# South Carolina State Reading Plan and Annual Proficiency Update

Pursuant to Act 284

November 2023

# Contents

## Requirements

The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) provides this 2023 revision to the *South Carolina State Reading Plan* (hereafter referred to as the State Reading Plan) and annual proficiency update in compliance with Act 284 of 2014, which reads, in part, as follows:

> §59-155-130 (9): The Read to Succeed Office must…provide an annual report to the General Assembly regarding the implementation of the South Carolina Read to Succeed Act and the State and the district's progress toward ensuring that at least ninety-five percent of all students are reading at grade level.

> §59-155-140 (A)(2): The state plan must be based on reading research and proven-effective practices, applied to the conditions prevailing in reading-literacy education in this State, with special emphasis on addressing instructional and institutional deficiencies that can be remedied through faithful implementation of research-based practices. The plan must provide standards, format, and guidance for districts to use to develop and annually update their plans, as well as to present and explain the research-based rationale for state-level actions to be taken. The plan must be updated annually and must incorporate a state reading proficiency progress report.

Revisions have been incorporated into this version of the State Reading Plan. Annual implementation and proficiency information is also included.

# Introduction

On February 11, 2015, the State Board of Education adopted the *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate* to help ensure all students in South Carolina graduate prepared for success in college, careers, and citizenship. The *Profile* outlines the world-class knowledge, world-class skills, and life and career characteristics necessary for our children to be successful in the global marketplace.

*Figure 1: Profile of the South Carolina Graduate*
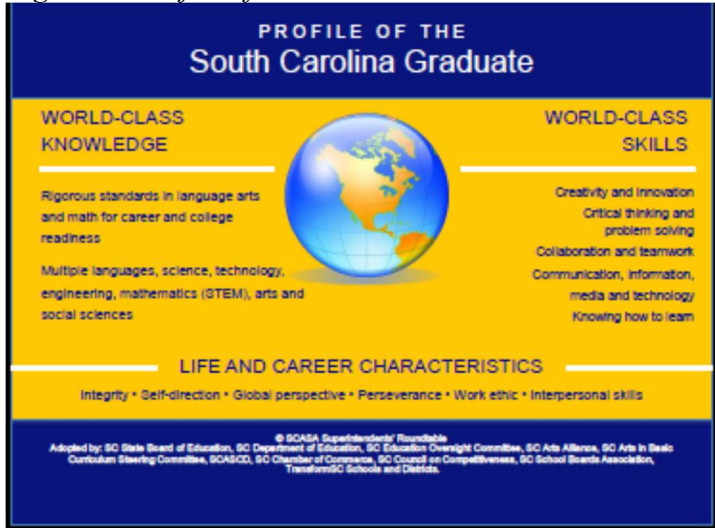


*Source*: South Carolina Department of Education. (2017). Retrieved from
http://ed.sc.gov/newsroom/profile-of-the-south-carolina-graduate/.

Foundational to the knowledge and skills outlined in the *Profile* is the ability to read proficiently. It is imperative that the state move forward with urgency to ensure South Carolina students achieve proficiency in reading and writing. The SCDE, districts, and schools work toward this common vision through the State Reading Plan, which is intended to guide districts and their schools in the design, implementation, and evaluation of literacy-focused instruction and interventions. The SCDE continuously refines and builds upon the State Reading Plan and provides districts with support and additional guidance as needed.

Act 284 of 2014 (Read to Succeed) was created to address literacy performance in our state and put in place a comprehensive system of support to ensure South Carolina's students graduate on time with the literacy skills they need to be successful in college, careers, and citizenship. Research is clear that students who are not proficient readers by third grade are more likely to struggle academically, greatly reducing their chances of graduating from high school, going to college, or successfully participating in a twenty-first-century high-skill economy. This is not an English language arts (ELA) issue alone; students who are struggling readers are less able to access content in all areas of learning, including science and mathematics.

There have been several statewide efforts to address the needs of our struggling readers over the past decade. Four major literacy challenges that affect the reading achievement of South

Carolina students were identified in 2011 by the SCDE and the South Carolina Literacy Panel. These four challenges include:

1. Low student achievement in reading and writing,
2. Literacy achievement gaps among demographic groups,
3. Summer reading achievement loss, and
4. A limited number of exemplary literacy classrooms.

A focus on these challenges informs the Read to Succeed legislation, the State Reading Plan, and the work of the state Read to Succeed Office, undertaken as the Office of Early Learning and Literacy (OELL) in the SCDE.

This update of the State Reading Plan is built upon the original version of the 2015 Reading Plan, which reflects input and feedback from stakeholders in educational organizations, districts, and schools. The original 2015 version includes information on characteristics of exemplary literacy classrooms and connects the Reading Plan to the 2015 statewide ELA standards. This 2022 update is condensed to make information more accessible, inform current expected district action, and focus on the provision of proficiency data. This updated report is also aligned with the upcoming [2023 South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Standards for English Language Arts](#) (SCDE, 2023).

## Overview of Read to Succeed

In June 2014, the South Carolina General Assembly passed Read to Succeed, excerpted in Appendix A, as a significant step toward closing the state's achievement gap and increasing opportunities for all students in South Carolina. The goal of Read to Succeed is to ensure all students graduate from high school with the reading and writing skills they need to be college- and career-ready. Read to Succeed legislation is comprehensive, systematic, and affects every educator and student in the state through eight components:

1. State, district, and school reading plans,
2. Third grade progression,
3. Summer reading camps,
4. Provision of reading interventions,
5. Requirements for in-service educator endorsements,
6. Early learning and literacy development,
7. Teacher preparation, and
8. Reading coaches.

The following sections include work continued by the OELL. Read to Succeed legislation requires that the SCDE with the approval of the State Board of Education develop, implement, evaluate, and continuously refine a comprehensive state plan for prekindergarten through grade twelve to improve reading achievement. Reading plans, beginning with the State Reading Plan, cohesively guide the work of the SCDE, districts, and schools across all components of the law. They must be well- grounded in research and best practices in order to make the vision of Read to Succeed a reality in South Carolina.

**Third-Grade Progression**
Act 284 also requires that a student must be retained in the third grade if the student fails to demonstrate reading proficiency at the end of third grade as indicated by scoring at the lowest achievement level on the state summative reading assessment (currently SC Ready). A student may be exempt for good cause from the mandatory retention but shall continue to receive instructional support and services and reading intervention appropriate for their age and reading level.

**Summer Reading Camps**
Third-grade Summer Reading Camps (SRC) are held each summer in accordance with section 1.49 of the General Appropriations Bill. Each district must identify third-grade students who are not reading proficiently on grade level and provide them with the opportunity to attend SRC. Districts may also serve struggling readers in other grades. OELL Literacy Specialists visit camps around the state to support educators and collect data using the Summer Reading Camp Monitoring Tool (SCDE, 2022). Additionally, both schools and families have access to resources created and collected in 2020 and housed on the SC Remote Learning (SCDE, 2020) website. The annual Leaders Making Readers Virtual Conference is held each spring to support districts and schools in planning for the upcoming camps. Key dates, reporting forms, documentation, and links related to SRC can be found on the SRC webpage (2023) on the SCDE website.

**Provision of Reading Interventions**
For the 2023–24 school year, districts must ensure all students in first through eighth grades are assessed using a state-approved interim assessment tool during the fall, winter, and spring. School districts must provide all interim and formative assessment data scores by grade and school to the Department of Education's Office of Assessment and Office of Research and Data Analysis. The department is directed to compile the information received and submit a comprehensive report regarding performance on such assessments to the General Assembly.

In 2018, Governor Henry McMaster signed Act 213 into law. Section 59-33-520 of the act provides direction on the implementation of MTSS and the use of approved screeners. The MTSS Framework and Guidance Document (SCDE, Updated 2022) helps districts and schools personalize student learning plans through intensive academic and/or social emotional support as well as identify at-risk students and provide the appropriate support. This document supports educators in making instructional decisions to help students to move between the tiers and receive interventions within the classroom walls. MTSS allows districts and schools to better identify students who are at risk or who require more instructional time, which will allow for a more accurate identification of students with disabilities and/or dyslexia. See Appendix D for more information on MTSS.

