The Rhode Island Right to Read Act

LEA Guidance Document

Revised July 2022

Guidance includes updates to reflect changes within H7164 Substitute A (July 2022).

Note: further edits may be forthcoming because of the regulatory process required by legislation.

RIDE Rhode Island Department of Education

Table of Contents

Introduction

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), approximately 35% of fourth graders are reading at or above a proficient level, and an average 35% of students are reading below a basic level. These numbers have remained stagnant for nearly thirty years. It is more important than ever for Rhode Island to take measures **to ensure students can accurately decode and fully comprehend grade-level text** by third grade and beyond. A key lever in altering this trajectory is to enhance educator knowledge in the science and research of how students learn to read and instructional approaches that align with this research.

Rhode Island legislators saw the necessity to support educator knowledge in these domains and passed [The Rhode Island Right to Read Act](#) . This law requires educators to develop either *proficiency* in or *awareness* of the knowledge and practices of the **Science of Reading** and **Structured Literacy** depending upon the educator's current assignment. This guidance document outlines responsibilities and expectations for Local Education Agencies (LEAs), schools, and educators for planning purposes to meet the intent of the Right to Read Act. The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) will work to support LEAs as they select and implement professional learning experiences to fulfill the requirements of this law. An additional document will be forthcoming to address information and requirements for Rhode Island Educator Preparation Programs.

The Science of Reading, or *scientific reading instruction*, is defined as empirically based instruction that is grounded in the study of the relationship between cognitive science and educational outcomes.

Structured Literacy is defined as an approach to teaching that integrates speaking, listening, reading, and writing by providing explicit, systematic, diagnostic-prescriptive instruction in phonological and phonemic awareness, sound-symbol correspondence (phonics), syllables, morphology, semantics, and syntax. For more information, visit RIDE's [Structured Literacy](#) page.

Timeline

The timeline below highlights The Right to Read Act requirements to be met by school year with language pulled directly from law.

Right to Read Act Timeline
2020-2021
• *LEAs begin to provide professional development in the Science of Reading and Structured Literacy.*   • *RIDE will make available on its website resources to assist school districts in developing a program to ensure all teachers and school administrators have access to materials to support professional awareness and best practices on characteristics of dyslexia and related disorders, and evidence-based interventions and accommodations.*   • *The general assembly shall form a joint study research commission (the "commission") consisting of nine (9) members. The purpose of the commission shall be to study the possibility and feasibility of establishing two (2) schools, to be located on the University of Rhode Island and Rhode Island College campuses, which would be dedicated to the instruction of dyslexic children and the development of instructional techniques and professional development programs used to improve the instruction and identification of dyslexia and other learning disabilities.*
2021-2022
• *RIDE shall collaborate with the Rhode Island Board of Education to require that all department approved undergraduate educator preparation programs include instruction of: characteristics of dyslexia and related disorders, evidence-based interventions and accommodations for dyslexia and related disorders, and dyslexia and related disorder targeted methods of teaching.*

2022-23
• *A public school that does not provide professional development will provide a notice to parents that the public school district has not met the requirements of this section.*
2025-2026
• *All educators who begin employment in this year and each year thereafter shall demonstrate proficiency or awareness of knowledge and practices of the Science of Reading and Structured Literacy depending on their work assignment.*
2024-2025
• *Each state-approved educator preparation program shall include in its annual report a description of program and post on its website information describing its program to prepare teachers to teach reading with Structured Literacy and practices aligned with the Science of Reading.*
2025
• *A person who completes a state-approved educator preparation program, or a person seeking teacher licensure by reciprocity or by adding an endorsement shall demonstrate proficiency or awareness depending on their future work assignment.*   • *The department of elementary and secondary education (the "department") shall develop a collaborative learning laboratory (the "laboratory") to assist and promote training for parents, guardians, caregivers, and teachers in: Recognition of the characteristics of dyslexia, related disorders, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia; and evidence-based interventions and accommodations for dyslexia, related disorders, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia. In developing the laboratory, the department shall work with professionals and experts who have proven, data-driven models of success in teaching students with dyslexia. The department shall seek to foster partnerships among educators and practitioners from both the public and private teaching sectors, with the goal of ensuring that every student in this state who has dyslexia shall be appropriately and adequately screened, diagnosed, and provided therapy, instruction, and accommodations as needed.*

Proficiency and Awareness

Who is required to demonstrate *proficiency* and who is required to demonstrate awareness?

