



Reading Curriculum and Professional Development Guidance and FAQ

LEGISLATIVE INTENT AND ADMINISTRATIVE RULES

The North Dakota 67th Legislative Assembly (2021) faced decisions on an influx of ESSER funds provided to states in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The legislative body wished to emphasize using the funds for education to mitigate learning loss and recovery challenges created by the pandemic. Section 15.1-21-12.1 of the North Dakota Century Code (NDCC) regarding reading curriculum and professional development supports the improvement of core reading instruction for students in North Dakota.

All teachers and principals serving students in grades K-3 will:

- 1) Receive training in instructional practices, which aligns with research that reveals the science of how the brain learns to read and engages in reading.
- 2) Utilize scientifically-based instructional materials and approaches.

In March, the Administrative Rules Committee approved Administrative Code 67-31, effective on April 1, 2022, and listed [here](#).

Distinctions in the Legal Subsections of NDCC 15.1-21-12.1

There are several subsections of the law with similar but distinct purposes.

Subsection 1 is regarding the core reading curriculum schools use, while Subsection 4 addresses assessments and intervention curricula.

Subsection 2 requires all current K-3 teachers and principals to attend professional development, while Subsection 3 states for any new or reassigned teachers and principals to be trained.

This code uses the terms scientifically based, research-based, and evidence-based. While there are subtle differences, the intent is to align knowledge and instruction with the body of evidence known as the Science of Reading.

Definitions

Systematic direct instruction means the carefully planned sequence of instruction with the organization of material that follows a developmentally appropriate order within a pre-established routine. Systematic direct instruction is explicit, follows a gradual release process, and allows opportunities for practice and feedback.

Teacher-approved professional development means professional development identified and organized through the collaboration of district teachers and administrators.

Mastery means the successful demonstration of knowledge in the areas of reading competency described in this section.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

Are there new reading components in this law?

The Big Five reading components (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension) named in this law were identified in 2000 by the National Reading Panel as the most effective methods for teaching reading. Experts in the field agree on these critical components of reading instruction. While most reading teachers implement some elements of instruction in these areas, the implementation must be examined and adjustments made where necessary. The intention is to ensure curriculum and instruction are aligned to:

- *The science of how reading is learned and processed by the brain.*
- *Systematic and direct (explicit) instructional methods.*
- *Processes, including assessments and resources, to diagnose, monitor, and inform reading instruction that meets each child's unique needs.*

Who must participate in the training?

All teachers and principals in public and nonpublic facilities who serve students in grades K-3, regardless of their assignment, must be trained in the topics outlined in the law, including those who teach classes such as music, physical education, and art.

As of fall of 2022, all teachers and principals newly hired to serve students in grades K-3 must receive training, including those moving into the K-3 grade band from another grade level assignment. Teachers and principals in this category will have one year to complete training or demonstrate mastery.

Are paraeducators and counselors required to take the training?

Certificated educators, such as counselors working with students in grades K-3, would be required to take training to meet the intent of the law. However, the law is silent regarding the training for paraeducators. Schools are encouraged to support all instructional staff, including paraprofessionals, with training and professional learning regarding the science of reading but are not required to do so by law.

Is there a matrix to explain what the special education staff must do?

The roles and responsibilities of staff serving special education are varied. The following three questions should help determine what legal responsibility special education staff have according to the law.

- *Are they serving students in grades K-3? If not, they are not required to engage in reading professional development. If yes, continue to the next question.*
- *Do they hold an educator's license? If not, they are not required to engage in reading professional development. If yes, continue to the next question.*
- *Are they directly teaching reading to students? If yes, they should align their professional development with other staff in the building to understand and support the systemic approach to reading instruction. If not, they should seek training that offers an overview of the Science of Reading, such as "Science of Reading: A Shared Responsibility." This short online course will be available free of charge. More information is available [here](#).*

Does everyone take the same training?

The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI), in consultation with legislators sponsoring the law, the Administrative Rules Committee, and the North Dakota Regional Education Associations (NDREAs), agree that training can be offered in a differentiated model to address the various educator assignments. The number of training hours for each role is not specified in the law; however, teachers directly responsible for instruction and principals leading implementation require additional intensive training. All parties, regardless of assignment, should ensure they access training that presents the theory and practical application specific to their role.

A suggested model:

- *K-3 Principals: Principals are advised to complete professional development on how to lead the implementation of teaching aligned with reading science.*
- *Teachers of Reading: Teachers who directly teach reading to students in grades K-3 are advised to complete professional development, including how to systematically teach in all areas in ND Administrative Code section 67-31-01-01. This may include K-3 classroom teachers, teachers with reading instruction assignments such as instructional coaches, and teachers that provide supplemental or reading intervention instruction, such as special education or Title I teachers.*
- *Other K-3 teachers: Grades K-3 teachers who specialize in a discipline or content area in which reading strategies should be incorporated, but the teacher does not have the primary responsibility for teaching students to read. These teaching assignments may include subjects such as music, art, or physical education teachers and librarians or counselors. These teachers are advised to complete professional development, including an overview of the foundational competencies in ND Administrative Code 67-31-01-01 that apply specifically to the role.*

What training will meet the requirement?

Through administrator and teacher collaboration, each district will identify the acceptable training that aligns with assigned roles to meet the law. The NDREAs can assist schools in selecting training that aligns with the science of reading.

It is important to note that each school will report to NDDPI what training they approved for individual teachers and principals. If the training content, quality, or time invested falls short, schools may be asked for documentation to ensure all teachers and principals have met the law. (For example, if a building reports that they created and provided a two-hour in-service to all staff, this will likely need to be explored further, as a two-hour training would not adequately train teachers of reading in theory, practical application, and ongoing implementation).