Act 213 provides direction on identifying and effectively addressing reading difficulties in students, and was the catalyst for the creation of the SC Dyslexia Handbook. The purpose of The South Carolina Dyslexia Handbook: A Guide to Early Literacy Development & Reading (SCDE, 2020) is to provide information to educators, students, families, and community members about the core elements of effective evidence-based reading instruction, early literacy development, reading difficulties, dyslexia, and the best practices for identification, instruction, and accommodation of students who have reading difficulties. The initiative to provide a comprehensive guide was requested by the South Carolina Learning Disorders Task Force. The

Learning Disorders Task Force was created under Act 213 for the purpose of working with the SCDE in matters relating to reading disorders to include, but not be limited to, dyslexia.

**Requirements for In-Service Educator Endorsements**
Read to Succeed ensures that students who are unable to read and comprehend on grade level will be identified as early as possible and be provided with targeted support from all classroom teachers, not just those specializing in ELA or Reading. Read to Succeed requires that all educators have the knowledge and skills they need to assess and address student reading problems effectively. To this end, the law mandates requirements for teacher preparation, coursework for in-service educators, and the establishment of reading coaches in schools. More information on educator endorsements may be found here.

**Early Learning and Literacy Development**
Early Learning Research compiled by the Institute of Education Sciences (2021) indicates that children entering kindergarten vary greatly in their language and literacy skills. Therefore, up-to-date information about evidence-based practices is essential for early childhood educators as they support preschool children's language and literacy development. The Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP) was established in annual budget proviso starting in 2006 as a pilot program for children residing in the plaintiff districts in the school funding lawsuit, Abbeville County School District et al. vs. South Carolina. On June 11, 2014, Governor Nikki Haley signed Act 284 (Read to Succeed); section 2 of that act codified the Child Early Reading and Development Education Program (CERDEP). The South Carolina General Assembly has expanded the funding for many of the state's at-risk 4-year-olds to have an opportunity to attend a full-day educational program (Proviso 1.48).

**Teacher Preparation**
Effective leadership, high-quality core instruction, and a strong curriculum are key components to increasing reading achievement across South Carolina. The SCDE's strategic plan has set a goal of conducting research so that the state can identify and disseminate effective policies and work to improve policies that have not been effective. The current partnership with Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Southeast is focused on the implementation of the South Carolina Teacher Leadership Pilot, the South Carolina Read to Succeed Act, and materials previously developed by the REL Southeast on developing a successful professional development program evaluation. The What Works Clearinghouse identifies research studies that provide credible evidence of the effectiveness of a given practice, program, or policy and disseminates summary information and reports on the REL Southeast Website (2022). See Appendix E for more information on REL.

In accordance with Section 1A.73 of the 2023–24 General Appropriations Bill, professional learning concerning the Science of Reading has increased to address the needs of many SC students. The Science of Reading is a comprehensive body of research that encompasses years of scientific knowledge, spans across many languages, and shares the contributions of experts from relevant disciplines such as education, special education, literacy, psychology, neurology, and more. The Science of Reading has evolved from a wide span of research designs, experimental methods, participants, and statistical analyses. This conclusive, empirically-supported research provides us with the information we need to gain a deeper understanding of how we learn to

read, what skills are involved, how they work together, and which parts of the brain are responsible for reading development. From this research, we can identify an evidence-based best practice approach for teaching foundational literacy skills called Structured Literacy. See Appendix F for more information on the Science of Reading.

**School-Based Reading Coaches**
The OELL commits to supporting districts in their implementation of Read to Succeed as outlined in the Read to Succeed Act. As part of our effort to promote literacy achievement, the OELL will continue the [Palmetto Literacy Project](#) (PLP) in the 2023–24 school year. Based on literacy data, we have differentiated support for reading coaches throughout the state. All primary and elementary-level coaches have access to statewide Professional Learning Opportunities (PLOs) throughout the year. The PLP schools will receive additional SCDE Literacy Specialist support utilizing research and collaboration with district and school staff to strengthen literacy outcomes. See Appendix G for more information on the PLP.

## The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) State Goals

In 2015, Congress passed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). ESSA requires state education agencies (SEAs) complete a state plan outlining education accountability metrics and evidenced-based interventions.

The Academic Achievement component of the Consolidated State Plan includes the following literacy state goals for students in grades 3–8:
- By 2035, 90 percent of students will score at Level 2 or higher on the ELA state summative assessment.
- By 2035, 70 percent of students will score at Level 3 or higher on the ELA state summative assessment.

While student subgroup performance is not included as part of the state's ESSA literacy goals, the state does report publicly on academic achievement by subgroup. To maintain consistency from previous proficiency reports, we include subgroup performance data in this year's report.

The South Carolina Consolidated State Plan includes the following transformational goals and benchmarks:
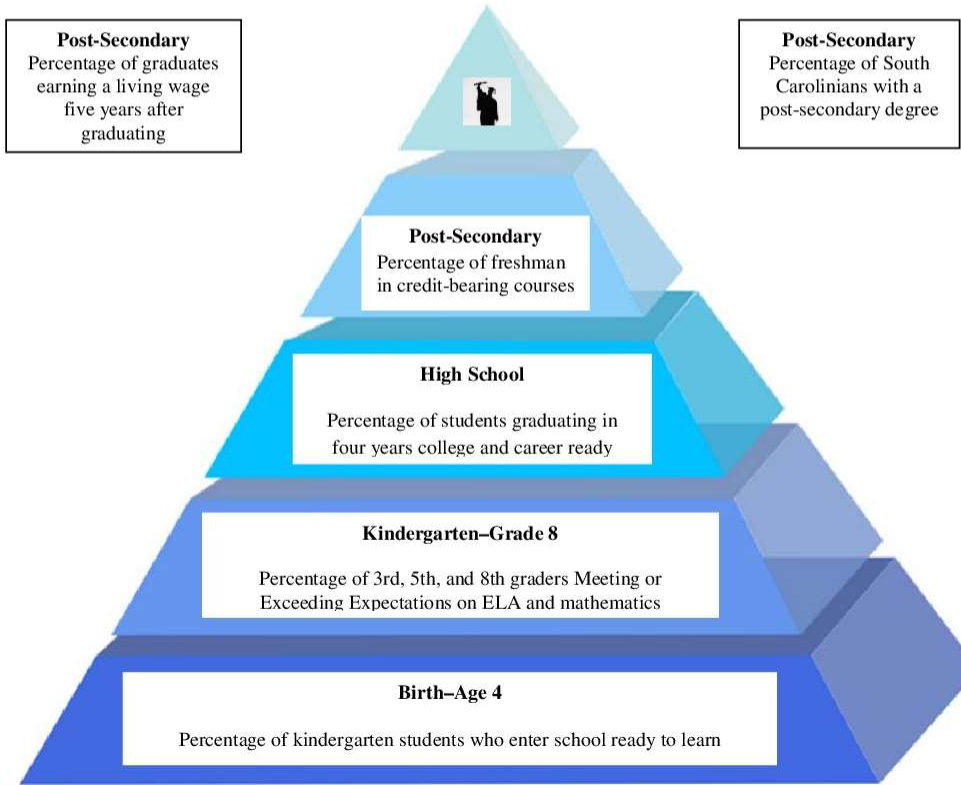
*Figure 2: South Carolina ESSA Goals and Benchmarks*

**South Carolina Transformational Goals and Benchmarks**

To meet the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate (the Profile), the state will set two overarching long term goals and report on the progress of key indicators along the continuum of a student's journey through the educational system from birth through career.

| |
|---|
| **Goal One** |
| By 2035, 90 percent of students will graduate "college, career, and citizenship ready" as outlined in the *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate*. |
| **Goal Two** |
| Beginning with the 2020 graduating class, the state, each district, and each high school should increase by five percent annually the percentage of students who graduate ready to enter postsecondary education to pursue a degree or national industry credential without the need for remediation in mathematics or English. |

**Statewide Leading Metrics**

**Post-Secondary**
Percentage of graduates earning a living wage five years after graduating

**Post-Secondary**
Percentage of South Carolinians with a post-secondary degree

**Post-Secondary**
Percentage of freshman in credit-bearing courses

**High School**
Percentage of students graduating in four years college and career ready

**Kindergarten–Grade 8**
Percentage of 3rd, 5th, and 8th graders Meeting or Exceeding Expectations on ELA and mathematics

**Birth–Age 4**
Percentage of kindergarten students who enter school ready to learn

*Source*: South Carolina Consolidated State Plan (2018). Retrieved from:
https://ed.sc.gov/newsroom/every-student-succeeds-act-essa/consolidated-state-plan-approved-by-usde-on-may-3-2018/.