Tables 1 & 2 delineate which teachers are required to demonstrate *proficiency* or *awareness* in accordance with The Right to Read Act expectations. *Proficiency* or *Awareness* training is determined by the **educator's current role.** Therefore, if an educator holds multiple teaching certificates, the requirement will be determined by their current role and the certificate in use. When an educator moves from an *awareness*-level work assignment to a *proficiency*-level assignment, they must complete an approved *proficiency* training upon reassignment.

The Right to Read Act defines the roles required for awareness and proficiency as *teachers.* Thus, educators listed in Table 3 are not required by law to participate in proficiency or awareness training. However, RIDE strongly encourages all educators within LEAs to engage in a minimum of *awareness* training, particularly educators working directly with supporting students to develop language and literacy skills such as Speech-Language Pathologists. Additionally, administrators are highly recommended to complete a minimum of *awareness* training that can be fulfilled by a traditional awareness pathway, or a specialized administrator pathway offered by the LEA's *proficiency* professional learning provider when available.

TABLE 1: *Elementary Proficiency and Awareness Requirements by Current Role*

Elementary (PK – 5th Grade)	
Proficiency	*Awareness*
Classroom Teacher	Art Teacher
Bilingual & Dual Language Teacher	Dance or Theater Teacher
Early Childhood Teacher	Health Teacher
English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Teacher	Library Media Studies Teacher
Reading Specialist/Coach	Mathematics Teacher
Special Education Teacher	Music Teacher
	Physical Education Teacher
	School Nurse Teacher

	Technology Teacher
	World Language Teacher

TABLE 2: *Middle and High School Proficiency and Awareness Requirements by Current Role*

Middle and High School (6th-12th Grade)	
Proficiency	*Awareness*
Bilingual & Dual Language Teacher	Art Teacher
English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Teacher	Business Education Teacher
Reading Specialist/Coach	Career & Technical Teacher
Special Education Teacher	Dance Teacher
	ELA/English Teacher
	Family Consumer Science Teacher
	Library Media Studies Teacher
	Mathematics Teacher
	Music Teacher
	Physical Education Teacher
	School Nurse Teacher
	Science Teacher
	Social Studies/History Teacher
	Technology Teacher
	Theater Teacher
	World Language Teacher

TABLE 3: *Strongly Recommended to Meet a Minimum of Awareness*

All Grades (K-12)	
Building or District Administrator	School Counselor
Curriculum Director	School Psychologist
Occupational and Physical Therapists	School Social Worker
School Nurse Teacher	Speech-Language Pathologist

What will *proficiency* training look like?

Educators required to exhibit *proficiency* in the Science of Reading and Structured Literacy may complete rigorous training, including a classroom application component, from a professional learning provider approved by RIDE. Programs leading to *proficiency* vary in intensity depending on the depth and breadth of content and the intensity and level of technical assistance provided during the classroom application component. LEAs may choose to provide training with a more robust practicum for educators who work directly with students with the greatest literacy needs.

Appendix I articulates essential components of *proficiency* training.

How does an educator demonstrate proficiency?

Per the Right to Read Act, an educator may demonstrate *proficiency* by completing a RIDE approved professional learning provider course or passing the RIDE approved test or possessing a master's degree in reading or related academic discipline or possessing a reading specialist and/or consultant certificate.

RIDE strongly encourages all educators to complete *proficiency* training to ensure a shared knowledge and understanding of the science of reading and structured literacy as it will inform their shared implementation of high-quality curriculum and decision making for students needing Tier 2 and 3 supports.

Upon successful completion of an approved *proficiency* training, educators will be eligible to apply for a Literacy/Dyslexia Endorsement to be added to their teaching certificate at no cost.

