

With the evidence base for teaching literacy in broad alignment with current state standards for both elementary and preschool settings, we now turn to how these practices are reflected in the regulations for certification.

Evidence Base for Improving Teacher Practice for Early Literacy

Research suggests that supporting teachers to implement standards specific to early literacy and reading readiness requires early childhood educators “to be immersed in knowledge about language and literacy development” in their preparation and in the course of the career.¹⁸ Effective teachers balance what to teach (content) with how to teach developmentally effective (theory, practice, and method)¹⁹ and they

¹⁶ Neuman, S. B., Copple, C., & Bredekamp, S. (2000). Learning to read and write: Developmentally appropriate practices for young children. National Association for the Education of Young Children.

¹⁷ Bredekamp, S., & Rosegrant, T. (Eds.). (1995). Reaching potentials: Transforming early childhood curriculum and assessment, Vol. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children

¹⁸ Neuman, S. B., & Cunningham, L. (2009). The impact of professional development and coaching on early language and literacy instructional practices. *American Educational Research Journal*, 46(2), 532–566.

¹⁹ Neuman, S. B., & Cunningham, L. (2009). The impact of professional development and coaching on early language and literacy instructional practices. *American Educational Research Journal*, 46(2), 532–566.

need to know how to monitor children's growth and progress.²⁰ But what types of professional development supports teachers to improve their practice once they are on the job?

A landmark study in 2009 focused on improving early literacy practices for early childhood educators in preschool settings found "there were statistically significant improvements in language and literacy practices for teachers who received coursework plus coaching" while "professional development alone had negligible effects on improvements in quality practices."²¹ This finding holds for elementary level teachers as well, with an additional caveat provided by a recent meta-analysis²² of the research that found that "brief well-executed PD [professional development] interventions have small but reasonably robust measurable effects on student literacy outcomes," with longer sessions not necessarily having a greater impact than short sessions. This indicates that focusing on the length of time served in a professional development session should not be a measure of its quality and should be viewed as part of a system for teacher growth, not the only path for teacher growth. Job-embedded professional development (JEPD) has the strongest evidence base for teacher improvement.²³

JEPD "is grounded in day-to-day teaching practice and is designed to enhance teachers' content-specific instructional practices with the intent of improving student learning."²⁴ ²⁵This type of practice does not take place in a separate course off-site from schools or classrooms—instead this is a school- or classroom-based model integrated into the workday. JEPD is a shared, ongoing process in a teaching community that focuses on direct applications of teachers in daily practice, while in dialogues with peers or coaches.²⁶ JEPD models can include coaching, collaborative teaching, peer-peer learning, and time for teacher reflection and connection about their own classroom practices.

²⁰ Job-embedded professional development: What it is, who is responsible, and how to get it done well. <https://gtlcenter.org/sites/default/files/docs/JEPD%20Issue%20Brief>.

²¹ Neuman, S. B., & Cunningham, L. (2009). The impact of professional development and coaching on early language and literacy instructional practices. *American Educational Research Journal*, 46(2), 532–566.

²² Basma, B., Savage, R. Teacher professional development and student literacy growth: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Educ Psychol Rev* 30, 457–481 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-017-9416-4>

²³ Job-embedded professional development: What it is, who is responsible, and how to get it done well. <https://gtlcenter.org/sites/default/files/docs/JEPD%20Issue%20Brief>.

²⁴ Darling-Hammond, L., & McLaughlin, M. W. (2011). Policies That Support Professional Development in an Era of Reform. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 92(6), 81–92. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0031721711109200622>

²⁵ Hirsh, S. (2009). A New Definition. *Journal of Staff Development*, 30, 10-16.

²⁶ Hawley, W., & Valli, L. (1999). The Essentials of Effective Professional Development: A New Consensus. In L. Darling-Hammond, & G. Sykes (Eds.), *Teaching as the Learning Profession: Handbook of Policy and Practice* (pp. 127-150). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

3. How do Delaware's current pathways for preparation and the current regulatory structure related to licensure and certification align to best practices for supporting literacy for young children in pre-K–Grade 3?

3a. What is the regulatory structure for certification and ongoing professional development?

This section identifies the current regulatory structure of teacher certification pathways in Delaware, including identification of congruence and gaps currently documented in law or regulation. Additionally, this review includes a brief overview of the authorities of each governing body with particular attention to the role of the SBE.

This section is organized into four parts:

- “Governing Bodies”
- “Brief Overview of Routes to Teacher Licensure and Certification”
- “Legislation and Related Regulations”
- “Areas for Further Exploration”

Key Findings

- The regulatory structure includes clear requirements for certification and role definition that align to the evidence base for preparing educators.
- The overlap among early childhood certification, Early Childhood Exceptional Children Special Education Teacher certification, and elementary certification is an area for further research due to multiple authorizing agencies for the settings in which these teachers work, the role of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) funding for serving students in the preschool space, and the differing preparation standards for professionals working within preschool to Grade 2 to meet the large spread of developmental needs.
- The role of the reading specialist as outlined in regulations and through certification may not match duties assigned within school settings, and the duties associated with this role are currently augmented by a series of other literacy-focused professionals who are not encompassed by current regulations or formal certification pathways.

- Professional development is clearly defined in the regulatory structure, and those definitions are compatible with the research base for best practices.

Part 1: Governing Bodies

There are three governing bodies with related authorities within the state of Delaware that (along with preparation institutions) ensure educators are equipped for their roles with children:

- Department of Education Licensure and Certification; Office of Early Learning; Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development
- Delaware Professional Standards Board
- State Board of Education

The Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) Licensure and Certification office and the Delaware Professional Standards Board work in coordination to ensure educators meet requirements before entering the workforce. The Licensure and Certification office promulgates rules and regulations proposed by the Professional Standards Board and approved by the State Board of Education. The DDOE is the issuing body for licenses, certificates, and permits to eligible educators seeking credentials to be educators, administrators, or other professional support service staff.

Delaware State Board Regulation and Authority

The State Board of Education consists of nine governor-appointed members, including a former Delaware State Teacher of the Year who is a current public school educator and a high school student attending a public school in the state. The board's primary function is to assist the secretary of education by providing advice and recommendations on initiatives and policies where regulation-making authority is entrusted jointly to the secretary and the SBE (Subsection 104(b)(1), 14 Delaware Code).²⁷ Board members' power, duties, and responsibilities that may be germane to pre-K–Grade 3 teacher certification policy include (but are not limited to) the following: (1) advise on the development of state policy and on the implementation of assessment programs and (2) approve rules and regulations to guide implementation of policy for Local Education Agencies (LEAs), including educator evaluation requirements and certification requirements, among others. In meeting this obligation, the State Board of Education could influence the establishment and support implementation of significant shifts in the teaching of literacy for Delaware's students, but they cannot act alone. To make significant improvement in literacy instruction, the State Board of Education must work in tandem with the Professional Standards Board to develop a system of professional development, professional standards, licensure, and certification (Subsection 1203)²⁸.

²⁷ See here for bill text: <https://delcode.delaware.gov/title14/c001/sc01/>

²⁸ See here for bill text: <https://delcode.delaware.gov/title14/c012/sc01/index.html>

Part 2: Brief Overview of Routes to Teacher Licensure and Certification

There are two sanctioned pathways into the profession: traditional and alternative. The traditional path in Delaware follows a graduation path through an accredited 4-year program. Delaware requires all teachers to hold a bachelor's degree and complete an acceptable teacher preparation program. Additionally, Delaware teachers must have passing scores on Praxis Subject Assessments aligning with the subjects and grade levels to be taught.

For the alternative path, a candidate who holds a bachelor's degree but did not complete a teacher preparation program may complete one of five alternative pathways to teacher licensure in Delaware. These pathways allow flexibility based on candidates' previous education and experience. Note that some pathways offer certification only in select subjects determined to be "critical needs." For example, teaching English language learners is considered a critical need for early childhood and falls within the purview of this report.

Licensure and Certification

Educators have three "license" options: (1) initial license, (2) continuing license, and (3) advanced license. Delaware educators may hold only one license; the type of license depends on the following experience:

- **Initial license:** A new educator with less than 1 year of licensed teaching experience will need to apply for an initial license and then pass an approved performance assessment. If they have more than 1 year but less than 4 years of licensed teaching experience, they should also apply for an initial license and will not be required to pass a performance assessment. The following certification areas do not require passing a performance assessment: elementary school counselor, secondary school counselor, driver's education teacher, school nurse, school psychologist, and school social worker.
- **Continuing license:** If an educator has more than 4 years of licensed teaching experience, they can apply for a continuing license.
- **Advanced license:** Educators with National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification should apply for an advanced license.

To practice in Delaware, all educators must have a license in addition to a standard certificate, which delineates the area in which an educator may practice. A standard certificate is issued to an educator who holds a license and who has acquired the prescribed knowledge, skill, or education to practice in a particular area, to teach a particular subject, or to instruct a particular category of students. A standard certificate is valid regardless of the assignment or employment status of the holder, provided that the educator's license remains current and valid. A certificate is not subject to renewal.

If an applicant is applying for an initial license, they must simultaneously apply for a standard certificate. When considering early literacy certifications, the early childhood (birth–Grade 2) and elementary (K–6) certifications are the primary classroom roles. However, specific certifications support lead teachers in their literacy instruction and directly support children, calling for a broader analysis of the support

system within school settings. These roles include reading specialist, teacher of English learners, and special education teachers.

HB207 was passed in June 2021, removing the requirement that applicants for initial and continuing educator licenses obtain a passing score on an approved performance assessment. Implementation details will be established in the coming months.

Table 2
Delaware Teacher Certification Overview

Certification type	Specific literacy focus in Regulations	Authority/role /job titles granted	Preparation equivalency	Assessment requirements
Early childhood teacher	No	Birth–Grade 2 teacher	Bachelor’s degree or equivalent	Passing score of 160 on Praxis Subject Assessment—Education of Young Children (ETS test 5024)
Elementary teacher standard certificate ^a	Partial: No specific literacy requirements or hours are listed. However, candidate may use the early childhood/generalist certificate, which includes demonstration of comprehensive literacy preparation.	K–6	Bachelor’s degree or equivalent	(A) Praxis Subject Assessment—Elementary Education: Multiple Subjects (5001), including 157 on Reading and Language Arts Subtest (5002); or (B) Before 2020: Praxis Elementary Education—Content Knowledge for Teaching (7801), including 156 on Reading and Language Arts CKT Subtest (7802); or (C) Praxis Elementary Education—Content Knowledge for Teaching (7811), including 156 on Reading and Language Arts CKT Subtest (7812)
Reading specialist	Yes	K–12	3 years of teaching plus master’s or master’s degree equivalent	Praxis 5301 or Praxis 5302

Early Childhood Exceptional Children Special Education Teacher	No	Birth–Grade 2		None
Special education teacher of students with disabilities	Diagnosis and instruction for reading/literacy	K–12	Bachelor’s degree or equivalent	151 on Praxis Subject Assessment—Special Education: Core Knowledge and Applications (ETS test 5354)
Teacher of English learners	Yes. Teaching Literacy for English Learners (3 credits)	K–12	Bachelor’s degree or equivalent	Praxis Subject Assessment—English to Speakers of Other Languages (ETS test 5362) passing score of 149

^a In the 2004 version of this certificate, requirements included “3.2.3.2 Six semester hours in literacy including reading, writing, and children’s literature.” The current version does not.

<https://regulations.delaware.gov/register/june2004/final/7%20DE%20Reg%201747%2006-01-04.htm>

Related Legislation and Regulation for Preparation SB51²⁹ and SB133³⁰

SB51 passed in 2013 and raised the requirements to enter teaching. As of April 2021, aspiring teachers in Delaware must pass performance and content examinations before receiving their initial license. They must also demonstrate strong academic performance prior to entering educator preparation programs (EPPs) because these programs can admit only those students who have a 3.0 grade point average or are in the top 50 percentile of the GPA distribution. However, EPPs may waive these requirements for up to 10% of the teaching class.