# State Reading Plan Actions

The State Reading Plan lists eight core actions the state will undertake to improve literacy performance statewide. These actions reflect an intentional focus on the teaching of reading for all students, with intervention strategies to support struggling readers.

**Action 1:** Provide professional learning that supports all pre-kindergarten through grade twelve educators in understanding and implementing the characteristics of exemplary literacy classrooms.

**Action 2:** Build a comprehensive assessment system that helps teachers make a clear connection between curriculum, assessment, and student data in order to develop effective instructional strategies.

**Action 3:** Provide research-based strategies for summer programs to districts and activities for parents to help prevent summer reading loss.

**Action 4:** Provide access to professional learning needed for Read to Succeed endorsements and other licensure requirements to help districts and schools train, reward, and retain effective teachers and reading coaches.

**Action 5:** Foster partnerships to communicate the Read to Succeed goals and to promote literacy achievement from birth to grade twelve through collaboration efforts with stakeholders that include community organizations, businesses, and state agencies.
> **Action 5.1**: Involve parents and family members in their children's education early.
> **Action 5.2**: Continue to involve parents and family members in their children's literacy development through elementary, middle, and high school.

**Action 6:** Strengthen language and literacy instruction in pre-kindergarten programs by providing professional learning in evidence-based, intentional curricula and by providing resources for literacy-rich classroom environments.
> **Action 6.1**: Expand accessibility to pre-kindergarten programs for all low-income students through partnerships with school districts and public and private partners that provide quality preschool experiences.
> **Action 6.2**: Provide comprehensive professional development, particularly in early literacy and social-emotional development, for early childhood educators in public schools, and partner with First Steps, the Department of Social Services, and Head Start programs to support their efforts at the same level.

Two additional actions were added during the 2016–17 school year.

**Action 7:** Improve the ability of South Carolina educators and/or schools to assess and identify the reading difficulties of their students.

**Action 8:** Improve the ability of South Carolina educators and/or schools to provide effective instruction and interventions.

A detailed description of the 2022–23 implementation of the State Reading Plan actions is provided in Appendix C.

# District Reading Plans

District reading plans, required by the Read to Succeed Act, must be aligned with the State Reading Plan and reflect district and school actions related to literacy.

Each district's pre-kindergarten through grade twelve self-reflection tool addresses the following as required in the Read to Succeed legislation:
- Document and monitor the reading and writing assessment and instruction planned for all PK–12 students, as well as the interventions in PK–12 provided to all struggling readers who are not able to comprehend grade-level texts;
- Provide supplemental instruction by teachers who have a literacy teacher add-on endorsement and is offered during the school day and, as appropriate, before or after school in book clubs, through SRC, or both;
- Utilize a system for helping parents understand how they can support the student as a reader at home;
- Provide for the reading and writing achievement and growth at the classroom, school, and district levels with decisions about intervention based on all available data;
- Ensure that students are provided with wide selections of texts over a wide range of genres and written on a wide range of reading levels to match the reading levels of students;
- Provide teacher and administrator training in reading and writing instruction;
- Develop strategically-planned partnerships with county libraries, state and local arts organizations, volunteers, social service organizations, community partners, and school media specialists to promote reading and writing; and
- Embed practices reflective of exemplary literacy-rich environments.

Read to Succeed requires districts to submit a variety of data to the SCDE. The SCDE may request additional data in the district plan to help gauge state and district progress and plan for district support. Some of the data required under the law may be asked for in the district's reading plan, while other data may be requested in other formats, such as through PowerSchool or an online portal at more appropriate or timely points in the school year. Under particular components of the law, districts and schools are also required to provide data and information to parents and stakeholders. Specific direction is provided by the SCDE as appropriate in relation to these requirements.

During the 2022–23 school year, the OELL again required district and school reading plans to include a section for reporting previous year growth and to create at least one goal using SC Ready data. The OELL made additional organizational adjustments to the template to reflect the state's implementation of MTSS and prioritization of effective reading instruction and interventions. The updated template may be found here.

Read to Succeed requires that all district reading plans be reviewed and approved by the SCDE. Districts are expected to assess implementation and revise their plans annually as needed.

Read to Succeed requires that a district that does not submit a plan or whose plan is not approved does not receive any state funds for reading until it submits a plan that is approved. The SCDE

may direct a district that is persistently unable to prepare an acceptable reading plan or to help all students comprehend grade-level texts to enter into a multidistrict or contractual arrangement to develop an effective intervention plan. Support to draft, revise, and enact annual reading plan goals is provided by Literacy Specialists and the OELL staff.

## School Reading Plans

Schools reading plans contain literacy goals that are aligned with the goals presented in the district reading plan. Currently, schools are asked to assess the implementation of their previous reading plans and refine their upcoming plans using the appropriate literacy reflection tool. Districts and schools are encouraged to use this planning process to hold themselves accountable to their communities and drive continuous improvement related to reading. The SCDE encourages each school to include the school reading coach and other stakeholders in the implementation, assessment, and refinement of the school reading plan. The current reading plan templates may be found below:

- District Reading Plan (Reflection Tool),
- Primary and Elementary Reading Plan (Reflection Tool), and
- Middle and Secondary Reading Plan (Reflection Tool).

## State Proficiency Update

A state reading proficiency progress report is required under the Read to Succeed Act. The following information comes from school year 2022–23 assessment data available as of November 2023.

**Early Learning (K-2)**

***Kindergarten Readiness***
In 2017, South Carolina began using the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) to measure school readiness for all students entering public kindergarten. The KRA determines each child's readiness level from an evaluation of four domains: Social Foundations, Language/Literacy, Mathematics, and Physical Well-Being. The KRA provides a snapshot of students' abilities at the beginning of the school year.

At the beginning of the 2019–20 school year, approximately 39 percent of kindergarteners statewide scored at the Demonstrating Readiness level overall. This percentage dropped significantly at the beginning of the 2020–21 school year, likely due to lost instructional time the prior year for 4K students and new testing policies due to COVID-19. The percentage of students scoring Demonstrating Readiness increased during 2021–22, but did not reach pre-pandemic levels; the percentage again increased slightly during 2022–23.

*Table 1: KRA Results by Percentage of Kindergarteners, 2019–20 to 2022–23*

| School Year | Number | Emerging Readiness | Approaching Readiness | Demonstrating Readiness |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fall 2019 | 55,694 | 24% | 37% | 39% |
| Fall 2020 | 48,521 | 33% | 40% | 27% |
| Fall 2021 | 54,486 | 28% | 36% | 36% |
| Fall 2022 | 53,508 | 27% | 34% | 38% |

*Source*: Education Oversight Committee (2023) *State-Funded Full-Day 4K*. Retrieved from: https://eoc.sc.gov/sites/eoc/files/Documents/4K/State-Funded%20Full-Day%204K%20Report%2C%20%20FY2021-22%262022-23.docx.pdf.

An analysis by the Education Oversight Committee found that students who participated in CERDEP outperformed non-CERDEP pupils in poverty, suggesting that state-funded full-day 4K significantly improves school readiness for underserved students.

*Table 2: KRA Results by 4K Experience, 2022–23*

| 4K Experience | Number | Emerging Readiness | Approaching Readiness | Demonstrating Readiness |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| All CERDEP Pupils in | 11,668 | 22% | 37% | 41% |
| Poverty, Non-CERDEP | 23,465 | 37% | 36% | 27% |

*Source*: Education Oversight Committee (2023) *State-Funded Full-Day 4K*. Retrieved from: https://eoc.sc.gov/sites/eoc/files/Documents/4K/State-Funded%20Full-Day%204K%20Report%2C%20%20FY2021-22%262022-23.docx.pdf.

**Elementary and Middle Grades (3–8)**

*National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)*
The NAEP are congressionally-mandated assessments given in math and reading to randomly selected fourth and eighth grade students in every state every two to three years. In 2022, the national average reading score at both fourth and eighth grade decreased by 3 points compared to 2019. South Carolina was one of a handful of states where the fourth grade reading scores did not decrease in 2022, but eighth grade scores decreased five points.
https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/highlights/reading/2022/.

*SC Ready*
In 2016, South Carolina began administering the SC Ready assessment in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics to students in grades 3–8. In 2022–23, the percentage of students scoring Meets or Exceeds increased significantly across all grade levels, and the percentage of students on or above grade level now exceeds pre-pandemic averages.