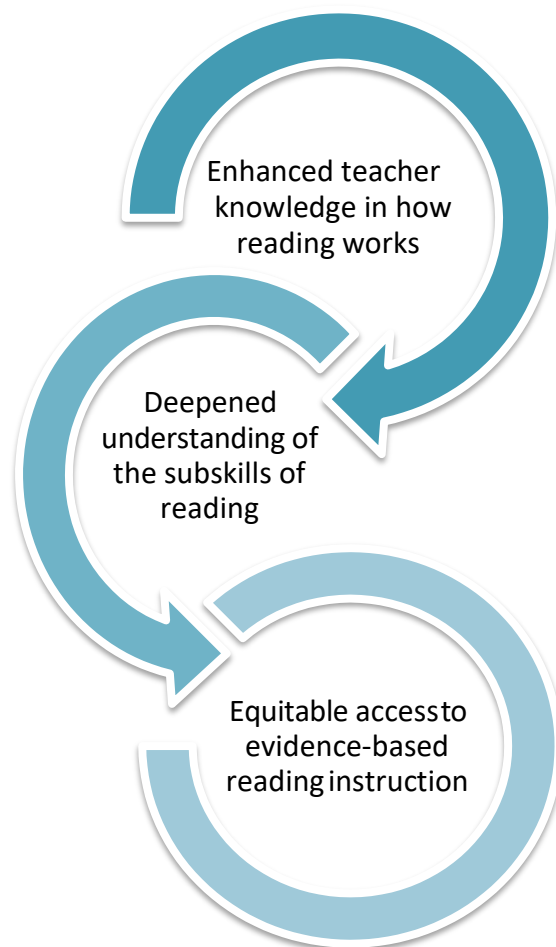## What will *awareness* training look like?

Educators required to exhibit awareness of the Science of Reading and Structured Literacy will complete 10 hours of training from a professional learning provider approved by RIDE. RIDE partnered with BRIDGE-RI to develop courses that fulfill awareness expectations.

Appendix II articulates essential components of awareness training.

What will educators learn?

In both *proficiency* and *awareness* training, participants will learn:
- Research and Frameworks related to the Science of Reading
- Explicit, systematic, multimodal instruction
- An understanding of the subskills of reading including Phonology, Phonics, Decoding, Encoding, Vocabulary, Fluency, Syntax & Language Comprehension
- The impact of weaknesses in these subskills
- Assessments and teaching practices that align with the Science of Reading and Structured Literacy Instruction

Enhanced teacher knowledge in how reading works

Deepened understanding of the subskills of reading

Equitable access to evidence-based reading instruction

LEA Guidance

LEA Requirements:

- By 2025-2026 school year, all PK-5 classroom educators, K-12 special educators, reading specialists/coaches, ESOL, bilingual and dual language educators must demonstrate *proficiency* in the knowledge and practices of The Science of Reading and Structured Literacy. All remaining educators must exhibit *awareness. (Table 1 & Table 2)*
- The percentage of educators in LEAs meeting these requirements will be shared on the RIDE website beginning in the **2022-2023** school year.
- All LEAs that do not provide professional learning in The Science of Reading and Structured Literacy will be required to send a notice to parents that the LEA has not met the requirements

The following table outlines steps LEAs are encouraged to take to meet the Right to Read Act requirements:

Table 3: *Action Items and Questions to Consider for LEA and Building Leaders*

LEA and Building Leaders	
Action items	**Questions to consider**
Determine the number of educators in need of *proficiency* or *awareness* training	- How many educators in our LEA are currently working in the roles listed in Table 1? - How many educators in our LEA are currently working in the roles listed in Table 2?
Select a professional learning provider from RIDE's approved list to deliver *proficiency* training	- Will each school select their own provider, or will we have the same provider district-wide? - Will we select the same *proficiency* provider for classroom educators as specialists? Or will we tailor training to the educator's role? (e.g., reading specialists trained in the Orton-Gillingham approach, classroom educators trained in LETRS)