Delaware’s EPPs also need to include direct experience in a classroom setting, consisting of at least 10 weeks of full-time teaching with supervision and “instruction for prospective elementary school teachers on research-based strategies for childhood literacy,” and candidates must pass both content and performance examinations to be considered a completer of the program. SB51 requires graduates’ performance to be monitored for at least 5 years following graduation from a program. This monitoring requirement became the Teacher Preparation Program Report Cards³¹.

On June 24th, 2021, Senate Bill 133 passed the House with forty yes votes and one absent and is likely to be sign into law by Governor John Carney. The Act incorporates the science of reading into Delaware’s public and charter schools by requiring, beginning July 1, 2023, that teacher preparation programs

²⁹ See here for bill text: <https://www.doe.k12.de.us/domain/398>

³⁰ See here for bill text: <https://legis.delaware.gov/BillDetail/68682>

³¹ See here for bill text: <https://regulations.delaware.gov/AdminCode/title14/200/290.shtml>

which prepare elementary school, early childhood education, or special education teachers or reading specialist to provide instruction in evidence-based reading instruction. In addition, it requires the Department of Education to establish a minimum number of hours of training that instructors in education preparation programs must complete in evidence-based reading instruction.

Part 3: Legislation and Related Regulations

The state of Delaware Title 14 Education regulations pertaining to licensure and certification include descriptions of the following selected roles. These roles are discussed based on their alignment to the scope of this review and do not include all roles described in regulation.

Early Childhood Teacher Certification (Birth–Grade 2)

- Regulation 1520³² was last amended in 2020.
- The certificate is applicable for teachers of students from birth to Grade 2.
- Teachers can receive the early childhood certificate if they have (1) obtained an Early Childhood Generalist certificate from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards or (2) a bachelor's degree from an accredited early childhood education institution or (3) successfully completed an alternative route teaching certification.
- Candidates need a passing score of 160 on Praxis education of young children (5024).

The structure of the early childhood certificate was overhauled in 2005,³³ from a birth-to-kindergarten model to a birth-to-Grade 2 model. The name of the certification was changed from early care and education teacher to early childhood teacher. At the time, there was a question regarding the necessity of retaining the course count after 2006; there is no longer a mention of the course count. Before the overhaul, a person could receive an early childhood certification through graduating from a nationally or state-accredited college with a major in early childhood education, a bachelor's degree from an accredited university in elementary or secondary education and 18 additional credits, or a bachelor's degree in a nonteaching subject with 45 credits of coursework in early childhood development. In 2007³⁴ the new regulation was implemented to align with administrative code 1505.

Elementary Teacher Regulation (Grades K–6)

- Regulation 1521 was last amended in 2020.
- The certificate is applicable for teachers of students in Grades K–6.
- To earn a standard certificate, a candidate must obtain a certificate from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, receive an elementary education degree, or successfully complete an alternative-route teaching certification.

³² See here for bill text: <https://regulations.delaware.gov/AdminCode/title14/1500/1520.shtml>

³³ See here for bill text: <https://regulations.delaware.gov/documents/May2005.pdf>

³⁴ See here for bill text: <https://regulations.delaware.gov/documents/November2007c.pdf>

- Candidates must also pass the Multiple Subjects Praxis (5001) or Praxis Content Knowledge for Teaching (7801 or 7811), with subtest scores specified.
- In 2005, the regulation was changed from primary to elementary teacher. As summarized at the time: “The amendment to this regulation is necessary to change the grade span of the certificate from K–4 to K–6. This change aligns with No Child Left Behind and is also aligned with configuration of Delaware elementary schools. It will also be renamed Standard Certificate Elementary Teacher (Grades K–6) to be more reflective of its subject.”³⁵ At the time, a general bachelor’s degree was also acceptable, so long as it included 9 hours of English, 12 hours of sciences, 9 hours of social studies, 9 hours of math, and 6 hours of fine arts, and pedagogical knowledge, or a bachelor’s in an accredited elementary education program. Previously, a bachelor’s degree in primary education was required, or a bachelor’s degree in elementary education, including 6 hours of children’s development, 3 hours of family development, 3 hours of early childhood professionalism, and 6 hours of “Literacy including reading, writing, and children’s literature.” A middle school credential with an additional 15 hours of K–4 coursework was also a possibility.
- This regulation was updated in 2020, striking the option to earn a degree in any content area and completing 15 credits or the equivalent in professional development in the area of the certificate; this option no longer applies to elementary teachers because they provide instruction in core content areas. Also, as of 2020, the Meritorious New Teacher Candidate Designation is a reciprocal license that no longer exists.

Reading Specialist Regulations

- Regulation 1521 was last amended in 2013.
- According to Regulation 1581,³⁶ reading specialists are educators “whose responsibility is to improve reading achievement in their assigned school or district position,” including through “one-on-one or small-group diagnostic teaching of reading. Responsibilities may include coaching and leading school reading programs.”
- To become certified as a reading specialist, a candidate must have 3 years of teaching experience and a master’s degree in reading from an accredited college or university, or an additional 30 general credits plus 24 credits to supplement the 3 teaching years specifically focused on assessment and instruction in reading and writing; literacy in the content areas; teaching English as a second language; literacy acquisition; coaching adult learners; and a practicum that applies learned strategies. Regulation 1501 4.3³⁷ indicates that reading specialists are eligible for a salary supplement for certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.
- The candidate must pass Praxis Subject Assessment—Reading Specialist (5301); however, this requirement is not currently listed in the regulatory language.
- Regulation 1501 4.3³⁸ indicates that reading specialists are eligible for a salary supplement for certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

³⁵ See here for bill text: <https://regulations.delaware.gov/documents/May2018c.pdf>

³⁶ See here for bill text: <https://regulations.delaware.gov/AdminCode/title14/1500/1581.shtml>

³⁷ See here for bill text: <https://regulations.delaware.gov/AdminCode/title14/1500/1501.shtml>

³⁸ See here for bill text: <https://regulations.delaware.gov/AdminCode/title14/1500/1501.shtml>

Early Childhood Exceptional Children Special Education Teacher (Birth–Grade 2)

- Regulation 1570³⁹ was last amended in 2020.
- Early Childhood Exceptional Children Special Education Teachers are educators “whose primary assignment is teaching students with disabilities from birth to Grade 2 in Delaware public schools.” Teachers who work with grade K–2 students with disabilities may be qualified to do so either through this certificate or a standard Special Education Teacher of Students with Disabilities certificate, outlined in the next section.
- This certification only qualifies teachers to “instruct a particular category of students” rather than preparing them to teach in a content or subject area. An educator must also hold at least one content area certification. Moreover, Early Childhood Exceptional Children Special Education Teachers are not prepared to work with students who have autism or severe intellectual abilities, are deaf or hard of hearing, or have visual impairments. These groups of students must be served by teachers with specialties in those particular areas who are separately certified.
- To be certified as an Early Childhood Exceptional Children Special Education Teacher, a candidate needs an Exceptional Needs Specialist certificate from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards or a bachelor’s degree in early childhood exceptional children special education. They can also qualify by supplementing a bachelor’s degree with 15 credits in child development, family partnership, assessment, curriculum, intervention, and collaboration—each with a particular emphasis on young children with special needs.
- A candidate is not required to pass a subject assessment to receive this certification.

Special Education Teacher of Students with Disabilities (K–12)

- Regulation 1571⁴⁰ was last amended in 2020.
- Regulation 1571 delineates the requirements for a teacher to work with special education in grades K–12. An educator must also hold at least one content area certification. Delaware is one of 28 states that currently maintain stand-alone special education licensure with a K–12 grade band for special education students with high-incidence disabilities, as opposed to a requirement that candidates receive a general education certificate before obtaining the special education certificate (Blanton et al. 2017). Delaware candidates must receive an initial general education certificate before obtaining a specialist concentration. According to state regulations teachers are not required to obtain critical training in areas like literacy however, Delaware teacher preparation programs do require specific elementary coursework for program completion.
- The certificate prepares candidates to teach groups of students with particular needs, not content or subject areas. The certificate also does not qualify teachers to work with students

³⁹ See here for bill text: <https://regulations.delaware.gov/AdminCode/title14/1500/1570.shtml>

⁴⁰ See here for bill text: <https://regulations.delaware.gov/AdminCode/title14/1500/1571.shtml>

with autism or visual impairment or who are deaf or hard of hearing; those groups must be served by teachers with specialties in those particular areas.

- To be certified as a special education teacher, a candidate needs an Exceptional Needs Specialist certificate from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards or a bachelor's degree in special education or its equivalent. A candidate can also receive a bachelor's degree in another subject supplemented by 15 credits including Diagnosis and Instruction for Reading/Literacy, behavioral analysis, special education curriculum and instruction, and individualized educational plan development. This alternative credit route expands the number of pathways available and is available among special education but not general education teachers.
- Candidates need to pass Praxis Subject Assessment—Special Education: Core Knowledge and Applications (ETS test 5354) with a score of 151.

Teacher of English Learners (K–12)

- Regulation 1562⁴¹ was last amended in 2021.
- Regulation 1562 outlines the requirements for certification as a teacher of English learners. Successful completion of the certificate allows candidates to teach in Grades K–12.
- To be certified as a teacher of English learners, candidates must demonstrate proficiency in English and receive a bachelor's degree in teaching English learners or a degree with 15 credits of professional development in Methods of Teaching English as a Second Language (3 credits), Second Language Acquisition (3 credits), Teaching Literacy for English Learners (3 credits), Second Language Testing (3 credits), and Structure of the English Language (3 credits).
- Candidates also need to pass Praxis Subject Assessment—English to Speakers of Other Languages (ETS test 5362) with a score of 149.
- Along with early and general special education, teachers of English language learners can receive their certification through a 15-credit professional development sequence. The state has moved away from this option for early childhood and elementary teachers.

Other Reading Support Professionals

In fiscal years 2019 through 2021, funding was included in the state budget for 10-month reading interventionists in qualifying schools that serve K–Grade 4 and have greater than or equal to 60% low socioeconomic status or greater than or equal to 20% English learner enrollment.

At this time, there are no statutory or regulatory requirements regarding the qualifications of reading interventionists.

School districts may also choose to employ literacy coaches or other individuals who serve to support reading services for students. A common example of additional staffing capacity to support literacy is the Reading Assist program.⁴² Reading Assist fellows are affiliated with AmeriCorps and trained to

⁴¹ See here for bill text: <https://regulations.delaware.gov/AdminCode/title14/1500/1562.shtml>

⁴² This review did not include an analysis of the Reading Assist program or a review of its alignment to best practices. Inclusion in this report is limited to acknowledgement of the role this program plays in school settings. For more information, see <https://readingassist.org/>.

implement a specific reading intervention program aimed at supporting the children scoring in the bottom 10% in literacy. At this time, there are no statutory or regulatory requirements regarding qualifications for these positions. As previously noted and further explored in the Summary of Considerations and Recommendation section, the full support system at the school level should be further researched to understand how these myriad roles intersect currently and how they could best be leveraged as a team to address literacy challenges within school sites.