*Table 3: SC Ready ELA Results for Grades 3–8, 2022–23*

| Grade | Does Not Meet | Approaches | Meets | Exceeds | Meets or Exceeds | Change from 2020–21 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | 24.7 | 21.8 | 25.6 | 27.9 | 53.4 | +5.4 |
| 4 | 20.3 | 22.5 | 24.4 | 32.8 | 57.1 | +6.7 |

| Grade | Does Not Meet | Approaches | Meets | Exceeds | Meets or Exceeds | Change from 2020–21 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 20.2 | 24.7 | 25.8 | 29.4 | 55.2 | +6.9 |
| 6 | 19.3 | 27.2 | 23.6 | 29.8 | 53.4 | +8.3 |
| 7 | 23.6 | 26.3 | 23.4 | 26.7 | 50.0 | +6.8 |
| 8 | 20.9 | 26.0 | 27.0 | 26.1 | 53.1 | +7.2 |

*Source*: SCDE (2023) *SC Ready ELA Results*. Retrieved from: https://ed.sc.gov/data/test-scores/state-assessments/sc-ready/.

The Read to Succeed Act specifically addresses the importance of third grade reading performance. Third grade is a pivotal year for a child's literacy development, as research suggests that once students fall behind in literacy skills in the early years, they often fail to develop proficiency with reading and comprehension in later grades. In 2022–23, the percentage of third grade students scoring meets or exceeds continued to increase, and like other grades now surpasses pre-pandemic averages.

*Table 4: Percentage of SC Ready Third Grade ELA Scores, 2019–20 to 2022–23*

| SC Ready Score Level | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Does Not Meet | 25.5 | - | 31.8 | 29.0 | 24.7 |
| Approaches | 24.7 | - | 24.9 | 23.0 | 21.8 |
| Meets | 26.6 | - | 23.9 | 23.6 | 25.6 |
| Exceeds | 23.1 | - | 19.3 | 24.4 | 27.9 |
| *Meets or Exceeds* | *49.7* | - | *43.3* | *48.0* | *53.4* |

*Source*: SCDE (2023). *SC Ready ELA Results*. Retrieved from: https://ed.sc.gov/data/test-scores/state-assessments/sc-ready/.

While the state does not include student subgroup performance as part of the ESSA literacy goals, subgroup performance is still reported annually. The state is required to report on the performance of economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, students of various racial and ethnic groups, and multi-lingual learners (MLL). Additionally, the state reports on the performance of migrant students.

*Table 5: Percentage of Students in Grades 3–8 Scoring Meets or Exceeds on SC Ready ELA by All Students and Subgroup, 2022–23*

| Subgroup | Grade 3 | Grade 4 | Grade 5 | Grade 6 | Grade 7 | Grade 8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *All Students* | 53.4 | 57.1 | 55.2 | 53.4 | 50.0 | 53.1 |
| Pupils in Poverty (PIP) | 42.3 | 46.2 | 43.7 | 41.3 | 38.0 | 41.7 |
| Students with Disabilities | 21.5 | 21.7 | 17.6 | 14.5 | 12.0 | 12.6 |
| White | 66.8 | 70.1 | 69.0 | 68.0 | 64.3 | 66.4 |
| Black or African American | 35.6 | 39.1 | 36.4 | 34.1 | 31.4 | 36.2 |

| Subgroup | Grade 3 | Grade 4 | Grade 5 | Grade 6 | Grade 7 | Grade 8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hispanic or Latino | 41.4 | 47.4 | 45.9 | 43.3 | 41.4 | 42.0 |
| Asian | 76.1 | 79.1 | 77.4 | 79.8 | 78.8 | 79.3 |
| Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | 37.5 | 56.9 | 46.2 | 48.7 | 42.6 | 47.3 |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 46.4 | 54.0 | 39.2 | 55.1 | 33.9 | 45.9 |
| Two or More Races | 55.4 | 59.1 | 56.6 | 54.8 | 49.7 | 54.4 |
| Migrant | 24.1 | 37.1 | 25.7 | 27.5 | 33.3 | 31.0 |
| Limited English Proficient | 39.2 | 37.4 | 35.9 | 34.3 | 33.9 | 32.5 |

*Source*: SCDE (2023). *SC Ready ELA Results*. Retrieved from: https://ed.sc.gov/data/test-scores/state-assessments/sc-ready/.

**High School**

*Graduation Rate*
The state's public four-year cohort graduation rate remained steady at 83.8, but is still down from the high of 84.6 percent in 2017.

*ACT Results*
Until the 2017–18 school year, all eleventh-graders were required by law to take at least one administration of the ACT; in 2022–23, approximately 40 percent of graduating seniors took the ACT. The ACT College Readiness Benchmark Scores are 18 for English and 22 for Reading. Averages across all domains remained consistent from the prior year.

*Table 6: SC Mean ACT Scores for 2023 Graduating Seniors*

| Average Composite Score | English Mean Score | Reading Mean Score | Math Mean Score | Science Mean Score |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 18.8 | 17.6 | 19.6 | 18.3 | 19.0 |

*Source*: ACT (2023). Retrieved from: https://www.act.org/content/act/en/research/services-and-resources/data-and-visualization/grad-class-database-2023.html.

For 2022–23, the ACT testing agency provided SC student subgroup results by race and/or ethnicity. The following chart outlines the percentage of students by subgroup who met each ACT benchmark.

*Table 7: Percentage of SC Students Who Met ACT Benchmarks, 2022–23*

| Ethnicity | English | Mathematics | Reading | Science | All Four |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Black/African American | 19 | 5 | 14 | 7 | 3 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 35 | 17 | 28 | 18 | 11 |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native | 32 | 13 | 26 | 15 | 9 |
| Native Hawaiian/Other/ Pacific Islander | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Asian | 75 | 60 | 60 | 55 | 44 |
| White | 61 | 35 | 50 | 37 | 24 |
| Two or More Races | 47 | 21 | 38 | 25 | 15 |

*Source*: ACT (2022). ACT (2023). Retrieved from: https://www.act.org/content/act/en/research/services-and-resources/data-and-visualization/grad-class-database-2023.html.

### SAT Results

Approximately 50 percent of graduating seniors in 2023 took the SAT during high school. In 2022–23, statewide average scores remained similar to the prior year; however, SC average scores now exceed the national average in English, Reading, and Writing (ERW).

*Table 9: Statewide Average SAT Scores, 2022–23*

| SAT Sections | South Carolina | United States |
|---|---|---|
| Reading and Writing | 527 | 520 |
| Math | 501 | 508 |
| Total Average Score | 1028 | 1028 |

*Source*: SAT (2023) *SC SAT Results, 2022–23*. Retrieved from: https://reports.collegeboard.org/media/pdf/2023-south-carolina-sat-suite-of-assessments-annual-report-ADA.pdf.

The SAT testing agency provides student subgroup results by race and/or ethnicity. The SAT testing agency provides student subgroup results by race and/or ethnicity. The following chart outlines the percentage of students by subgroup who met both SAT benchmarks in English, Reading, and Writing (ERW) and Math.

*Table 10: Percentage of Students Who Met Both SAT Benchmarks, 2022–23*

| Subgroup | South Carolina | Nation |
|---|---|---|
| *All Students* | *38* | *40* |
| White | 49 | 51 |
| African-American | 14 | 17 |
| Hispanic | 30 | 24 |
| Asian | 59 | 74 |
| Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander | 26 | 21 |
| American Indian/Alaska Native | 22 | 17 |
| Two or More Races | 43 | 51 |

*Source*: SAT (2023) *SC SAT Results, 2022–23*. Retrieved from: https://reports.collegeboard.org/media/pdf/2023-south-carolina-sat-suite-of-assessments-annual-report-ADA.pdf.

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**Appendix A: Excerpt from Act 284 of 2014, Read to Succeed**

Section 59-155-140(A)(1): The department, with approval by the State Board of Education, shall develop, implement, evaluate, and continuously refine a comprehensive state plan to improve reading achievement in public schools. The State Reading Proficiency Plan must be approved by the board by June 15, 2015, and must include, but not be limited to, sections addressing the following components:

(a)  reading process;
(b)  professional learning to increase teacher reading expertise;
(c)  professional learning to increase reading expertise and literacy leadership of principals and assistant principals;
(d)  reading instruction;
(e)  reading assessment;
(f)  discipline-specific literacy;
(g)  writing;
(h)  support for struggling readers;
(i)  early childhood interventions;
(j)  family support of literacy development;
(k)  district guidance and support for reading proficiency;
(l)  state guidance and support for reading proficiency;
(m)  accountability; and
(n)  urgency to improve reading proficiency.