Plan for *awareness* training	• Will our LEA utilize RIDE's *awareness* training? RIDE awareness training is a series of modules that are available at no cost to LEAs for educators to meet *awareness* criteria. • Will administrators participate in specialized administrator training from your LEA's *proficiency* provider (when available) or *awareness* training? • How will *awareness* training align with educators' professional learning plans?
Identify funding	• How might district funding be leveraged to support the roll out of *proficiency* and *awareness* training (e.g., Professional Development funds, Title 2 funds, ESSR, other grant funds)? • Are there LEA grants or RIDE-funded training that could be used to support this work?
Work with your selected professional learning provider to create a training plan	• What are the timelines for training? • How will the educators be supported during their training? • How will this training be integrated within high-quality instruction and intervention across our LEA's Multi-Tiered Systems of Support? • How will this training be integrated into the instruction of our High-Quality curriculum?
Create a communication plan	• How will this be communicated to educators? • How will you build stakeholder awareness of the Right to Read Act?
Plan for data-collection	• How will you monitor *proficiency* and *awareness* completion?

Educator Guidance

Beginning in the 2020-2021 school year, practicing educators who require *proficiency* training will begin to engage in training from a RIDE-approved professional learning provider to meet the *proficiency* requirements of The Right to Read Act.

Beginning in 2021-2022, practicing educators who require *awareness* training will begin to engage in training from a RIDE-approved professional learning provider to meet the *awareness* requirements of the Right to Read Act.

ALL Educators are encouraged to seek guidance from their school and district leaders to learn more about the training plan their LEA has established. Additionally, educators are strongly encouraged to retain any certificates of completion that document their successful completion of *proficiency* or *awareness* expectations.

Once training has begun, teachers will:

1. Successfully complete all coursework and applied components delivered by the professional learning provider.
2. Implement knowledge and practices learned within daily instruction and supports for students.
3. (Optional) Upon completion of *proficiency* training, educators are eligible to add the Literacy/Dyslexia endorsement to their certificate by logging into their eCert account and formally applying online. There is no cost associated with this endorsement.

Pre-Service Educators:

The Right to Read Act articulates clear expectations for the Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) in Rhode Island. Guidance for state approved EPPs regarding these expectations is forthcoming. All pre-service educators are encouraged to speak with their EPP regarding their program and how it plans to meet the Right to Read Act expectations of proficiency and/or awareness by 2025.

Appendix I

Essential Components of Proficiency Training
Aligned to the Literacy / Dyslexia Endorsement Competencies
Competency I
Demonstrate and apply foundational knowledge on the science of reading development and reading difficulties derived from interdisciplinary research with special emphasis on language/literacy needs of students with dyslexia and other language-based learning disabilities
Knowledge and Skills Related to the Reading Process, Science of Reading Research and Methods
Theoretical Models including the Simple View of Reading, Scarborough's Rope, and the Four-Part Processor
How the brain learns to read
Permanent word storage and orthographic mapping
Neurobiological learning differences including dyslexia (decoding) and developmental language disorder (word comprehension)
Literacy needs of students with language-based learning difficulties
Competency II
Differentiate, accommodate, and scaffold instruction to address the reading difficulties demonstrated by students with dyslexia and other language-based learning disabilities
Instruction
Systematic
Explicit
Incorporating multiple modalities
Code emphasis vs. meaning emphasis in student texts, teaching approaches, and curriculum materials
Differentiating and scaffolding instruction for students with language-based learning differences
Accommodations for students with dyslexia (e.g., audiobooks, speech-to-text)

Competency III
Select and conduct assessments within a Response to Intervention or Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Framework, analyze assessment data to inform instruction, and communicate findings with students, families, and other educators
Assessment
Diagnostic-Prescriptive
Criterion referenced assessment measures
Using assessment measures to understand a student's learning profile
Using assessment data within Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Framework
Communicating findings of assessment data with students, families, and other educators
Competency IV
Implement structured literacy instruction in all major skill domains (phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics and word recognition, automatic and fluent reading of text, vocabulary, listening and reading comprehension, and written expression) and review instruction based on analysis of student data
Knowledge and Skills Related to Phonology
Phonology
Phonological Awareness
Phonemic Awareness
Articulation of the sounds