Delaware Department of Education Regulation 290⁴³ outlines educator preparation requirements. The regulation requires that EPPs receive the approval of the DDOE. A few specific conditions for approval relevant to this scope are included here:

- Beginning in the 1st year of the program, candidates shall participate in a supervised clinical experience.
- EPPs for prospective elementary school teachers “shall provide instruction on research and evidence-based best practices and strategies for teaching childhood literacy” in alignment with Delaware ELA standards, which teachers will be prepared for via a “deep conceptual understanding of the content that extends beyond basic procedural understanding.”
- Topics to be taught include oral and written learning; structure of language, including phonology, orthography, morphology, semantics, syntax, and discourse organization; phonemic awareness, phonics, and word recognition; fluent and automatic reading of text, vocabulary, text comprehension, conventions of language, and written and spoken expression; the impact of disability on literacy; the impact of English language acquisition on literacy development.
- Teachers must pass both a content and performance examination to complete the program:
 - Content assessment took effect on July 1, 2015.
 - Performance assessment requirement took effect on July 1, 2015.
- Candidates shall be formally evaluated at least three times during their time in the program.
- Programs must be evaluated by providing to the Department of Education “data on program graduates, graduate performance, and graduate performance and effectiveness.”

The regulation specifies eligibility for the Alternative Routes to Teacher Licensure and Certification Program, which may enter into an agreement with the department to grant certifications for 3 years. Programs must offer at least 120 hours of preservice training, which includes “an orientation to the policies, organization, and curriculum of the employing school district or charter school; instructional strategies and classroom management; and child or adolescent development.” There are also supervision and evaluation requirements laid out.

There are slightly different requirements for teachers seeking alternative certification in special education, including more intense supervision requirements like being observed and provided with feedback at least three times in their 1st year, and the requirement that candidates for alternative certification in special education complete the requirement within 3 years.

⁴³ See here for bill text: <https://regulations.delaware.gov/AdminCode/title14/200/290.shtml>

Professional Development Requirements in Regulation

For the issuance and renewal of a continuing license, educators must complete 90 clock hours of professional development, with 45 hours directly relating to work with students and staff.⁴⁴ For an advanced license, an educator must complete the National Board's certification renewal process.

The types of qualifying activities and engagements to meet each of these levels are detailed within 1511 Issuance and Renewal of Continuing License⁴⁵ and 1598 Delaware Professional Development Standards.⁴⁶ Taken together, these two regulations set out a framework and definitions for what constitutes quality professional learning in Delaware. To quote the regulations, "professional development means a combination of focused, in-depth learning, practice, feedback, reflection, and expert support experiences designed to change participants' attitudes, insights, and perspectives and ultimately results in improved professional practice. Effective professional development programs include ample opportunities for knowledge acquisition, skill mastery, descriptive feedback, and refinement of practice in the work setting as per 14 DE Admin. Code 1598 Delaware Professional Development Standards."

As discussed under RQ2, Job-Embedded Professional Development (JEPD) is considered the most impactful on teacher practice and includes myriad activities and engagement types, all within a school or classroom setting and in collaboration with peers or mentors. Within 1511, the types of professional development that qualify for clock hours are also well-within the bounds of what would be considered JEPD if also connected to peer–peer learning. For example, the following definitions follow JEPD-aligned professional development options:

- **Action research:** "A process by which educational issues and problems are identified and researched at either the school or the classroom level. By integrating current research into these settings and engaging the relevant educators in research activities, the findings can be applied immediately to solve the targeted problems more quickly."
- **Mentoring:** "Activities, training, and service in mentoring support or assistance provided through a formally organized department-approved comprehensive induction program or such supplemental mentoring programs as required by regulation or the educator's employing authority."
- **Microcredential:** "Evidence-based professional development activities that are competency-based, personalized, on-demand, and sharable. Educators must demonstrate their competence via evidence submitted and reviewed by trained evaluators."
- **Professional Learning Community (PLC):** "Consists of a minimum of four educators with the following attributes: supportive and shared leadership, collective creativity, shared values and vision, supportive conditions, shared personal practice, and focus over an extended period of time on improving student learning with an accountability measure built into their process. An extended period of time would be considered a minimum of 10 consecutive weeks and a minimum accumulation of 15 clock hours."

⁴⁴ See the DDOE's License Renewal page for more details: <https://www.doe.k12.de.us/Page/3507>.

⁴⁵ See here for bill text: <https://regulations.delaware.gov/AdminCode/title14/1500/1598.shtml>

⁴⁶ See here for bill text <https://regulations.delaware.gov/AdminCode/title14/1500/1511.shtml#TopOfPage>

Based on the regulatory structure in place, Delaware is well-positioned to pursue strong job-embedded professional development models on the site level.

Funding and Budget Landscape

Although not directly aligned with the state's certification structure, the state legislature has made a number of investments to support reading and early literacy in recent years. In FY19–FY21 funding was provided through the Student Success Block Grant for reading interventionists. Additionally, in FY20, the Opportunity Funding program was initiated. Although not directly tied to reading interventions, the program provides additional resources that schools and districts may choose to use to support early literacy initiatives. In 2021, the Delaware legislature passed a bill to make this funding permanent.

Stakeholder Views

Interviews with stakeholders on the structure of the roles, associated certifications, and pathways available for early childhood and elementary teachers consistently indicated the preschool space as an area for further review. Despite preschool services being offered for both children receiving special services and typically developing children, a small number of children are served within district-run programs, and the links between preschool and K–3 could be strengthened.

Additionally, stakeholders indicated the role of the reading specialist has a variety of duties and tasks that are shared across a number of other literacy-focused professionals within a school building. Multiple stakeholders indicated a significant caseload of struggling readers causing district and school leadership to engage more literacy professionals to directly connect with students. A related problem to the high-rates of demand on reading specialists is the lack of time available to provide model lessons, coaching sessions, or direct intervention with students as intended based on the regulations and the preparation descriptions for the title of reading specialist. Some districts have added other roles focused on direct student support or on teacher capacity-building through a coaching role based on local decision-making at the district level.

Areas for Further Research

The differing roles across districts may make it difficult to provide state-level supports or professional development that will impact improved literacy without a review of how these roles are utilized to meet the current student and school needs.

- Certification pathways may not be equivalent as described in regulations on the preparation side and on the placement side within a school setting, based on the number of options for each role and reports from stakeholders that duties assigned to each role have great variability across districts.
- Literacy requirements are consistently included in K–12 roles, but early childhood certificate requirements are not as explicit. Consider a further review of early literacy development within

early childhood certifications and programs. This review should examine their alignment to ELF (described previously) and their alignment to elementary preparation.

- Screening and assessment for literacy are considered essential practices for increasing literacy achievement, but these are not surfaced in the course requirements for certification.

3b. What are the teacher preparation and professional development pathways for current Delaware educators, and how are they prepared to support literacy development for children in pre-K–Grade 3?

WestEd conducted a review of the current processes and procedures for candidates to achieve certification in early childhood and early childhood elementary in the state of Delaware with input from stakeholders in addition to a review of publicly available information for each preparation program. The goal of the analysis was to understand the current pathways for Delaware teachers and how they are prepared to support literacy development for young children.

Key Findings

- Delaware teaching candidates have strong access to a variety of program options.
- High-quality, collaborative, and job-embedded professional development is a key lever for boosting literacy practices for teachers.
- Individual professional development could be better incentivized through compensation or other measures.
- Further analysis of literacy roles currently in place at the school level would inform possible changes to regulations or preparation pathways.

Delaware Teacher Preparation Programs

In 2018, the Delaware Department of Education crafted the Education Preparation Program Report⁴⁷ for each college and university in the state. The state uses these reports to monitor programs and ensure they can develop quality educators. Each report contains six scored domains: Recruitment, Candidate Performance, Employment and Placement, Retention, Graduate Performance, and Perceptions. Updated reports are expected in 2021.

⁴⁷ For more information visit <https://www.doe.k12.de.us/domain/398>

The following is a summary of the teacher preparation programs.⁴⁸ Each program must meet the requirements of Regulation 290, as discussed in section 3a of this report.

Delaware State University

Delaware State University⁴⁹ currently offers Bachelor of Science degrees in early childhood education (ages 3–8), elementary education (Grades K–6), and physical education. Graduate degrees include education leadership; MED and dual-title MA TESOL/bilingual education; and M.ED. in educational leadership. Doctoral degrees include educational leadership and EDD with two concentrations, K–12 or higher education.

University of Delaware

The university offers undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral degrees.⁵⁰ Undergraduate programs include a major in early childhood education/special education and elementary teacher education. Graduate programs include a master's degree in teaching English as a second language and a specific master's in literacy that prepares Delaware educators to become certified reading/literacy specialists. In addition, the university offers many doctoral programs including a Ph.D. in education with a specialization in literacy.

Wilmington University

Wilmington University⁵¹ offers undergraduate, graduate, doctoral, and certificate programs. Undergraduate programs include a BS degree in early care and education (birth–Grade 2), elementary education (K–6), and education studies. Graduate programs include master's degrees in education for current educators, becoming a teacher, education (nonlicensure), and special education, and Master of Education degrees in reading and school leadership. The college houses 13 doctoral programs, including reading specialist, English speakers of other languages, and special education: K–12 teachers of students with disabilities.

Relay Delaware

Relay⁵² offers the following relevant programs to this scan: Master of Arts in teaching, with the option to major in elementary education, and special education (Grades K–12). In addition, Relay offers a Master of Arts in teaching with a teaching residency. This program is tailored to those new to the teaching profession. Students will earn their degree, teaching certificate, and hands-on classroom experience. The teaching residency program allows students to major in elementary education and special education (Grades K–12).

⁴⁸ For more information visit <https://www.doe.k12.de.us/domain/398>

⁴⁹ For more information visit <https://www.desu.edu/about>

⁵⁰ For more information visit <http://www.education.udel.edu/overview-of-programs/>

⁵¹ For more information visit <https://www.wilmu.edu/education/indexe.aspx>

⁵² For more information visit <https://www.relay.edu/location/delaware>

Wesley College

The Wesley College^{53 54} Education Department administers undergraduate initial teacher preparation programs in elementary education (K–6) and physical/health education. At the graduate level, the department offers a Master of Arts in teaching (MAT), an initial teacher preparation program. Undergraduate programs include education K–6, educational studies, physical education K–12, and special education (dual certification). The college's graduate programs include a Master of Arts in teaching (initial certification program) and a Master of Education (M.Ed.).

Delaware Technical and Community College

This system includes four campuses: Delaware Technical and Community Colleges, Dover, Georgetown, and Wilmington. They offer a wide variety of teacher preparation certificate programs, including Associates of Art in teaching in elementary education and 13 different certificate programs, including English speakers of other languages, reading specialist, and Special Education: Early Childhood Exceptional Children that prepare educators to serve students with a wide range of abilities.

⁵³ Wesley College and DSU are in the process of a merger.

⁵⁴ For more information visit <https://wesley.edu/academics/programs/undergraduate-programs/education-department>

Table 3
Delaware Teacher Preparation Programs Overview

State-approved school	CAEP accredited ^a	DDOE program tiers (2018) ^b	NCTQ UG elementary program percentage (2016) ^a	NCTQ early reading grade	Teacher prep program enrollment	Teacher prep program completers	Licensing exam pass rate	Net price ^b
Wilmington University UG		Tier 1, Tier 2		B	135	124	100%	\$14,955
Wilmington University G	Yes	Tier 1, Tier 2	97%	D	-	-	-	-
University of Delaware	Yes	Tier 2	—	A	876	210	98%	\$16,286
Wesley College	Yes	No Program Report	25%	B	22	15	100%	\$23,823
Delaware State University	Yes	No Program Report	72%	A	32	30	96%	\$12,736
Relay Graduate School of Education	No	—	—	-	-	-	-	-

^a For more information visit <https://www.teachercertificationdegrees.com/schools/delaware/#1>
^b For more information visit <https://www.doe.k12.de.us/Page/3902>

Delaware Alternative Pathways to Certification

Delaware currently offers alternative pathways to certification:

- The Alternative Routes to Certification Program
- The Delaware Transition to Teaching Partnership (DT3P)

These programs provide entry into the profession that differs from the traditional route via preparation program.