(2)  The state plan must be based on reading research and proven-effective practices, applied to the conditions prevailing in reading-literacy education in this State, with special emphasis on addressing instructional and institutional deficiencies that can be remedied through faithful implementation of research-based practices. The plan must provide standards, format, and guidance for districts to use to develop and annually update their plans, as well as to present and explain the research-based rationale for state-level actions to be taken. The plan must be updated annually and must incorporate a state reading proficiency progress report.

(3)  The state plan must include specific details and explanations for all substantial uses of state, local, and federal funds promoting reading-literacy and best judgment estimates of the cost of research-supported, thoroughly analyzed proposals for initiation, expansion, or modification of major funding programs addressing reading and writing. Analyses of funding requirements must be prepared by the department for incorporation into the plan.

(B)(1) Beginning in Fiscal Year 2015-2016, each district must prepare a comprehensive annual reading proficiency plan for prekindergarten through twelfth grade consistent with the plan by responding to questions and presenting specific information and data in a format specified by the Read to Succeed Office. Each district's PK-12 reading proficiency plan must present the rationale and details of its blueprint for action and support at the district, school, and classroom levels. Each district shall develop a comprehensive plan for supporting the progress of students as readers and writers, monitoring the impact of its plan, and using data to make improvements and to inform its plan for the subsequent years. The district plan piloted in school districts in Fiscal Year 2013-2014 and revised based on the input of districts shall be used as the initial

district reading plan framework in Fiscal Year 2014-2015 to provide interventions for struggling readers and fully implemented in Fiscal Year 2015-2016 to align with the state plan.

(2) Each district PK-12 reading proficiency plan shall:
(a) document the reading and writing assessment and instruction planned for all PK-12 students and the interventions in prekindergarten through twelfth grade to be provided to all struggling readers who are not able to comprehend grade-level texts. Supplemental instruction shall be provided by teachers who have a literacy teacher add-on endorsement and offered during the school day and, as appropriate, before or after school in book clubs, through a summer reading camp, or both;
(b) include a system for helping parents understand how they can support the student as a reader at home;
(c) provide for the monitoring of reading achievement and growth at the classroom, school, and district levels with decisions about intervention based on all available data;
(d) ensure that students are provided with wide selections of texts over a wide range of genres and written on a wide range of reading levels to match the reading levels of students;
(e) provide teacher training in reading and writing instruction; and
(f) include strategically planned and developed partnerships with county libraries, state and local arts organizations, volunteers, social service organizations, and school media specialists to promote reading.

(3)(a) The Read to Succeed Office shall develop the format for the plan and the deadline for districts to submit their plans to the office for its approval. A school district that does not submit a plan or whose plan is not approved shall not receive any state funds for reading until it submits a plan that is approved. All district reading plans must be reviewed and approved by the Read to Succeed Office. The office shall provide written comments to each district on its plan and to all districts on common issues raised in prior or newly submitted district reading plans.
(b) The Read to Succeed Office shall monitor the district and school plans and use their findings to inform the training and support the office provides to districts and schools.
(c) The department may direct a district that is persistently unable to prepare an acceptable PK- 12 reading proficiency plan or to help all students comprehend grade-level texts to enter into a multidistrict or contractual arrangement to develop an effective intervention plan.

(C) Each school must prepare an implementation plan aligned with the district reading proficiency plan to enable the district to monitor and support implementation at the school level. The school plan must be a component of the school's strategic plan required by Section 9 59-18-1310. A school implementation plan shall be sufficiently detailed to provide practical guidance for classroom teachers. Proposed strategies for assessment, instruction, and other activities specified in the school plan must be sufficient to provide to classroom teachers and other instructional staff helpful guidance that can be related to the critical reading and writing needs of students in the school. In consultation with the School Improvement Council, each school must include in its implementation plan the training and support that will be provided to parents as needed to maximize their promotion of reading and writing by students at home and in the community.

# Appendix B: Report on Achievement Goals

The Read to Succeed Act requires an annual report on the state and districts' progress toward ensuring that at least ninety-five percent of all students are reading at grade level.

At the state level, South Carolina has not yet achieved the goal of having at least ninety-five percent of all students statewide reading at grade level.

*Table 11: Percentage of SC Students Scoring Proficient or Above on State Summative Reading Assessments by Grade Level, 2018–19 to 2022–23*

| Grade | Assessment[a] | Percent of Students Scoring Proficient or Above | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2018–19 | 2019–20[b] | 2020–21 | 2021–22 | 2022–23 |
| 3 | SC Ready ELA | 49.7 | -- | 43.3 | 48 | 53.4 |
| 4 | SC Ready ELA | 51.2 | -- | 46.1 | 50.4 | 57.1 |
| 5 | SC Ready ELA | 41 | -- | 38.9 | 48.3 | 55.2 |
| 6 | SC Ready ELA | 41 | -- | 41.8 | 45.1 | 53.4 |
| 7 | SC Ready ELA | 44 | -- | 42.5 | 43.2 | 50 |
| 8 | SC Ready ELA | 44.6 | -- | 41.9 | 45.9 | 53.1 |
| 11-12 | ACT Reading[c] | 33 | 30 | 35 | 37 | 37 |
| 11-12 | SAT ERW | 66 | -- | 68 | 67 | 68 |

*Note*: [a]Proficiency on the SC Ready ELA assessment for grades 3–8 is measured as score of Meets or Exceeds, a score at or above the ACT College Ready Benchmark for Reading for students testing in grades 11 and 12, and a score at or above the SAT College Ready Benchmark for ERW for students testing in grades 11 and 12.
*Note:* [b]Most summative testing was cancelled in 2019–20 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
*Note*: [c]2018–19 was the first year that SC juniors were not required to take the ACT; therefore, the overall number of graduates taking the ACT declined, while the overall number of students taking the SAT increased.
*Source*: SCDE. (2023). *SCDE Test Scores*. https://ed.sc.gov/data/test-scores/

**Appendix C: 2022–23 Implementation of State Reading Plan Actions**

The eight actions listed in the State Reading Plan guide the work of the OELL. This appendix includes a comprehensive list of the actions taken by the OELL to support districts, schools, and educators in implementing the Reading Plan.

**Action 1**: Provide professional learning that supports all pre-kindergarten through grade twelve educators in understanding and implementing the characteristics of exemplary literacy classrooms. The OELL:
- Provided face-to-face or virtual professional learning opportunities through Literacy Specialists and early learning specialists;
- Provided on-site support through Literacy Specialists to administrators, reading coaches, and classroom teachers in the implementation of evidence-based reading instruction and analysis of data to inform instruction;
- Provided on-site technical assistance to individual district and school leadership teams to support them in the development of a systematic plan for the implementation of instructional best practices as defined by the South Carolina Literacy Competencies;
- Partnered with Regional Education Laboratory (REL) Southeast to continue a three-year pilot of emerging literacy professional learning communities (PLCs) with pre-kindergarten educators;
- Continued to implement the revised district and school literacy reflection tool as part of the district and school reading plan process;
- Maintained the reading goal updates for the 2022–23 school year to include a focus on third-grade literacy proficiency as well as an assessment of goals from the prior school year;
- Continued to provide technical assistance sessions to support districts with the streamlined reading plan process; and
- Analyzed district reading plans and provided feedback to all districts.

**Action 2**: Build a comprehensive assessment system that helps teachers make a clear connection between curriculum, assessment, and student data in order to develop effective instructional strategies. The OELL:
- Provided face-to-face as well as virtual technical support and guidance as districts developed comprehensive, evidence-based reading plans;
- Worked with K–12 research organizations to update the statewide plan for implementation of MTSS and other related agency frameworks (See Appendix D for more information on MTSS);
- Provided professional learning opportunities on using assessment and classroom data within the MTSS framework to identify students in need of literacy supports;
- Assisted districts with the implementation of the KRA; and
- Provided technical assistance to districts for summer reading camps.