Is there a list of approved training(s)?

The NDDPI does not provide a list of approved trainings. The primary source of information regarding high-quality professional development opportunities is available through the [North Dakota Regional Education Associations](#).

For additional professional development opportunities, consult the [North Dakota Professional Development](#) site.

What if a teacher has already been trained or is currently participating in training?

To be eligible for consideration, the required training must have occurred on or after July 1, 2018. All training must meet the requirements set forth in the law.

Training that is underway at the beginning of the 2024-2025 school year and taking place over an extended time to ensure deep learning and embedded opportunities for practice are reported as “ongoing.” The report may request complete information about ongoing training dates.

If my staff has had some reading professional development since July 2018, how can we determine whether it meets the requirements of the law?

Each building report will identify the training each teacher or principal is submitting as evidence that they have met the intention of the law. Administrators and teachers should collaborate on the review of training to evaluate them for quality and inclusion of the required components of the law, including scientifically-based reading instruction knowledge and approaches, systematic and direct instruction, phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. If the determination is that the training provided instruction that leads to meaningful, sustainable implementation of aligned information and support for the assigned role of this educator, then they should submit that in the report. If the training was brief, not wholly aligned with the law, or has not been included in ongoing reading instruction approaches in the building, then it is likely not the evidence that should be submitted, and the teacher or principal should seek out aligned professional development to attend.

If the law provides the option for individuals to demonstrate mastery, how is this documented?

For newly hired teachers and principals, the district has one year of the teacher's or principal's first year of placement in the grade level or at the school to document compliance. Other than professional development, a district may utilize successful completion of alternative tests, such as the Praxis used by the Education Standards and Practices Board, to meet this requirement.

FUNDING

Who pays for the training?

While available, approximately two million dollars in ESSER funds were allocated to the science of reading training to provide low-cost and no-cost opportunities for ND educators to fulfill the requirement and to build capacity through the ND Regional Education Associations to provide training. The state continues to utilize state funds to support training opportunities from state and national providers through contracts and grants to schools. Local districts can prioritize this training requirement by accessing funds such as Title II, Title V, and Title I to provide training in accordance with those program guidelines.

IMPLEMENTATION & COMPLIANCE REPORTING

How will districts report implementation?

Each K-3 public and nonpublic school will submit a Reading Curriculum and Professional Development report to the STARS portal.

Buildings will respond in the following areas:

- Reading curriculum and instruction,
- Professional development and training for grades K-3 teachers and principals, or demonstrated mastery of literacy topics by teachers and principals; and
- Assessment instruments to diagnose reading development and comprehension.

Will the professional development report need to be maintained once all staff meet compliance?

Yes. Schools must remain in compliance with the law by ensuring all new K-3 staff are trained. If a school has received an exemption from reporting (which may be up to three years), it will not be required to submit a professional development report until its next assigned due date. However, it must support those educators in obtaining their training to meet building compliance and maintain updated records for the next reporting date.

What assurance is required for professional development?

As of October 1, 2023, each K-3 school building will report on the status of professional development completion for each teacher and principal by submitting documentation indicating completion of the following required areas:

- *Theory of science-based reading instruction and systematic direct instruction.*
- *Application of science-based, direct instruction in each focus area according to the educator's role (teachers of reading, other K-3 teachers, principals).*

Will teachers' transcripts be reviewed for these courses?

No. These courses are not required to be taken for credit. Buildings will self-report which training individual staff have accessed to satisfy the requirement.

Are special education staff reported by their special education unit or by the buildings where they primarily work?

All contracted professional education staff members must be reported by the building or special education unit that holds their contract. If an individual holds more than one contract, the primary contractor (the largest share of contract time) should report that staff's training. If the assignment is equitable, the special education unit and the school building(s) should confer to determine which entity will report the individual. This process will mirror procedures for special education staff completing the MISO1 report.

What assurance is required for the reading curriculum?

Buildings will report the reading curriculum approved for use in their building, assuring that it is implemented with fidelity, and meets the requirement of NDCC 15.1-21-12.1 in grades K-3. Each school district and nonpublic school shall ensure the portion of its curriculum which is related to reading:

- a. *Is scientifically-, evidence-, and research- based.*
- b. *Focuses on:*
 - (1) *Phonemic Awareness*
 - (2) *Phonics*
 - (3) *Fluency*
 - (4) *Vocabulary*
 - (5) *Comprehension*
- c. *Uses systematic direct instruction for students in grades K-3 to ensure all students obtain the necessary early reading skills.*

What assurance is required for the assessment?

Each K-3 school building will report the assessments used at each grade level to:

- 1) *Diagnose reading development and comprehension.*

Is there a list of state-approved curricula?

There is not a state-approved list of curricula. The [North Dakota Regional Education Association](#) is available to support questions and offer guidance on the review and selection of appropriate curricula.

Will we need to buy new curricula?

Each school and district determines locally whether to purchase a curriculum. A committee of informed teachers and principals should review current curricula and select new ones. This local process may reveal a need to replace or supplement the current curriculum.

How will the implementation and compliance information be used?

The information reported will be reviewed to ensure all staff are adequately trained and to offer guidance to schools that have not achieved 100% compliance.

The NDDPI will prepare a report for the Legislative Committee on the implementation and effectiveness of this section in improving educational outcomes and student reading competency.

Is this an annual report?

Yes. However, the reviewing agency has the option to offer exemptions for up to three years for buildings demonstrating superior progress toward implementation and compliance.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Please email questions to dpiliteracy@nd.gov, or contact Ann Ellefson or Brenda Ehrmantraut in the Office of Academic Support at (701) 328-2260.