Application Process⁵⁵

After candidates have completed the requirements for teaching license in Delaware, to gain an initial teaching license they must submit the following documents:

- Official transcripts of a bachelor's degree and teacher preparation program;
- Verification of teaching experience submitted through the Delaware Educator Data System (DEEDS);
- Passing scores on the appropriate Praxis exam
- Submission of completed application and fees

Teacher Outlook

During the 2016–2017 school year, there were an estimated 228 public schools serving a K–12 student population of 136,264. With approximately 9,208 public school teachers.⁵⁶

According to the National Center for Education Statistics in the 2016–2017 school year, there was an average of 350 job openings for elementary school teachers.⁵⁷ There was no data available for preschool-teacher or kindergarten-teacher openings.

Professional Development Pathways

A critical finding of the data review noted that 65% of the current talent pool is considered veteran (more than 5 years) but not yet eligible for retirement. Simultaneously, recent trends indicate lower numbers of newly certified teachers. This indicates a need for a deep investment in high-quality and job-embedded professional development in order to have the greatest impact on practices for teaching literacy.

⁵⁵ For more information visit <https://www.doe.k12.de.us/certification>

⁵⁶ For more information visit <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/stnfis.asp>

⁵⁷ For more information visit <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/tableGenerator.aspx>

There are a number of new initiatives and new courses focused on professional learning pathways to support improved literacy. Many are slated to begin in Fall 2021 and are therefore included in Appendix A of this report without content review or analysis by the research team. Promising initiatives planned at this time include a series of professional-learning cohorts, such as grants provided to schools under the Reimagined Professional Learning Grants Initiative. Professional educators who complete the courses and the corresponding microcredentials will receive professional-learning clock hours, certification as offered by the professional-learning provider, and badges for each microcredential completed.

Additional professional learning opportunities provide specialized skills related to teaching literacy, such as the Back to Basics–AIM Pathways which is accredited by the International Dyslexia Association (IDA). The AIM Pathways platform houses multiple courses aligned to the IDA Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading as well as theoretical models of the science of reading. Another series of microcredentials focused on literacy are coming available in 2021, with educators receiving badges for completion.

The research team was unable to gather information on available incentives for educators to participate in professional development. Stakeholders raised the issue consistently in interviews that incentives exist and more are desired, but the team was unable to confirm an inventory of incentives at this time. However, one confirmed example includes funding available for higher education courses and degrees. Currently, agreements have been established with the University of Delaware and Salisbury University. Funding through the Delaware Literacy Plan covers the cost of tuition, fees, and books for each course, and there is no out-of-pocket cost for participants who meet all completion requirements.

While the emerging programs and pathways include promising content, the implementation by individual teachers across the state would be strengthened if supported by teams of teachers participating in related literacy initiatives within a school site. Supporting principals and district leadership with methods and models for leveraging available professional development for their teacher teams in a coordinated approach for their school could amplify the impact of these courses.

Stakeholder Views

Stakeholders indicated a strong relationship between the teacher preparation institutions and the broader state system of certification and licensure. Generally, stakeholders report strong preparation programs with some variation based on role and program completed. This variation could be due to coursework or to differences in clinical focus, but that is outside the scope of this study. The individual preparation of professionals is perceived to be aligned to their titles, but there are a number of emerging team structures that utilize different role configurations to meet student needs and therefore fall outside of the formal pathways between preparation and certification.

To explain the increase in other types of literacy roles, stakeholders indicated a belief that reading specialists are underutilized at some districts and overwhelmed with triage processes rather than opportunities to provide professional development or direct practice with students. Classroom teachers

could also be better utilized to support a schoolwide literacy initiative. Many stakeholders reported an interest in expanding opportunities for clinical experiences, coaching programs, communities of practice, and other types of job-embedded supports for beginning and veteran educators to improve literacy practice. Stakeholder perception indicated that incentives for growth are based on individual initiative and may or may not align to a reciprocal increase in compensation. As a result, some stakeholders suggested a review of incentives for professional development that includes more significant fiscal support and a review of overall salary structures based on role.

4. How does Delaware compare to states and countries that have seen increases in student achievement and growth in reading and literacy over time in their regulatory structure, certification process, and preparation pathways for supporting literacy?

In order to explore potential areas for improvement and assess Delaware's alignment to current best practices, the research team completed a comparison with states determined to have strong literacy standards and instruction by recognized experts in the field and other comparable traits. The research team utilized the International Literacy Association's 2017 standards for preparing literacy professionals, Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), and IDA accreditation status. The results of this process are included in Appendix A of this report.

Key Findings

- Model states have a unified approach to prioritizing the science of reading and building teacher capacity to adapt literacy practices to match through professional development or coordination with preparation institutions. Some include specific assessments or measures of performance related to teacher proficiency in the science of reading.
- For international comparisons, there is a range of different approaches to identifying the boundary between early childhood education and childcare. Additionally, entry into the education sector in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries is very rigorous, with most countries only recruiting teacher candidates from the top graduates. Lastly, internationally, the definition of mandates and incentives does not consistently align with American definitions.

Methodology

States were selected due to their use of microcredentials, state-funded pre-K access, and citation in recent research for innovative practices related to teacher certification and/or early literacy.

4a. What are the regulatory structures and preparation pathways in place in model states and countries?

Four of the model states, Colorado, Kansas, Mississippi, and Rhode Island, utilize accreditation by ILA CAEP and/or IDA for teacher preparation programs.⁵⁸ Only one model state, Iowa, does not use accreditation by ILA CAEP or IDA for teacher preparation. The review found that the use of accreditation by ILA CAEP or IDA varies across Arkansas teacher preparation programs, and it is unclear if or when programs are accredited by ILA CAEP or IDA in the state of North Carolina. Each of the model states, Arkansas, Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Rhode Island, align literacy standards taught in teacher preparation programs.

By grade structure, four model states, Colorado, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Rhode Island, teaching certification is comparable to the state of Delaware. Three states', Arkansas, Iowa, and Kansas, grade structure for certification have more variations than Delaware. Five of the chosen model states require teachers to pass a literacy assessment for initial certification: Arkansas, Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, and Mississippi. The literacy assessment required across the five states varied between state-specific and Praxis exams. North Carolina and Rhode Island are the only states that do not require teachers to pass a literacy assessment for certification; however, they both require teachers to complete a course focused on the science of reading during their teacher preparation program.

Four of the seven model states offer different types of specialization like microcredentials and specialist roles for educators. One state, North Carolina, does not currently offer additional specialization. The review of Iowa was unclear; it currently offers a microexternship that would need to be further researched to validate as a specialization. Two identified states require teachers to pass a literacy exam for advanced certification while five do not; however, three of these four states require that teachers complete additional credits in literacy. For more details, see Appendix B.

Models for Consideration: Rhode Island, Colorado, North Carolina, Mississippi

Four states—Rhode Island, Colorado, North Carolina, and Mississippi—outlined in Appendix B are on the forefront of a literacy reform movement taking hold across the country. These states prioritize teaching based on the science of reading through mandated requirements for teacher training and a variety of professional learning and preparation coordination efforts. As a result, some of these states have already seen impacts on their literacy rates. For example, Mississippi celebrated its performance on the most recent National Assessment of Education Progress in a 2019 press release:

⁵⁸ Evaluating or analyzing these different standards is outside of the scope of this review.

“Mississippi has achieved the first place spot in the nation for gains on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as the Nation’s Report Card, with 4th grade students making the largest score gains from 2017 to 2019 in reading and mathematics, 8th grade students outpacing the nation for growth in mathematics, and 8th grade reading holding steady ... Mississippi is the only state in the nation to show significant increases in three of the four core NAEP subjects in 2019. The state’s progress sparked national conversations around the reason for this improvement, as captured by the title of a 2019 *New York Times* op-ed “There Is a Right Way to Teach Reading, and Mississippi Knows It.” The article is referring to the same key ingredient as State Superintendent Cary Wright: [‘It’s all around the science of reading. That is really paying off for us.’](#)”

The shift toward instruction that is embedded with a strong grasp of the “science of reading” operates on a theory of action that tightly binds together research, policy, and practice: Policies in all four states center the state’s instructional strategies around research on the science of reading, and in turn, teachers are trained on a specific set of research-based literacy domains. In Mississippi, the approach was first codified in the 2013 Literacy-Based Promotion Act; in Colorado, it was included in the 2012 Reading to Ensure Academic Development (READ) Act; in North Carolina, it was recently promulgated in the Excellent Public Schools Act of 2021; and in Rhode Island, the Rhode Island Right to Read Act passed in July of 2019.

Each of the acts specifically defines the science of reading and particular reading skills on which the state’s schools must focus. For instance, [in Colorado](#), the READ Act stipulates the following: “Instructional programming and services for teaching students to read must be evidence based and scientifically based and must focus on reading competency in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency including oral skills, and reading comprehension.” These definitions impacted teacher preparation and ongoing professional development across states.

Rhode Island

The Rhode Island Right to Read Act⁵⁹ passed in July 2019 requires educators to exhibit either proficiency in or awareness of the knowledge and practices of the science of reading and structured literacy. Proficiency or awareness requirements will be determined based on the certification being used for the educator's current employment position. In addition, local education agencies are required to provide professional learning for educators to support these requirements. The Right to Read Act also requires educator preparation programs (EPPs) to address these requirements within their programs.

Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) requires educators to exhibit proficiency in the science of reading and structured literacy by completing a training that includes a classroom application component from an approved professional-learning provider. RIDE in partnership with its online learning management system, BRIDGE-RI, developed a free online awareness training to LEAs. Educators who successfully complete an approved proficiency training are eligible to apply for a literacy/dyslexia

⁵⁹ For more information <https://www.ride.ri.gov/InstructionAssessment/Literacy/RhodeIslandRighttoReadAct.aspx#4419340-awareness>

endorsement. There will be a series of modules with a total of 8–10 hours of content available August 2021. As stated by the Rhode Island Right to Read Act, by the 2023–2024 school year, all pre-K–5 classroom educators, K–12 special educators, reading specialist/coaches, and ESOL, bilingual, and dual-language educators must demonstrate proficiency in the knowledge and practice of the science of reading and structured literacy.

Colorado

In Colorado⁶⁰, current K–Grade 3 teachers must participate in at least 45 hours of evidence-based reading training that addresses literacy content standards by January 31, 2022. After the 2022–2023 school year, this requirement is extended to new teachers as well. The READ Act allocated around 30 million dollars in intervention funding, for which districts become ineligible if their teachers are not trained. Options to meet the training requirement include earning a reading teacher or reading specialist endorsement; passing an SBE-approved assessment of knowledge of teaching reading alternative assessment (ETS Praxis Teaching Reading: Elementary 5205) in the event that their training does not have an end-of-course assessment; completing an undergraduate, graduate, or license renewal course with an end-of-course assessment; or completing a Department of Education, district, or board of cooperative education approved training. There is a list of preapproved trainings and a process for a district to get another training approved.

North Carolina

In North Carolina⁶¹, according to the recently passed Excellent Public Schools Act of 2021, current pre-K–5 teachers are required to undergo a training in the science of reading, integrate digital and technical intervention resources, and assess kindergarten students. For renewal of their licenses, elementary teachers must receive three credits in the science of reading. And new teachers must be trained in preparation programs that include coursework on the science of reading. As part of the state's literacy instruction reform initiatives, the University of North Carolina's Board of Governors charged the University of North Carolina system with establishing a common research-based framework for literacy instruction that could shape the outcomes of the state's teacher preparation programs. The framework is intended to create consistency across the state's education preparation system, ensure that teaching candidates are equipped with knowledge of research-based competencies in literacy, and leave candidates prepared to implement these competencies—all with an eye toward augmenting literacy achievement for all students in the state, including students from culturally diverse backgrounds. The authors note that their framework aligns with previous state reports, the latest research, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), and the Institute of Education Sciences' "[Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade](#)" practice guide. Thus, whereas the National Reading and Early Literacy panels were largely focused on competencies from the

⁶⁰ For more information visit <https://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy>

⁶¹ For more information visit <https://www.ncleg.gov/BillLookup/2021/S387>

student acquisition perspective, the North Carolina framework focuses more directly on the role that *teachers* play in helping students acquire these competencies.