**Action 3**: Provide research-based strategies for summer programs to districts and activities for parents to help prevent summer reading loss. The OELL:
- Held the annual Leaders Making Readers Literacy Symposium virtually to provide district and school leaders with best practices on implementing strong SRC;
- Provided access to Leaders Making Readers presentations for any district or school staff;

- Provided regular updates on Read to Succeed implementation to superintendents, instructional leaders, South Carolina Leaders of Literacy (SCLL), and administrators;
- Provided monthly updates on Read to Succeed through the South Carolina Association of School Administrators' (SCASA's) various instructional roundtables;
- Continued the rollout of using PowerSchool for summer student data reporting for the 2023 SRC;
- Offered SRC Community Partnership Grants as stated in the General Appropriations Act to support the creation of effective partnerships between community organizations and school districts;
- Revised the summer reading camp monitoring tool and protocol to more accurately reflect the state's focus on MTSS and tiered instruction;
- Supported schools with planning for SRC, with Literacy Specialists focusing on evidence-based reading, writing, and foundational skills instruction; and
- Visited summer reading camps around the state to support educators and collect data using the SRC Monitoring Tool.

**Action 4:** Provide access to professional learning needed for Read to Succeed endorsements and other licensure requirements to help districts and schools train, reward, and retain effective teachers and reading coaches. The OELL:
- Continued the statewide pilot of LETRS professional development for Palmetto Literacy Projects;
- Facilitated LETRS virtual and on-site trainings via trained Literacy Specialists;
- Partnered with Lexia to provide Read to Succeed endorsements for educators who successfully complete the LETRS for Educators series;
- Approved coursework for in-service teachers to prepare them for helping all students comprehend grade-level texts;
- Provided teachers access to online courses leading to completion of the Read to Succeed endorsement;
- Provided the initial Literacy Teacher endorsement course through Literacy Specialists via VirtualSC;
- Revised the Reading Coach Competencies; and
- Provided training, books, and resources by OELL Literacy Specialists to state-funded reading coaches leading to the Read to Succeed Literacy Teacher endorsement and Literacy Coach endorsement.

**Action 5:** Foster partnerships to communicate Read to Succeed goals and to promote literacy achievement from birth to grade twelve through collaboration efforts with stakeholders that include community organizations, businesses, and state agencies. The OELL:
- Collaborated with the Office of Grants and the EOC to award and monitor $700,000 in Community Partnership Grants to select districts;
- Received technical assistance from the Education Commissioner's Office. OELL is currently focusing on transitioning resources for families with four-year-old kindergarten's going to kindergarten (5K);
- Updated the statewide family resource page that supports the Palmetto Pre-K website portal: https://palmettoprek.org/;

- Continued the support of the families of early learners via grant-funded Learning Engagement Coaches. Coaches work directly with families and family engagement; and
- Rolled out the state's Learning Object Repository (Instructional Hub) to all districts.

**Action 6**: Strengthen language and literacy instruction in pre-kindergarten programs through professional learning in evidence-based, intentional curricula and by providing resources for literacy-rich classroom environments. The Early Learning team within OELL:

- Provided on-site support through CERDEP monitors and Early Learning Specialists to CERDEP and non-CERDEP districts;
- Monitored and supported CERDEP summer programs;
- Presented professional development around early literacy and learning topics across all domains;
- Maintained the CERDEP Guidelines, CERDEP family handbook, and CERDEP registration forms;
- Collaborated with other state agencies to continue several grants that support early learning (Preschool Development Grant, South Carolina Longitudinal Data System Grant, Return to Learn Technology Grant);
- Collaborated with REL to create the Administrators Guide for Early Learning PLC model for early literacy;
- Collaborated with the Office of Assessment to support trainings for 4K and 5K assessments;
- Continued to support the implementation of the South Carolina's Early Learning Standards (SC-ELS) through professional development opportunities and virtual resources;
- Collaborated with various early learning state-level stakeholders to continue implementation of South Carolina's first Preschool Development Grant, including the continued implementation of the 4K Parent Portal;
- Promoted Head Start summer programming, including work focused on the successful transition from 5K to kindergarten;
- Collaborated with early childhood stakeholders on the implementation of the Pyramid Model, which includes a focus on social-emotional learning; and
- Implemented a plan alongside First Steps for increased collaboration on recruitment and training.

**Action 7**: Improve the ability of South Carolina educators and/or schools to assess and identify the reading difficulties of their students. The OELL:

- Continued statewide implementation of MTSS, including use of universal screeners to identify potential reading difficulties;
- Offered continued support aligned with the SC Dyslexia Handbook;
    - Act 213 provides direction on identifying and effectively addressing reading difficulties in students. The purpose of The South Carolina Dyslexia Handbook: A Guide to Early Literacy Development & Reading is to provide information to educators, students, families, and community members about the core elements of effective evidence-based reading instruction, early literacy development, reading difficulties, dyslexia, and the best practices for identification, instruction, and accommodation of students who have reading difficulties. The initiative to provide a comprehensive guide was requested by the South Carolina Learning Disorders

Task Force. The Learning Disorders Task Force was created under South Carolina Act 213 for the purpose of working with the SCDE matters relating to reading disorders: to include, but not be limited to dyslexia.

- Supported districts in selecting and administering approved reading and social-emotional screening assessments; and
- Provided virtual and in-person training and support on identifying and supporting students with reading difficulties.

**Action 8:** Improve the ability of South Carolina educators and/or schools to provide effective instruction and interventions. The OELL:

- Continued the statewide implementation of Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) professional development in all PLP Tier 2 and 3 schools;
- Provided high-quality, core curricula options for all PLP Tier 2 and 3 schools;
- Provided in-person and virtual training sessions on Tier I core instruction and effective literacy interventions;
- Presented MTSS intervention scenarios and key information to district and school leaders;
- Provided professional development and resources connected to the MTSS Decision Tree;
- Targeted Literacy Specialist support for Tier 3 PLP schools, or those in which one half or more of third-grade students scored at the lowest achievement level on SC Ready ELA; and
- Offered PLOs on key MTSS components and strategies, including core Tier I instruction and phonics-based instruction. On-demand MTSS modules for educators are also available for use during or after the school day.

**Appendix D: South Carolina Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)**

The following section is adapted from the [MTSS Framework and Guidance Document](#) (SCDE, updated 2022).

**Vision**
Every South Carolina local educational agency and state-operated program will implement and sustain all components of a MTSS, so that all students will achieve the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate.

**Goal**
The goal of a MTSS is to deliver early intervention for every student who struggles to attain or maintain grade-level performance by effectively utilizing best instructional practices within an evidence-based instructional model. An ongoing, systematic process of using student data to guide instructional and intervention decisions is required.

**Overview**
This MTSS Framework helps districts and schools personalize student learning plans through intensive academic and/or social emotional support as well as identify at-risk students and provide the appropriate support. This framework includes a Guidance Document, which supports educators in making instructional decisions to help students to move between the tiers and receive interventions within the classroom walls. MTSS allows districts and schools to better identify students who are at risk or who require more instructional time, which will allow for a more accurate identification of students with disabilities and/or dyslexia.

MTSS addresses the needs of the whole child – academically, behaviorally, socially, and emotionally – through a holistic and personalized system of learning that incorporates academics and social emotional behaviors into one framework. This approach recognizes the connection between academics and behavior and addresses both areas simultaneously; such an approach enables educators and support professionals to use data to drive their instructional interventions with students, allowing the student the most growth potential. This process uses interventions that match the skill that needs to be addressed, which was identified through data driven decision making and progress monitoring to increase that student's potential for success and graduating high school college and career ready. This framework is *proactive* rather than reactive because it is a system that challenges educators and support professionals to be lifelong learners by analyzing current systems and making decisions that will improve instructional approaches.

**Legislature**

***The Legislative Mandate Act 213***
Governor Henry McMaster signed Act 213 into law in 2018. The act provides direction on the implementation of MTSS and the use of approved screeners. The law's requirements are included below:

- Section 59-33-520. (A) (1) The State Department of Education shall establish and provide training and support for a statewide MTSS framework that must contain a common data-based problem-solving model, on-going student assessment, and a layered

continuum of supports using evidence-based practices. As part of the assessment, a universal screening process must be used to identify students who may be at risk of experiencing academic difficulties in reading, math, or writing, and who also may be at risk of experiencing difficulties in social-emotional development.