Knowledge and Skills Related to Phonics, Decoding and Encoding
Alphabetic Principle
Decoding
Correspondence of letters and sounds
Encoding
Syllable types
Syllable division rules
Schwa
Morphology supports word composition and spelling (e.g., Latin Bases, Prefixes, Assimilated Prefixes, Inflectional and Derivational Suffixes, and Greek Combining Forms)
Spelling rules and generalizations
Student text selection including decodable text
Assistive technology supports
Knowledge and Skills Related to Fluency
Rate
Accuracy
Prosody
Instruction and practice

Knowledge and Skills Related to Vocabulary
Taught directly and indirectly
Developing vocabulary through oral language
Morphology supports word comprehension and vocabulary building across contents: (e.g., Latin Bases, Prefixes, Assimilated Prefixes, Inflectional and Derivational Suffixes, and Greek Combining Forms)
Multiple meanings and contexts
Choosing and leveling words for explicit instruction
Knowledge and Skills Related to Comprehension
Listening and reading comprehension
Background knowledge
Assistive technology accommodations including audiobooks to build background knowledge
Grammar
Text Structures
Pre-Reading, During Reading, and After Reading: Metacognitive Strategies to support Executive Functioning
Connecting writing to reading to further comprehension (e.g., explicit instruction in pronoun referents, cohesive ties, and syntax elements including sentence types and sentence combination activities)

Appendix II

Essential Components of Awareness Training Aligned to the Literacy / Dyslexia Endorsement Competencies
Competency I *Demonstrate and apply foundational knowledge on the science of reading development and reading difficulties derived from interdisciplinary research with special emphasis on language/literacy needs of students with dyslexia and other language-based learning disabilities. Given the time allotment, we anticipate Competency I being completed within approximately 1 hour's time and the remainder devoted to Competencies II-IV*
Knowledge and Skills Related to the Reading Process, Science of Reading Research and Methods
Theoretical Models including the Simple View of Reading, Scarborough's Rope, and the Four-Part Processor
How the brain learns to read
Permanent word storage and orthographic mapping
Neurobiological learning differences including dyslexia (decoding) and developmental language disorder (word comprehension)
Literacy needs of students with language-based learning difficulties
Competency II *Differentiate, accommodate, and scaffold instruction to address the reading difficulties demonstrated by students with dyslexia and other language-based learning disabilities*
Instruction
Systematic
Explicit
Differentiating and scaffolding instruction for students with language-based learning differences
Accommodations for students with dyslexia (e.g., audiobooks, speech-to-text)

Competency III
Have awareness of assessments within a Response to Intervention or Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Framework, analyze assessment data to inform instruction, and communicate findings with students, families, and other educators
Assessment
Using assessment data within Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework
Diagnostic-Prescriptive
Competency IV
Implement structured literacy instruction in all major skill domains (I.e., phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics and word recognition, automatic and fluent reading of text, vocabulary, listening and reading comprehension, and written expression) and review instruction based on analysis of student data
Knowledge Related to Structured Literacy
Overview of Structured Literacy
What Structured Literacy is not
Knowledge and Skills Related to Phonology
Phoneme awareness and the connection to decoding (connect back to orthographic mapping)
Knowledge and Skills Related to Phonics, Decoding and Encoding
Morphology supports word composition and spelling (e.g., Latin Bases, Prefixes, Assimilated Prefixes, Inflectional and Derivational Suffixes, and Greek Combining Forms)
Spelling rules and generalizations
Assistive technology supports

Knowledge and Skills Related to Vocabulary
Taught directly and indirectly
Developing vocabulary through oral language
Morphology supports word comprehension and vocabulary building across contents: (e.g., Latin Bases, Prefixes, Assimilated Prefixes, Inflectional and Derivational Suffixes, and Greek Combining Forms)
Multiple meanings and contexts
Choosing and leveling words for explicit instruction

Knowledge and Skills Related to Comprehension
Listening and reading comprehension
Background knowledge
Assistive technology accommodations including audiobooks to build background knowledge
Text structures
Pre-reading, During Reading, & After Reading: Metacognitive Strategies to support Exec Functioning
Connecting writing to reading to further comprehension (e.g., explicit instruction in pronoun referents, cohesive ties, and syntax elements including sentence types and sentence combination activities)