The framework was recently folded into the state's reading instruction reform law, which defines the science of reading as "evidence-based reading instruction practices that address the acquisition of language, phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics and spelling, fluency, vocabulary, oral language, and comprehension that can be differentiated to meet the needs of individual students." Programs are expected to "fully integrate the eight essential components with the associated competencies and subcompetencies into programs that prepare educators to teach in K-3 classrooms."

These components are related to adjacent concepts for which teaching candidates must also be prepared. First, there is recognition of how teachers promoting student engagement generates motivation in students to read. Second, there is an emphasis on embedding culturally responsive pedagogy into taught practices so that teachers have a better attitude toward, more confidence with, and increased interest in serving diverse learners across the ability, language, and English proficiency spectra: groups of students who may require different services provided through altered materials, scaffolds, and pacing. Finally, the framework encourages school communities as a whole to embrace literacy across all staff members.

This framework represents Phase I of the state's teacher candidate reform plan. Phase II will encourage teacher preparation programs to take a look at their programs and evaluate the degree to which their programs currently incorporate these dimensions, while working to implement any missing components.

Mississippi

In Mississippi⁶², licensure programs must include a two-course literacy I and literacy II sequence. Moreover, teachers across the state have been undergoing the Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) learning solution, which is operated by the same vendor that North Carolina uses and wants to require by law for all teachers. In January 2014, the Mississippi Department of Education began providing LETRS, a statewide early literacy professional development solution, to K-3 educators through online modules and face-to-face workshops and providing literacy coaches to the state's lowest performing schools. Early research has indicated that this program yielded significant results because "when the LETRS professional development program was implemented, teacher knowledge of early literacy skills, the quality of early literacy skills instruction, student engagement during early literacy skills instruction, and teaching competencies improved among educators who participated in the program over and above any increases found among educators generally."

States also pair this focus on teacher professional development with meeting students' precise needs. In Mississippi, a 2016 amendment called for each student to have an individualized reading plan that outlines a student's current reading level as determined by a diagnostic assessment, goals for progress,

⁶² For more information visit [https://www.mdek12.org/sites/default/files/mclp-7-16-2017_final-\(1\).pdf](https://www.mdek12.org/sites/default/files/mclp-7-16-2017_final-(1).pdf)

and the strategies that will be used to meet that need. Students in Mississippi who perform in the lowest categories of the statewide 3rd grade literacy assessment will not qualify for promotion to 4th grade. A similar planning process is mandated in Colorado, where a student's READ plan must be incorporated in their early learning (prekindergarten or kindergarten) readiness plan.

International Comparison

It is important to note that international comparisons are context-dependent. Among other caveats, the following should be considered for this study:

- U.S. students tend to start school at a later age than most international students.
- United States has more reading specialists than other countries.
- United States spends more per student on education but has mixed graduation rates.⁶³
- The education system in the United States is layered by federal and state structures while the majority of international systems centralize their education system.⁶⁴ The National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) latest comparison of education in the United States and other G20 countries found that in the United States, only 10% of children enroll in school settings before age 6; and 3- to 4-year-old enrollment was 64%, higher than only six other G20 countries.
- In addition to lower enrollment for the early childhood years, the NCES report found American teachers were far more likely than other G20-country teachers to indicate that they had access to a reading specialist for supplemental classroom support.
- The NCES report also found that the United States spends more public and private dollars on education than any other country included in the study yet continues to have mixed graduation rates, lagging behind many other G20 countries.

Key Findings

- While considering the caveats listed in the "International Comparison" section, the research team noted there are many different Early Childhood Education & Care (ECEC) systems and structures within Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries. Consequently, there is also a range of different approaches to identifying the boundary between early childhood education and childcare.
- Entry into the education sector in OECD countries is very rigorous, with most countries only

⁶³ For more information visit <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2016/2016100.pdf>

⁶⁴ For more information visit [A Comparative Study of Teacher Preparation and Qualifications in Six Nations](#)

recruiting teacher candidates from the top of graduates.

- Internationally, the definitions of mandates and incentives are very different; because of these variances, they cannot be judged or interpreted synonymously.
- What is not specifically clear is the literacy context within the teacher preparation programs and the certification processes for candidates. For a more in-depth analysis, further research will be required.

Methodology

The countries were chosen based on their Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) ranking relative to the United States and were balanced to represent different global regions. Each country's early childhood teaching certification program and pathways were reviewed based on available English-language studies. In addition, caveats that may impact the comparison between the country and United States were identified. For more detailed information, see Appendix C.

4b. What are the recommendations based on this analysis?

Delaware is well-positioned to be a model for literacy improvement for the field. Its Literacy Plan plus a number of new initiatives shared by interview participants indicate significant investment focused on positively impacting literacy rates for Delaware's students.

Key Findings

- There is a clear evidence base for teaching literacy, and current state standards are aligned to that evidence base.
- There is a clear evidence base for using job-embedded professional development to advance practice, and the current regulations and professional development standards are aligned to that approach.
- The scan of the regulatory structure did not find any major gaps in the roles or requirements for certification when compared to other states or to the current evidence base. However, there are a number of critical roles at the school level focused on literacy that are not captured by the regulatory or certification structures (such as Reading Assist, reading interventionists, and literacy coaches). This calls for a deeper exploration.
- The pathways available for teachers to enter the profession and advance are accessible, clear, and aligned to models in other states and include support and incentives (such as discounts for tuition), opportunities for specialization, and professional development credit via clock hours for

licensure. Stakeholders reported a need for greater incentives to engage more teachers and that existing incentives may not be widely known by teachers and administrators.

- Stakeholders reported a high demand on specialists at the school level to support learning needs, with triage processes in place to refer children to special programs or for Individual Education Plans (IEPs). This pressure results in districts underutilizing literacy specialists for coaching, lesson modeling, and direct student support due to being overwhelmed by other types of work. These stakeholder reports indicate a need for review of staffing structures at the classroom, school, and district levels.
- Due to the majority of teachers in the talent pool in the veteran but not retirement-eligible group, professional development is a critical lever to aligning current teacher practice to ILA standards (or another identified set of standards for quality and coherence) and impacting achievement rates for students.

While preparation courses appear to match regulatory requirements, a further analysis of course content could indicate areas for improved alignment to the ILA standards. Additionally, NCTQ rates existing teacher candidate assessments for literacy to be subpar, making this an area for improvement.

Recommendations for Improvement

Based on these findings, we recommend the following considerations for improvement:

- **Endorse a requirement for an assessment of teaching literacy competencies for candidates.** While preparation courses appear to match regulatory requirements, a further analysis of course content could indicate areas for improved alignment to the ILA standards and may address NCTQ's unfavorable rating of the existing assessments. Delaware could consider the addition of a literacy-specific assessment for certification in elementary, special education, and early childhood roles. While performance of candidates on assessments of competencies for teaching literacy have been shown to correlate to student achievement.⁶⁵ there are concerns in the field that assessments act as an unnecessarily high barrier for new teacher candidates and, in particular, candidates of color.
- **Strengthen incentives for school-level and district-level literacy improvement through investments in high-quality, collaborative, and job-embedded professional development that strategically utilizes teams of literacy professionals to meet student needs.** Due to the findings that the regulatory structures for role descriptions do not reflect the configurations of teams on the ground, and stakeholders report a high demand for increased literacy services for children, the SBE could collaborate with the DDOE to support strong team structures in school buildings.

⁶⁵ Berkeley, S., Regan, K., Dimitrov, D., Guckert, M., & Ray, S. (2016). Teacher's Basic Knowledge of Reading Instruction: Insights from a Teacher Preparation Program. *Teacher Educators' Journal*.

These structures could be designed to match current definitions of qualifying professional learning for clock hours in existing regulation:

- Consider elevating the role of literacy practice in existing principal evaluation with a dual focus on fostering educator team structures and student growth overall.
- Incentivize collaborative teams at schools through funding professional development and release time for teachers to engage.
- Develop guidance and exemplars for districts on how to establish and leverage literacy teams and reading specialists in particular. Teams could include classroom lead teachers, literacy coaches, reading specialists, and paraprofessionals.
- **Strengthen individual incentives to utilize existing microcredential pathways and other opportunities for education growth.** Identify incentives for professional development through compensation and flexible use of time for collaboration for literacy across grade bands. Research into potential impacts on the salary tables and coordination across authorizing agencies is recommended.
- **Examine and ensure alignment of the literacy preparation requirements for early childhood professionals to ILA standards and strengthen the link between preschool educators to educators in the K–3 grade bands.** Currently, the literacy requirements for preparation are less explicit for early childhood than for elementary certifications. This effort could be in coordination with a general alignment across pre-K–3.

Conclusion

Delaware's Literacy Plan⁶⁶ and existing initiatives for professional development support for teachers puts the state well on the way to advancing state goals for improving literacy for public school students. Key levers for continued progress lie at the school and district levels through high-quality and job-embedded professional development to lift all of Delaware's teachers to a common approach to teaching literacy.

For new teachers entering the profession, an external requirement to demonstrate their grasp of the science of reading could ensure consistent preparation. This path has potential drawbacks of increasing the bar to enter the classroom at a time when teacher shortages are always close at hand.

Finally, the preschool setting is uniquely attuned to the developmental needs of our youngest students. That does not mean the preschool educators should be siloed from the K–3 setting or held to different standards for preparation. The content to meet the preliteracy needs of children ages 3–4 must be different than for elementary educators, but the levels of literacy preparation required for the educators should be aligned to the developmental levels of the children served.

Through continued collaboration by the State Board of Education, Professional Standards Board, and Department of Education, the research team believes the structures are in place for preparing and supporting educators as they provide literacy instruction and, if necessary, intervention to Delaware's youngest students.

⁶⁶ https://www.doe.k12.de.us/cms/lib/DE01922744/Centricity/Domain/167/literacy-5c-20s_6_24_19_final.pdf

Appendix A. Professional Learning Opportunities from DDOE

The following documents are based on drafts provided by Delaware's Department of Education. These initiatives are in the process of approval and implementation.

Reimagined Professional Learning Grants Initiative

The goal of the Reimagining Professional Learning (RPL) grants is “to create sustainable professional learning conditions and processes aligned to high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) that lead to improved teacher practice and student learning.” LEAs apply for grants based on applications and plans aligned to the following:

2021–2022 RPL schools will commit to

- establishing a culture of professional learning that is responsive to teachers' needs;
- ensuring that teachers have access to high-quality instructional materials, as defined by the Delaware Department of Education, and the training and ongoing professional learning needed to use those materials expertly;
- building district and school capacity to take ownership of high-quality professional learning by engaging district and school leaders and teachers in the development and execution of the professional learning plans; and
- driving continuous improvement, engaging in collaborative learning, and taking shared responsibility for achieving the professional learning goals.

Note: This program aligns closely to the report recommendation to incentivize schoolwide professional learning time for collaboration on literacy supports for students.

Defined Sequential Literacy Learning Pathway

The sequential literacy learning pathway lists professional-learning providers that allow educators to follow a sequential pathway of knowledge-building while demonstrating mastery in structured literacy instructions. Although most components of literacy are covered in these courses, there may be a need for educators to access additional professional-learning opportunities with corresponding microcredentials to cover specific areas of literacy instruction not addressed in the courses (e.g., writing, assessment, family engagement). Educators who complete the courses and additional microcredentials will receive certification offered by the professional-learning provider and badges for each microcredential completed.