- Beginning with the 2019–20 School Year, to the extent funding is provided or that approved screening tools are available at no cost, a local school district shall use the universal screening process to screen each student in the district who is in kindergarten through first grade three times each school year and as needed in second grade as outlined in the district's universal screening procedures, and any other student as required by the department, for reading difficulties, including dyslexia, and the need for intervention.

Act 284, also known as the Read to Succeed Act, requires that, beginning with the 2017–18 school year, a student must be retained in the third grade if the student fails to demonstrate reading proficiency at the end of third grade as indicated by scoring at the lowest achievement level on the state summative reading assessment (currently SC Ready). A student may be exempt for good cause from the mandatory retention but shall continue to receive instructional support and services and reading intervention appropriate for their age and reading level. In addition, the law requires the following:

(1) classroom teachers use evidence-based reading instruction in prekindergarten through grade twelve, to include oral language, phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension; administer and interpret valid and reliable assessments; analyze data to inform reading instruction; and provide evidence-based interventions as needed so that all students develop proficiency with literacy skills and comprehension;
(2) classroom teachers periodically reassess their curriculum and instruction to determine if they are helping each student progress as a proficient reader and make modifications as appropriate;
(3) each student who cannot yet comprehend grade-level text is identified and served as early as possible and at all stages of his or her educational process;
(4) each student receives targeted, effective, comprehension support from the classroom teacher and, if needed, supplemental support from a reading interventionist so that ultimately all students can comprehend grade-level texts.

**Six Components of MTSS**
The following MTSS component definitions were created by the University of South Florida and Florida Department of Education (Problem-Solving and Response to Intervention Project, 2015).

1) **Leadership:** Leadership is key to successful implementation of any large-scale innovation. The building principal, assistant principal(s), and school leadership team are critical to implementing MTSS at the school level. They engage staff in ongoing professional development for implementing MTSS, plan strategically for MTSS implementation, and model a data-based problem-solving process for school improvement. The school principal also supports the implementation of MTSS by communicating a vision and mission to school staff, providing resources for planning and implementing instruction and intervention, and ensuring that staff have the data needed

for data-based problem-solving.

2) **Building the Capacity/Infrastructure for Implementation**: School-wide capacity and infrastructure are required in order to implement and sustain MTSS. This capacity and infrastructure usually includes ongoing professional development and coaching with an emphasis on data-based problem-solving and multi-tiered instruction and intervention; scheduling that allows staff to plan and implement instruction and intervention; and processes and procedures for engaging in data-based problem-solving.

3) **Communication and Collaboration:** Ongoing communication and collaboration are essential for successful implementation of MTSS. Many innovations fail due to a lack of consensus, to a lack of feedback to implementers to support continuous improvement, and to not involving stakeholders in planning. In addition to including stakeholders in planning and providing continuous feedback, it is also important to build the infrastructure to communicate and work with families and other community partners. These practices increase the likelihood that innovative practices will be implemented and sustained.

4) **Data-Based Problem-Solving:** The use of data-based problem-solving to make educational decisions is a critical element of MTSS implementation. This includes the use of data-based problem-solving for student outcomes across content areas, grade levels, and tiers, as well as the use of problem-solving to address barriers to school wide implementation of MTSS. While several models for data-based problem-solving exist, the four-step problem-solving approach evaluated in this instrument includes: 1) defining the goals and objectives to be attained, 2) identifying possible reasons why the desired goals are not being attained, 3) developing a plan for and implementing evidence-based strategies to attain the goals, and 4) evaluating the effectiveness of the plan.

5) **Three-Tiered Instructional/Intervention Model:** The three-tiered instructional/intervention model is another critical element of MTSS implementation. In a typical system, Tier I includes the instruction delivered to all students; Tier II includes supplemental instruction or intervention provided to students not meeting benchmarks; and Tier III includes intensive, small-group or individual interventions for students facing significant barriers to learning the skills required for school success. It is important to consider academic, behavior, and socioemotional instruction and interventions when examining this domain.

6) **Data-Evaluation:** Given the importance of data-based problem-solving within an MTSS model, the need for a data and evaluation system is clear. In order to perform effective data based problem-solving, school staff need to understand and have access to data sources that align with the purposes of assessment. Procedures and protocols for administering assessments and data use allow school staff to use student data to make educational decisions. In addition to student data, data on the fidelity of MTSS implementation allow school leadership to examine the current practices and make changes to increase implementation.

*Figure 3: High Quality Classrooms -Tiered Approach*
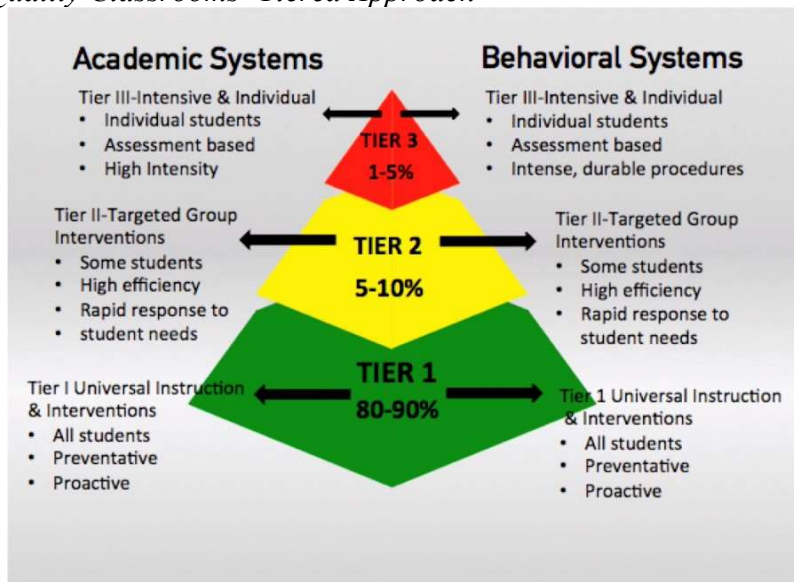


*Source*: South Carolina Department of Education, Office of Special Education Services. Created in 2018. *Adapted from*: OSEP Technical Assistance Center (2018). Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) & PBIS Model.

### Tier I Instruction

South Carolina's MTSS is a systems-change approach to support a focus on a strong core instruction which promotes a high-quality education system where all students can succeed. Tier I is the foundation of a tiered instructional delivery model and refers to the universal instruction provided to all students in the school. The development and support of Tier I strategies are critical to a functioning MTSS system. Tier I instruction refers to high-quality core instruction provided to all students. In Tier I, teachers provide research supported, evidence-based, differentiated instruction with fidelity. Universal screening at regular intervals documents the progress of all students and helps guide instruction as well as indicate if further diagnostic testing is needed to pinpoint the skill deficit that should be addressed through intervention. Formative Assessments should also be used to monitor students as they are taught standards to determine how students are responding to Tier I instruction (see Proviso 1.96). This information may be used to carry over to Tier II instruction to provide remediation or extension instruction. This information should also be used as a teacher reflective tool to determine effectiveness of Tier I instruction.

This data should always be used in conjunction with other relevant data such as office referrals, tardies, absenteeism, diagnostic results when appropriate and available, progress monitoring data, etc. Educators with a diverse skill set regarding instructional best practices, review and analyze the screening data to craft a plan to meet student needs. If a significant number of students are not successful in the core instructional model, all variables (e.g. attendance, class size, behavior observations, instructional fidelity, professional learning opportunities, and curricular choices) should be examined to determine how to strengthen Tier I instruction. Tier I instruction is expected to meet the needs of 80–90 percent of students in reaching grade-level proficiency toward meeting grade-level standards. Tier I instruction must be critically evaluated using universal screening data so that the vast majority of students succeed. Powerful classroom

instruction requires that effective teachers differentiate instruction, based on data, in order to meet the needs of all students.  To implement MTSS with fidelity, school staff must critically evaluate and improve implementation of Tier I instructional and behavior programs so that the vast majority of students are successful.

## *Tier II*

Once the school has ensured that Tier I instruction is effective in meeting the needs of 80–90 percent of students, supplemental instruction is provided in Tier II. Tier II consists of research- and evidence based small group interventions for students not meeting grade-level academic and behavior expectations. Approximately 15 percent of students will need Tier II intervention in addition to effective Tier I instruction. Hallmarks of Tier II include increased collaboration among parents, interventionists, classroom teachers, instructional leaders, and other stakeholders as well as more frequent progress monitoring to facilitate teachers in making data-based adjustments to instruction in response to student needs.

## *Tier III*

Tier III provides research-supported, individualized, intensive instructional intervention, and more frequent progress monitoring for students not responding to Tier II interventions. Two to five percent of students will need Tier III intervention in addition to instruction at Tier I and/or Tier II. Collaboration and support among professionals increases in Tier III to reflect the level of services needed by students. Tier III interventions are not necessarily special education; however, if a disability is suspected, school staff must inform parents of their procedural safeguards and initiate a referral to determine if the student meets 504 or special education (IDEA) eligibility. For more information on eligibility for special education, refer to the State Board of Education Regulation 43-243.1 (SC State Board, 2016).

Any student may receive services in any tier given their academic and behavior needs. Students are not placed permanently in a tier of instruction and will move between tiers as needed. A student with a disability or with other identified special considerations may be served at any tier during the process based on individual needs. The optimal District MTSS Leadership Team will use an evidence based model of schooling that:
- Integrates academic and behavioral instruction;
- Utilizes decision making in "need-driven" by ensuring district resources reach the appropriate schools;
- Takes responsibility for high quality core instruction being implemented with fidelity;
- Ensures a universal screener (see Proviso 1.96) is used to identify students at risk; and
- Uses common progress monitoring tools (may be same tool used for universal screening).

# Appendix E: REL Southeast Partnership with SCDE

This partnership includes members of the SCDE who oversee strategic initiatives and policies for educators, students, and families across the state. The SCDE's strategic plan has set a goal of conducting research so that the state can identify and disseminate effective policies and work to improve policies that have not been effective. To meet this goal, the Department seeks to increase the capacity of its staff to conduct and apply rigorous research. The partnership is initially focused on implementation of the South Carolina Teacher Leadership Pilot, the South Carolina Read to Succeed Act, and materials previously developed by the REL Southeast on developing a successful professional development program evaluation.

During 2018–19, REL Southeast conducted multiple face-to-face trainings with state, district, and school educators in South Carolina on the resources in their literacy roadmap. The roadmap is an infographic that guides educators along a pathway to implementing evidence-based literacy practices in a school improvement framework aligned to the ESSA. It provides information on ESSA evidence levels, guidance about how to form SEA and local education agency (LEA) implementation teams, development of logic models and guides for implementing and evaluating evidence-based literacy practices, selecting appropriate evidence-based practices, implementing those practices, and evaluating the implementation on an ongoing basis.

[Roadmap Link: Implementing Evidence-Based Literacy Practices](#)

In 2020, the REL Southeast's Improving Literacy Alliance partnered with the SCDE to create webinars on South Carolina's MTSS plan. The SCDE's Literacy Specialists created webinars on core principles of leadership, building collaboration and infrastructure, and communication and collaboration. The REL Southeast created webinars on the core principles of data-based problem solving, tiered instruction, and data evaluation. The links for all webinars can be found here: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southeast/scmtss_plan_webinars.asp.

**Appendix F: The Science of Reading**

The Science of Reading is a comprehensive body of research that encompasses years of scientific knowledge, spans across many languages, and shares the contributions of experts from relevant disciplines such as education, special education, literacy, psychology, neurology, and more. The Science of Reading has evolved from a wide span of research designs, experimental methods, participants, and statistical analyses. This conclusive, empirically supported research provides us with the information we need to gain a deeper understanding of how we learn to read, what skills are involved, how they work together, and which parts of the brain are responsible for reading development. From this research, we can identify an evidence-based best practice approach for teaching foundational literacy skills called Structured Literacy.

David Kilpatrick stated, "We teach reading in different ways; they [students] learn to read proficiently in only one way." The Science of Reading has demystified any wonder of how we learn to read and offers evidence backed by science to confirm that there is one right way to teach reading. In addition to this, the Science of Reading offers key information to drive our approach to instruction and to reach all learners.

Comprehension is the ultimate goal for reading. It is driven by two broad skill sets that are identified in the Simple View of Reading:

*Figure 4: The Simple View of Reading*



The Simple View of Reading

Word Recognition **X** Language Comprehension **=** Reading Comprehension

*Source*: Gough, P. B., & Tunmer, W. E. (1986). Decoding, reading, and reading disability. *Remedial and Special Education*, 7(1), 6–10. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1177/074193258600700104.

The Simple View of Reading by Gough and Tunmer is supported by a significant amount of research. It provides a useful framework for understanding the development of reading skills across time. It also helps explain necessary elements for providing instructional support. The ultimate goal of reading is drawing out and constructing meaning from text for a purpose. To be successful, the reader needs skills in both word decoding and language comprehension. Weakness in either area will reduce reading ability. Decoding skills and language comprehension make independent contributions to reading comprehension across diverse populations of readers.

Hollis Scarborough (2001) expanded upon The Simple View of Reading noting that reading is a multifaceted skill that is gradually acquired through years of instruction and practice. Scarborough compared skilled reading to the many strands of a rope with each strand representing a separate skill. When combined, these skills create a strong, proficient reader. However, when any one strand (skill) is not acquired or is poorly developed, it weakens the

strength of the rope. Scarborough's Reading Rope, which highlights the essential components of reading, may be found below (Ordetex, 2021).

*Figure 5: Scarborough's Reading Rope*
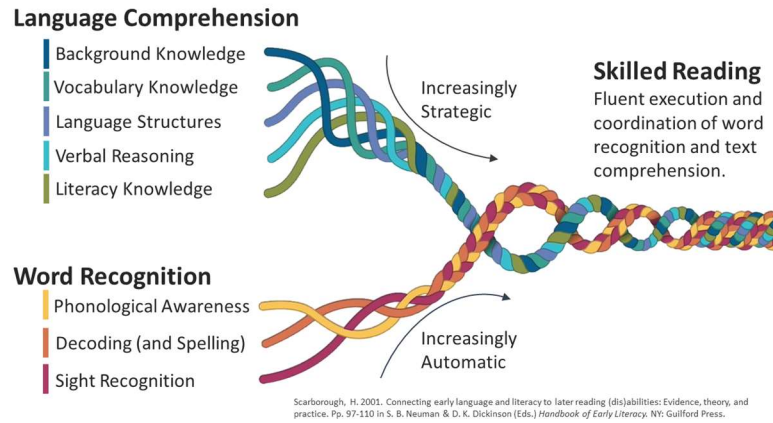


*Source:* Scarborough, H. S. (2001). Connecting early language and literacy to later reading (dis)abilities: Evidence, theory, and practice. In S. Neuman & D. Dickinson (Eds.), *Handbook for research in early literacy* (pp. 97–110). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

For more information on best practices in reading instruction, please refer to Section 2 of the SC Dyslexia Handbook.

**Appendix G: Palmetto Literacy Project (PLP)**

The OELL commits to supporting districts in their implementation of Read to Succeed as outlined in the Read to Succeed Act. As part of our effort to promote literacy achievement, the OELL will continue the PLP in the 2023–24 school year. The PLP will involve members of the Read to Succeed team and the Literacy Specialist team supporting Tier 3 schools through research and collaboration with district and school staff to strengthen literacy outcomes. Districts may also request support for additional schools based on availability. Literacy Specialist support for both the PLP Tier 3 and all districts statewide is outlined below.

- Support for all schools will consist of regional statewide PLOs for school leadership teams, reading coaches, and teachers in South Carolina. These PLOs will be facilitated by the Read to Succeed team and the Literacy Specialist team within the OELL.
- PLP Tier 3 support will be provided by Literacy Specialists in schools where one half or more of third grade students scored in the *Does Not Meet* category on the 2019 SC Ready ELA assessment. This support will consist of regular job-embedded professional learning through regular onsite visits and monthly Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) with reading coaches. A data-based problem solving approach will be utilized to identify strengths and possibilities for growth around student achievement for all stakeholders. Literacy Specialists will support schools in creating goals and action plans for the 2023–24 school year. These schools have been notified of their support from the OELL.

**LETRS Professional Learning**
The majority of PLP schools will complete their LETRS cycles at the conclusion of the 2023–24 school year. Teachers who are new to PLP schools were given additional licenses and will complete their two-year training based on their hiring cycle.

The first statewide cycle of LETRS training began in fall 2023 with approximately 3500 educators.

For more information on SC's LETRS rollout, please visit: https://ed.sc.gov/instruction/early-learning-and-literacy/professional-learning-opportunities/sc-letrs-professional-development/.