Back to Basics–AIM Pathways

- Summer 2021–2022 (up to 30 seats per cohort per pathway).
- Accreditation from the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) for alignment to its Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading.

- The courses include learning sections with hundreds of learning tools, a variety of downloadable teacher resources, and virtual coaching sessions to support classroom implementation of literacy instruction.
- The AIM Pathways platform houses multiple courses aligned to the IDA Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading as well as theoretical models of the science of reading such as the Simple View of Reading and Hollis Scarborough's Reading Rope.
- Courses:
 - **Pathways to Proficient Reading** is designed to strengthen educators' knowledge and skills in the science of reading instruction.
 - **Pathways to Literacy Leadership** is designed for educational leaders committed to learning about the connection between reading research, theoretical models, and best practices for language and literacy instruction.
 - **Pathways to Proficient Writing** is designed for educators to learn about the connection between writing research, theoretical models, and best practices for writing instruction in the classroom.

Pathways to Structured Literacy uses the Orton-Gillingham approach to deepen educators' knowledge and understanding of the science of reading by providing multiple opportunities to apply this knowledge to classroom instruction. Completion of Pathways to Proficient Reading or Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) K–5 certification Units 1–8 is required before enrolling in this course.

Lexia Learning–LETRS Online

- Fall 2021–2022 (up to 20 seats per cohort per section).
- Addresses critical outcomes for effective literacy instruction: understanding the science of reading, enhancing teacher effectiveness, and transforming instruction.
- Professional learning is relevant and applicable and designed to be the cornerstone of a multiyear, systemic literacy improvement initiative.
- LETRS provides practical support to teachers with tools—online, print, and in-person consulting services—and ongoing support throughout the school year.
- LETRS K–5 provides teachers with the knowledge to be literacy and language experts.
- Courses:
 - **LETRS Volume I** (Units 1–4) provides approximately 63 hours in a combination of online learning, reading, and classroom application.
 - **LETRS Volume 2** (Units 5–8) provides approximately 53 hours in a combination of online learning, reading, and classroom application.
 - **LETRS Pre-K** provides strong foundational skills knowledge for pre-K–K teachers.
 - **LETRS Administrators** supports district and school leaders to improve literacy instruction.

Reading Assist Institute (RAI)

The Reading Assist intervention program provides a deep understanding of the science of reading as well as an understanding of phonemic awareness, phonics, structural analysis (syllables), vocabulary, morphology and comprehension, print awareness, decoding and word recognition, word-reading strategies, reading fluency, syntactic awareness, and text structure analysis. The program develops participants into practitioners in the area of structured literacy instruction and teaches the necessary skills to plan and deliver instruction to struggling readers.

Reading Assist's reading intervention program provides both theory and practice and is divided into three interactive segments. For Parts 1 and 2, RAI recommends training take place during either pre- or postservice; however, it can be adapted to a school calendar. Participants receive 73 instructional hours, which equates to full-day training sessions. A sample calendar is provided with the course syllabus.

The program is disseminated in the following manner to allow participants to examine the science of reading and later apply what is learned in real-life teaching scenarios:

- **Part 1** is a discussion-based seminar important to building the background knowledge on the science of learning to read.
- **Part 2** is implementation-based instruction during which participants learn how to plan and deliver explicit, sequenced, multisensory instruction. It addresses principles of diagnostic-prescriptive instruction so that participants learn how to target and adjust their instruction to meet the needs of the student.
- **Part 3** is a practicum where the participant teaches a minimum of 60 hours of individualized lessons to one student. During the practicum, each participant is assigned a highly trained RAI coach to monitor their progress and assess competency. The practicum takes place at the participants' host school.

Defined Microcredentials Literacy Learning Pathway

The microcredentials literacy learning pathway lists professional-learning providers that allow educators to participate in various formats of knowledge-building in structured literacy instructions. The providers listed have been approved by DDOE to offer professional learning in support of the Delaware Literacy Plan.

Each provider offers professional-learning opportunities that correspond to microcredentials within each of the seven stacks. In this learning pathway, microcredentials *must* be completed to demonstrate mastery of specific areas of literacy instruction addressed in each course. Educators who complete the courses and the corresponding microcredentials will receive professional-learning clock hours, certification offered by the professional-learning provider, and badges for each microcredential completed.

Delaware Microcredential Opportunities

Microcredentials						
Live in Fall 2021				Live in Fall 2022		
Stack 1	Stack 2	Stack 3	Stack 4	Stack 5	Stack 6	Stack 7
Meeting the Literacy Instructional Needs of Every Learner	Universal Design for Learning	Foundational Skills	Decoding and Word Recognition	Vocabulary	Comprehension	Writing
Screening, Diagnostic, and Progress Monitoring Assessment	Variability	Developing Print Concepts	Letter-Sound Relationships	Morphology	Building Background Knowledge	Teaching Narrative Writing
Facilitating Effective Tier 1 Reading Instruction	Goals and Assessment	Phonological Awareness	Synthetic Phonics	Narrative Language Skills	Effective Reading Strategies	Teaching Informational Writing
Providing Explicit Instruction	Multiple Means of Engagement	Phonemic Awareness	Analytic Phonics	Tiered Vocabulary	Teaching Vocabulary for Comprehension	Teaching Opinion Writing
Supporting Families in Student Literacy Development	Multiple Means of Representation		High Frequency Words	Inferential Language	Text Structure	
	Multiple Means of Action and Expression		Fluency for Foundational Skills		Fluency for Comprehension	
Level 1						
Level 2						
Level 3						
10 clock hours per microcredential						
29 microcredential pathways						
Suggested 2 years to complete the whole pathway						
Potential to level or tier the pathway so that teachers can earn in chunks						

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Fall 2021–Spring 2022 (up to 30 per cohort).
- This course will enable participants to gain an understanding of variability, elimination of barriers in reading curriculum, and the UDL principles.
- Participants will use the UDL framework to prepare and present a UDL lesson, share and receive feedback, and review and revise a final reading lesson plan to be submitted to Schoology.
- Upon completion of the cohort, participants will receive an internationally recognized UDL credential and certification from the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST).
- It will include two synchronous workshops and four synchronous 2-hour meetings.

Professional Development Center for Educators (PDCE)–Early Literacy Cohorts

- Designs, implements, and evaluates three professional learning opportunities for Delaware educators: traditional graduate courses, hybrid online cohorts, and face-to-face sessions (school-year sessions or summer Reading Institute).
- Coordinated content and build knowledge and skills consistent with the science of reading and its implementation in high-quality instructional materials.
- Designed to provide choice and equitable access to professional learning for Delaware educators.
- Professional learning is evaluated for design quality, effects on knowledge and skills, and teacher efficacy.
- Evaluation will comprise a variety of tools, including microcredentials.

Early Literacy Development Course

- Fall 2021–Spring 2022 (up to 30 per cohort).
- This course provides an overview suitable for elementary teachers, specialists, and administrators looking to build understanding of the relationships among reading, writing development, and knowledge development. This understanding will help them to see the teaching and learning affordances of high-quality instructional materials.
- Readings used during these sessions will be provided.
- This course has six 3-hour segments and will be provided in a synchronous, virtual environment:
 - **Section 1. The Cognitive Model of Reading Assessment:** These two sessions will address reading development across three different pathways—automatic word recognition, language comprehension, and strategic knowledge. Participants will leave with an understanding of big ideas in reading assessment and a strategy for identifying students' foundational skills needs.
 - **Section 2. Understanding Text Complexity:** These two sessions will guide participants to consider the affordances of challenging text to build knowledge in the language comprehension pathway. Participants will explore the Common Core's text complexity requirements and trace their development across elementary-grade texts. They will then engage in collaborative learning about the affordances of challenging text: text structure knowledge, grammar knowledge, and vocabulary knowledge. Participants will leave with an understanding of the ways that challenging text facilitates learning.
 - **Section 3. Reading and Writing Connections:** These two sessions will provide an overview of writing development consistent with the cognitive model, targeting transcription skills and composition skills as separate pathways. Participants will then

work cooperatively to map the design of a comprehension composition curriculum across the elementary grades. Participants will leave with an understanding of writing development and instruction across grade levels

Virtual Cohort: Foundational Skills in Reading

- Fall 2021–Spring 2022 (up to 30 per cohort).
- This course will enable participants to identify and assign different types of phonics instruction based on student diagnostic data.
- It includes six asynchronous modules and six synchronous 1-hour Zoom meetings.
- Participants will learn to use diagnostic data to form skills groups, plan and manage a small-group rotation, compare and contrast synthetic, analytic, and analogy-based direct instruction in decoding, and interpret progress-monitoring data to direct regrouping and reteaching.

Virtual Cohort: Foundational Skills in Writing

- Fall 2021–Spring 2022 (up to 30 per cohort).
- This course will enable participants to use a framework for teaching students in K–2 how to plan and compose their writing.
- It includes six asynchronous modules and six 1-hour synchronous Zoom meetings.
- The course will focus on narrative writing, and personal narratives in particular, but the framework can be applied to narrative, informational, and opinion writing.
- Participants will learn to teach sentence writing to help students evaluate good and poor examples of narratives, use graphic organizers to plan their writing, and use checklists to evaluate writing and drive revision.

Reading Specialist Master's Degree

Multiple institutes of higher education offer reading specialist master's degrees. Currently, agreements have been established with the University of Delaware and Salisbury University that funding through the Delaware Literacy Plan will cover the cost of tuition, fees, and books for each course, and there is no out-of-pocket cost for participants who meet all completion requirements. The professional-learning opportunities provided to support knowledge-building and develop mastery in literacy instruction are:

- The offerings are courses in a M.Ed. in the literacy/reading programs of these institutions.
- Eligible educators must select one institution and enroll (through PDMS) in both courses offered by the institution to participate in this learning pathway.
- Participants are not required to continue in a M.Ed. in the literacy/reading program to enroll.
- Upon completion of the courses offered, educators who wish to stay on the master's in literacy/reading pathway will need to contact the institute's college of education for enrollment in the M. Ed in the literacy/reading program.

Courses were selected by the following criteria:

- Initial courses for a reading specialist master's degree
- Course content focused on essential elements of reading and reading instruction

Criteria for successful completion of the courses includes the following:

- Completion of all required assignments
- Earned grade of C or better

University of Delaware M.Ed. in Literacy

- Summer 2021–Ongoing (up to 25 per cohort).
- The University of Delaware's fully online and flexible M.Ed. in literacy will prepare current teachers and educators for certification as a reading/literacy specialist.
- Cohort of 26 educators each session and educators must take both courses:
 - **EDUC 608–Literacy Assessment and Instruction I:** The course focuses on effective literacy assessment and instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency. This course is delivered online.
 - **EDUC 609–Literacy Assessment and Instruction II:** The course focuses on effective literacy assessment and instruction in comprehension, vocabulary, and writing. This course is delivered online.

Salisbury University Master of Education Reading Specialist (To be determined)

- The Master of Education (M.Ed.) reading specialist program at Salisbury University is a professional degree and certification program designed to prepare reading educators in instructional and leadership capacities for K–12 school settings.
- Cohort of 20 educators each session, and educators must take both courses:
 - **REED 515 Emergent Literacies:** Emphasizes current theories and research on language and literacy development, including oral and written language practices, including linguistic variation for birth through Grade 2. Content focuses on phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, texts, and materials, motivation, and skills and strategies.
 - **REED 516 Elementary Literacies:** Emphasizes a wide range of theoretical and applied perspectives on literacy instruction, motivation, instructional methods, skills and strategies, and models for instruction in Grades 3–6. Content focuses on word study, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and critical thinking in narrative, expository, and digital texts.
- Lead for literacy cohort, including work done with Dr. Rita Bean.

Professional Development Learning Science Institute (LSI)

- Current–Ongoing.
- A kick-off and surveys will be sent to participating schools to assist the team in gathering information about each school's early literacy work and coaching systems:
- Based on responses to the surveys, LSI will tailor professional development to meet the needs of participating schools.
- School teams will participate in orientation, professional development, coaching, and planning feedback sessions between January and June.
- There are five virtual 3-hour professional-development sessions in January, February, March, April and June.
- There are 30-minute virtual meetings with school teams—five teams in January and the remaining five teams in February—to delve more deeply into individual school needs and circumstances.
- Full-day, onsite classroom walkthroughs with a debrief and coaching are conducted in February and April. Two LSI faculty members will facilitate the February walkthroughs while Rita Bean and an LSI faculty member will lead the April classroom visits.

- A “guided design” thinking exercise consisting of a planning chart completed by school teams with written responses will be provided by the two LSI faculty members in June.
- This would be an open-ended process that schools would work through to focus on short-term and long-term goals (e.g., a two-page chart they would begin to fill out around their data sources, early thinking about priority areas, initial thinking about professional learning structures, etc.)
- Each professional development session will be led by Rita Bean and Jacy Ippolito, along with an LSI curriculum staff developer.
- Participants will make connections between the concepts detailed in the featured books and how school leaders effectively coach their staff on early literacy instruction every day.

Implementation Supports

Participants will be supported through two onsite coaching sessions. Coaching will build capacity to strengthen effective early literacy instructional practices as well as effective use of resources.

Two full days of onsite classroom walkthroughs, a debrief, and coaching will be with two LSI faculty members in February and Rita Bean and an LSI faculty member in April. If the geographic location of the participating schools makes it impossible to visit all in one day, the facilitators will divide the group and each will work with five schools. Two schools will be selected for the walkthroughs and the remaining school teams will come to one of those two schools to participate in the walkthroughs and resulting discussions.

Coaching model will be aligned with Delaware's early literacy initiative—and will develop district and building level coaches in support of early literacy.

Multiyear Implementation Model for State, District, and Building Levels: Delaware Early Literacy Initiative (DELI) Coaches (To be determined)

Year 1: Foundational Training in the Science of Reading Course

Pathways to Proficient Reading Course

- 40 hours, 25 educators per cohort
- 1-year license for AIM pathways platform
- Orientation session and administration of AIM precourse knowledge inventory (2 hours)
- Six facilitated community of practice coaching sessions (1 hour per session per cohort)
- Postcourse knowledge inventory (1 hour)
- For K–12 teachers, coaches, interventionists, literacy leads, ELL educators, special education teachers, reading specialists
- Prerequisite for the Pathways to Structured Literacy course

Pathways to Literacy Leadership Course

- 30 hours, 30 administrators per cohort
- 1-year license for AIM pathways platform
- Orientation session and administration of AIM precourse knowledge inventory (2 hours)
- Four facilitated virtual community of practice coaching sessions (90 minutes per session)

- Postcourse knowledge inventory (1 hour)
- Audience administrators: Assistant superintendents, curriculum directors, coordinators, special education directors, principals, assistant principals
- Course requirements designed to build instructional leaders to promote a culture of literacy
- No prerequisite course requirements

Pathways to Proficient Writing Course

- 20 hours, 25 educators per cohort
- 1-year license for AIM pathways platform
- Orientation session and administration of AIM precourse knowledge inventory (2 hours)
- Four facilitated virtual community of practice coaching sessions (60 minutes per session)
- Postcourse knowledge inventory (1 hour)
- For K–12 teachers, coaches, interventionists, literacy and writing leads, ELL educators, special education teachers, reading specialists
- No prerequisite course requirements

Year 2: The Deeper Dive: Employing Diagnostic and Prescriptive Instruction and Assessment

Part A. Pathways to Structured Literacy: The Orton-Gillingham Approach

- 25 hours, 25 educators per cohort
- 1-year license for AIM pathways platform
- Orientation session and administration of AIM preknowledge inventory assessment (2 hours)
- Four facilitated virtual community of practice coaching sessions (60 minutes per session)
- Administration of postknowledge inventory assessment (2 hours)

Part B. Practicum

- 60 hours, 25 educators per cohort
- Instruction with one student (due to attrition); small groups considered, with permission of practicum supervisor
- Minimum of two sessions per week
- Minimum of 50-student, full intervention sessions: 45 minutes per intervention session
- Minimum of 14 weeks of student contact
- Pre- and post-assessment sessions
- Five formal observations (Candidates must meet the proficiency requirements in three out of five observations)
- Submission of lesson plans and student work
- Eight to 10 additional coaching conferences with the practicum supervisor to ensure fidelity required and optimal coaching session
- Lesson implementation video submissions
- Instructional goal setting
- Meet the requirements established on the IDA Summative Practicum Evaluation rubric
- Maintain a digital practicum portfolio
- Participate in KPEERI exam
- For coaches, interventionists, literacy leads, ELL educators, special education teachers, reading specialists, and educators

- Course requirements: Develop foundational knowledge in the science of reading and transfer to the science of implementation

Year 3 and Beyond: Train-the-Trainer Model Building Internal Capacity for Systemic Change—Sustainability

Facilitator Training for Pathways to Proficient Reading and Pathways to Structured Literacy Courses

- 25 educators per cohort
- Participate in pathways platform training
- Shadow and lead facilitation of VCoP sessions
- Demonstrate proficiency using AIM's fidelity tools
- Shadow and lead coaching sessions observed by AIM's pathways supervisor
- Evidence of passing KPEERI exam

Entire training can be completed in 18–36 months depending on the participant's knowledge and pacing.

Appendix B: State Comparison

Comparison States’ Average Salary	Alignment to ILA standards for teacher prep	Literacy standards alignments	Role comparability Grade structure	Literacy required for initial certification	Opportunities for specialization (microcredentials, specialist roles, etc.)	Literacy required for advanced certification
Arkansas \$51,386 ⁶⁷	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early childhood candidates must complete 18–27 hours in early childhood development and education focused specifically on infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. In addition, they must take a specialty area assessment designated by the state. • Certification requires completion of a state-approved program from a CAEP-accredited college or university. ⁶⁸ 	Early childhood literacy standards are aligned with NAEYC. ⁶⁹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early childhood (birth–pre-K) ⁷⁰ • K–3 • K–6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • edTPA • Arkansas Foundations of Reading Assessment 	Arkansas teachers have multiple microcredential opportunities, including nine paths for early career professionals, nine pathways for pedagogy assessment, and content assessment if they are an aspiring teacher who scores within -2 standard errors of measurement on the Praxis Content Area exam. ⁷¹	Elementary education (K–6) and special education (K–12) are required to pass the Foundations of Reading test (Act 416 of 2017).

⁶⁷ For more information visit <https://www.salary.com/research/salary/benchmark/public-school-teacher-salary/ms>

⁶⁸ For more information visit <https://www.teachercertificationdegrees.com/certification/arkansas/>

⁶⁹ For more information visit https://humanservices.arkansas.gov/wp-content/uploads/B-PK_Courses_9.2013.pdf

⁷⁰ For more information visit https://humanservices.arkansas.gov/wp-content/uploads/Birth_Pre_K_Act_187_of_2009.pdf

⁷¹ For more information visit <https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/educator-effectiveness/educator-support--development/professional-learning-through-micro-credentials>

Comparison States’ Average Salary	Alignment to ILA standards for teacher prep	Literacy standards alignments	Role comparability Grade structure	Literacy required for initial certification	Opportunities for specialization (microcredentials, specialist roles, etc.)	Literacy required for advanced certification
Colorado \$58,887 ⁷²	Elementary education endorsement requires bachelor's, an approved elementary teacher preparation program, field experience, and student teaching and demonstration of a suite of competencies.	Teacher competencies include evidence-based standards that the elementary teaching candidate must possess. Broadly, “The elementary educator is highly knowledgeable about research-based literacy development,” including language processing requirements, cognitive and behavioral influences on reading, environmental and cultural interactions, phases in reading development, and understanding of the research-based “causal” link. ⁷³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early childhood (birth–age 8) • Elementary (K–6) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading assessment will be incorporated in alignment with the READ Act. • For elementary teacher: Praxis 5001, with a 157 or higher reading score on 5002. For early childhood, either a degree in early childhood education, sufficient coursework in the subject, or a passing score on Praxis 5024. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible reading teacher and reading specialist endorsements • Reading teachers (K–12) with 2 years of teaching and approved graduate program, along with knowledge of the standards • Reading specialists: Master’s in reading, 3 years of classroom teaching experience, and understanding of the “intrinsic differences between good and poor readers” ⁷⁴ • Emphasis on diagnosing and working with students who have dyslexia, for reading specialists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K–3 teachers must complete evidence-based training in teaching by Jan. 31, 2022. • Districts become ineligible for certain funds during the next school year if their teachers aren’t trained. • New K–3 teachers required to train after 2022–23. • Training must consist of at least 45 hours; address literacy standards; and include an assessment. • To meet the requirement, teachers can get a Colorado Reading Teacher or Reading Specialist endorsement; pass the Praxis Teaching Reading: Elementary 5205; take an approved course; attend an approved course or professional development. ⁷⁵

⁷² For more information visit <https://www.salary.com/research/salary/benchmark/public-school-teacher-salary/co>

⁷³ Colorado State Department of Education. *1 CCR 301-101*, n.d., p. 11

⁷⁴ Colorado State Department of Education. *1 CCR 301-101*, n.d., sec. 6.04 Reading Specialist (Grades K-12)

⁷⁵ Colorado READ Act | CDE. Accessed May 4, 2021. <https://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy>.

Comparison States’ Average Salary	Alignment to ILA standards for teacher prep	Literacy standards alignments	Role comparability Grade structure	Literacy required for initial certification	Opportunities for specialization (microcredentials, specialist roles, etc.)	Literacy required for advanced certification
<p>Iowa \$56,525 ⁷⁶</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State board must approve “practitioner preparation programs” based on outlined criteria. • Programs must be regionally accredited. • No mention of CAEP, as in other states. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher candidates must “demonstrate competency in literacy, to include reading theory, knowledge, strategies, and approaches; and integrating literacy instruction into content areas.” ⁷⁷ • Teachers must be able to serve all students, including students with special education needs, students with dyslexia, and gifted and talented students. • Instruction “shall include evidence-based best practices, determined by research, including that identified by the Iowa reading research center.” ⁷⁸ 	<p>Endorsement areas include pre-K–3 regular/special education teachers; birth-Grade 3 inclusive settings; K–6 teacher elementary classrooms; pre-K–kindergarten.</p>	<p>Praxis Pre-K–K: Principles of Leading and Teaching Early Childhood (5621), score of 157</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Praxis K–6 Principles of Learning and Teaching (PLT) K–6, score of 160 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microexternships can be earned with 40 hours of working or job shadowing. • One renewal credit may be received for each unique externship. ⁷⁹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To change from initial to standard license, 2 years of public school experience is necessary. • To renew standard license, 6 renewal credits and mandatory reporter training is necessary. • One credit aligned with the individualized professional development plan. ⁸⁰ • Four renewal credits can be earned for national board certification.

⁷⁶ For more information visit <https://www.salary.com/research/salary/benchmark/public-school-teacher-salary/ia>

⁷⁷ Iowa Administrative Code, Chapter 79: Standards for Practitioner and Administrator Preparation Programs, 2020, p. 7

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Standard, Master, PSL, and Administrator Renewal Information. Iowa Board of Educational Examiners. Accessed May 4, 2021. <https://boee.iowa.gov/license-types-and-applications/standard-master-psl-administrator-renewal-information>.

⁸⁰ Standard, Master, PSL, and Administrator Renewal Information. Iowa Board of Educational Examiners. Accessed May 4, 2021. <https://boee.iowa.gov/license-types-and-applications/standard-master-psl-administrator-renewal-information>.

Comparison States’ Average Salary	Alignment to ILA standards for teacher prep	Literacy standards alignments	Role comparability Grade structure	Literacy required for initial certification	Opportunities for specialization (microcredentials, specialist roles, etc.)	Literacy required for advanced certification
Kansas \$56,052 ⁸¹	CAEP standards serve as state standards for educator preparation unit accreditation. ⁸²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early childhood: Candidate must be well-versed in literacy concepts, including phonemic awareness, vocabulary, writing, share reading. • Elementary: Candidate must demonstrate competencies in English language/arts, in alignment with state standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early childhood options: Birth through kindergarten, birth through Grade 3, or prekindergarten through Grade 3 • Early childhood through late childhood: Kindergarten through Grade 6 • Early childhood unified: Birth–K, birth–Grade 3 • Elementary unified: Added specialty in early childhood ⁸³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial certifications require a bachelor’s degree, pedagogical and content assessments • For interdisciplinary early childhood education certification: 5023, with a qualifying score of 166; education of young • Elementary education: Content Knowledge for Teaching (7811, 159 on reading subsection) • Elementary unified: Content Knowledge for Teaching (7811, 159 on reading subsection); special education: Core Knowledge and Applications (5354) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial license • Professional license: 1 year teaching experience and successfully complete teacher performance assessment • Accomplished license: Passed advanced performance examination or school specialist, teacher leader credential, a training and mentorship program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No specific reading assessment requirement • Professional licenses, national board certification, or combination of an advanced degree and professional development points coordinated with the professional development council required • Literacy specialist competencies are aligned with ILA standards, which are directly referenced

⁸¹ For more information visit <https://www.salary.com/research/salary/benchmark/public-school-teacher-salary/ks>

⁸² Kansas State Department of Education. Institutional Handbook for Accreditation and Program Approval, August 11, 2020.

⁸³ Kansas State Department of Education. Regulations and Standards for Kansas Educators, 2020–2021.

Comparison States’ Average Salary	Alignment to ILA standards for teacher prep	Literacy standards alignments	Role comparability Grade structure	Literacy required for initial certification	Opportunities for specialization (microcredentials, specialist roles, etc.)	Literacy required for advanced certification
Mississippi \$51,386 ⁸⁴	State adopts CAEP standards that include content and pedagogical knowledge; clinical partnerships and practice; candidate recruitment, progression, and support; program impact; quality assurance; and continuous improvement. ⁸⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparation courses must cover phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Elementary education programs have to include at least two literacy courses, Literacy I and II. Since 2016, teachers must pass the foundations of reading assessment. ⁸⁶ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are three different “endorsement areas”: K–4; K–6; and 4–6. Child development pre-K–K Testing requirements for each grade Early development: 21 on ACT or Praxis Core Academic Skills for Educators; Praxis subject assessment K–4: Praxis 117 K–6: Praxis 152 K–12: Praxis 120 A “supplemental endorsement” for K–12 reading (with an emphasis on remedial reading instruction) can be added to an initial license. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NCATC or CAEP-certified program for Class A certification Foundations of reading assessment (229) is required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Class A = bachelor’s level license Class AA = master’s degree level license Class AAA = specialist degree level license Class AAAA = doctorate degree level license Emphasis on Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for renewal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For initial renewal: 10 continuing education units, including literacy For class AA, master’s degree in “endorsement area” is required, and 3 semester hours as well as 5 CEUs or national board certification is required

⁸⁴ For more information visit <https://www.salary.com/research/salary/benchmark/public-school-teacher-salary/ms>

⁸⁵ Guidelines for Mississippi Educator Licensure K–12, April 2021.

⁸⁶ For more information visit [https://www.mdek12.org/sites/default/files/documents/MBE/MDE-2021\(2\)/tab-04-begin_apa-draft_establish_2021_educator_preparation_program_guidelines.pdf](https://www.mdek12.org/sites/default/files/documents/MBE/MDE-2021(2)/tab-04-begin_apa-draft_establish_2021_educator_preparation_program_guidelines.pdf)

Comparison States’ Average Salary	Alignment to ILA standards for teacher prep	Literacy standards alignments	Role comparability Grade structure	Literacy required for initial certification	Opportunities for specialization (microcredentials, specialist roles, etc.)	Literacy required for advanced certification
North Carolina \$56,348 ⁸⁷	Programs require accreditation from CAEP or State Board of Education approval; for a preparation program to retain approval, at least 70% of students need to pass the qualifying exam. ⁸⁸	Excellent Public Schools Act of 2021 defined the "science of reading" as “evidence-based reading instruction practices that address the acquisition of language, phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics and spelling, fluency, vocabulary, oral language, and comprehension that can be differentiated to meet the needs of individual students.” ⁸⁹	There are birth–K and K–6 certification bands.	Excellent Public Schools Act of 2021 requires elementary teacher candidates to enroll in coursework covering the science of reading coursework, reading assessment, and reading intervention.	Excellent Public Schools Act of 2021 requires pre-K–5 teachers to undergo literacy training from Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS); the single vendor, which is the one that Mississippi also used, is controversial. ⁹⁰	Elementary teacher renewal requires three continuing education credits in literacy according to the Excellent Public Schools Act of 2021.
Rhode Island \$62,451 ⁹¹	Prep programs are aligned to ILA. ⁹² Programs must be approved as CAEP accredited.	Rhode Island Core Standards, aligned to Common Core state standards	Early childhood (P-K–Grade 2) Elementary (Grades 1–6)	8–10 hours of awareness training content or completion of proficiency training through an approved provider	Microcredentials are grant-based and provided through a third party.	Need to do more research; not evident on RIDE

⁸⁷ For more information visit <https://www.salary.com/research/salary/benchmark/public-school-teacher-salary/nc>

⁸⁸ North Carolina Administrative Code, Chapter 6 Elementary and Secondary Education, Sec. 16 NCAC 06C .0202

⁸⁹ This row draws on the Excellent Public Schools Act of 2021, Pub. L. No. Senate Bill 387 (2021).

⁹¹ For more information visit <https://www.salary.com/research/salary/benchmark/public-school-teacher-salary/RI>

⁹² For more information visit <https://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Instruction-and-Assessment-World-Class-Standards/Literacy/RI-Core-Standards-ELA-Literacy/Rhode-Island-Core-Standards-ELA.pdf>

Appendix C International Comparison

International examples	PISA rankings relative to U.S.	Public pre-K available	Role comparability Grade band	Literacy courses required for initial certification/Literacy required for advanced certification	Opportunities for specialization (microcredentials, specialist roles, etc.)	In-service training	Caveats
<u>Japan</u>	Higher	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kindergarten Elementary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prescribed credits, but not specific to literacy, for the first class certificate are as follows: For elementary school teachers, 8 credits of subject courses, 41 credits of pedagogical guidance courses, and 10 credits in addition to those for the BA degree from a university with a teacher training program. Candidates must participate in a three-week teaching practicum for all levels of teacher’s certificates and a one-week nursing-care internship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advanced First class Second class 	Teacher training is multidimensional, continuous, and systematic. Teachers are exposed to training governed across four levels: 1. National; 2. Prefectural board of education; 3. Municipal board of education; 4. Voluntary educational associations, groups, and individual teacher's self-training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school system in Japan consists of 3 years of optional kindergarten, 6 years of primary school, 3 years of lower secondary school, and 3 years of upper secondary school. Children are required to attend school for a minimum of 9 years—6 years of primary and 3 years of lower secondary education. The Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (METX), in conjunction with university professors and the Central Council for Education, provide curriculum for preschool education through senior high school.

International examples	PISA rankings relative to U.S.	Public pre-K available	Role comparability Grade band	Literacy courses required for initial certification/Literacy required for advanced certification	Opportunities for specialization (microcredentials, specialist roles, etc.	In-service training	Caveats
<u>Canada</u>	Higher	Yes <u>Expansion</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>K certificate</u> • <u>Grade 1–3 certificate</u> 	Teacher training programs are housed in Canadian universities, although separate standards for teacher qualifications exist across the provinces. <u>Each province sets its own policies for entry into teacher education.</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate, diploma, or degree from a postsecondary institution • License, certificate, or registration with a government regulatory body • Industry-recognized certificate granted by a certification body upon a candidate's demonstration of occupational competence 	As an example, all Ontario province teacher graduates are entered into a year-long program with an option to extend. New teachers are given a smaller caseload and are assigned to a mentor, who is an experienced teacher, who also has a reduced teaching load. In addition, these teachers participate in targeted professional development. At the end of the program, both the teacher and mentor are evaluated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a result of a 2017 Supreme Court ruling that 2002 legislation that barred teachers from negotiating class size and compensation related to students with disabilities was unconstitutional, the government has invested over \$300 million to advance classrooms and hire more than 3,000 teachers. • Canada education system and structures are one of the most decentralized in the world.

International examples	PISA rankings relative to U.S.	Public pre-K available	Role comparability Grade band	Literacy courses required for initial certification/Literacy required for advanced certification	Opportunities for specialization (microcredentials, specialist roles, etc.	In-service training	Caveats
<u>South Korea</u>	Higher	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early childhood (birth–age 5) • Kindergarten 	Curricular variance among colleges of education is visible in the case of total credit hours for graduation, curricular organization such as credit hours of general education to specific subject matter, and pedagogy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Certification System Grade 2 Teacher: Must graduate from a 4-year training institute or acquire a master's degree from a graduate school of education. Certificate can be issued without examination. • Grade 1 Teacher: Must have certification standard and evaluation results of in-service and must complete over 15 credit hours of re-education courses administered by in-service training institutes. Certificate can be issued without examination. Teacher college requires students to take 140 credit hours: 42 credit hours of major subject and over 20 credit hours of teacher training subjects (this differs across colleges). In teacher education programs of general universities, students are required to take over 42 credit hours of teacher training subjects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universities of education, which prepare elementary school teachers, run practice-teaching programs. Elementary teachers participate in practice teaching programs that are offered repetitively over several academic years. • Duration of practice teaching ranges from 6 to 9 weeks with 3 to 5 credit hours issued, depending on university. 	South Korea has regulated the supply of primary school teachers, who are trained in only 13 institutions in the country; whereas, it has not closely regulated the supply of secondary school teachers who are trained at a much broader set of institutions and programs.

International examples	PISA rankings relative to U.S.	Public pre-K available	Role comparability Grade band	Literacy courses required for initial certification/Literacy required for advanced certification	Opportunities for specialization (microcredentials, specialist roles, etc.)	In-service training	Caveats
<u>Chile</u>	Lower	Yes. Low-income children ages 0–3 have priority in nurseries and childcare centers. All children ages 4–5 have a legal right to a place in a pre-primary education setting for 22 hours per week.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day care certification • Early childhood certification 	As of 2017, the requirement is to reach a minimum score in the PSU (500) or to be in the top 30% of the marks’ ranking or to have passed a program to access higher education that is licensed by the Ministry of Education.	The minimum educational attainment required for teachers in ECEC (as well as in primary school) is a bachelor’s degree (ISCED level 6) (OECD, 2019[2]).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early childhood educators who work in publicly funded ECE centers are part of the National System of Professional Development (Sistema de Desarrollo Profesional Docente), which came into being in early 2016. • This system strengthens the role of educators through improvements in (1) teacher preparation; (2) in-service training; (3) support and mentoring; and (4) formative assessments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chile has a national curriculum in place for children 0–6 years. • In Chile all responsibilities, including standard setting, curriculum development, monitoring, and. Notably, funding of the early childhood and care system, are at the national level: Ministry of Education.

Note. [A Comparative Study of Teacher Preparation and Qualifications in Six Nations](#)

<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2016/2016100.pdf>

<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2013/12/american-schools-vs-the-world-expensive-unequal-bad-at-math/281983/>