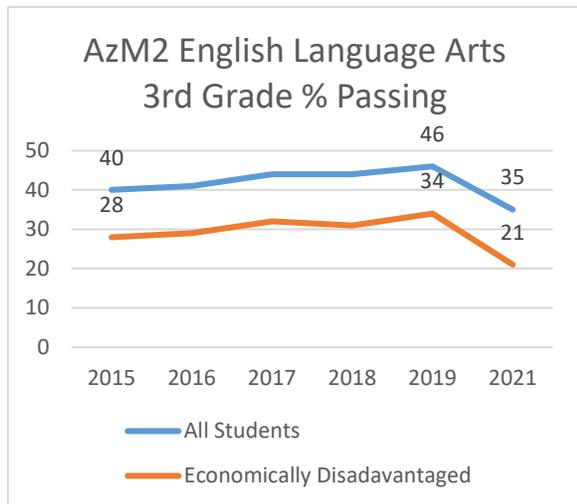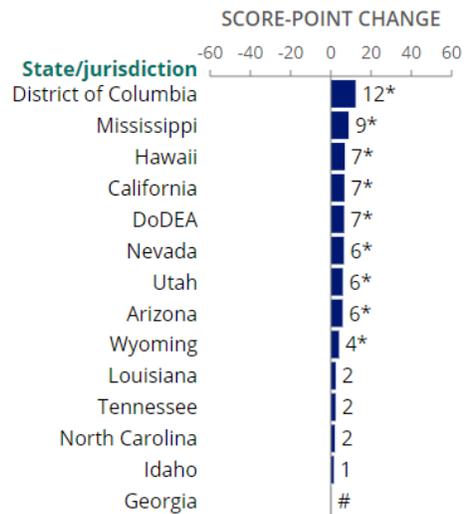## Introduction

Move on When Reading (MOWR) is the state's K-3 Reading Program designed to promote early identification and intervention for struggling readers.

The MOWR Program provides an average of $145 per K-3 student to schools for staffing, instructional materials, assessments and professional development in kindergarten through third grade. School districts and charter schools are required to submit literacy plans to the state for review and approval in order to access these funds.

Through the Arizona Education Progress Meter, the state collectively agreed to a 3rd grade reading goal of 72% proficient by 2030 and 90% proficient by 2039.[1] From 2015 to 2019, 3rd grade English language arts proficiency increased from 40% to 46%. From 2009 to 2019, Arizona's 4th grade reading scale score on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) increased from 210 to 216, making it one of only nine states to show statistically significant gains (see table to right).[2]

However statewide assessment data showed 3rd grade English language arts proficiency dropped from 46% in 2018-2019 to 35% in 2020-2021; likely a result of the impacts of COVID-19 on student learning. Additional data and research has similar findings[3].

SCORE-POINT CHANGE

State/jurisdiction	Score-point change
District of Columbia	12*
Mississippi	9*
Hawaii	7*
California	7*
DoDEA	7*
Nevada	6*
Utah	6*
Arizona	6*
Wyoming	4*
Louisiana	2
Tennessee	2
North Carolina	2
Idaho	1
Georgia	#

AzM2 English Language Arts 3rd Grade % Passing

All Students: 40, 46, 35
Economically Disadvantaged: 28, 34, 21

The following recommendations build on the gains of the last ten years while seeking to accelerate progress towards our goals and overcome the impacts of COVID-19.

The report is organized by the five topics required for review by SB 1572.

---

[1] https://www.expectmorearizona.org/progress/indicators/third-grade-reading/?indicators=State::Arizona::All

[2] https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading/states/scores/?grade=4

[3] See appendix

1. **The information required in school districts' and charter schools' literacy plans, the manner in which the plans are submitted to ADE and the frequency with which the plans are submitted**

Local Education Agencies (LEAs) submit literacy plans to the state for review and approval in order to receive additional K-3 funding. The essential components of the plans include information on the LEA's: 1) K-3 Core Reading Program; 2) Reading Intervention Programs; 3) K-3 Assessment Plan; 4) Professional Development Plan; 5) Dyslexia Training Designee; 6) Reading Schedules; 7) Parent Notifications; and 8) the LEA's Budget.

Using information submitted in the literacy plans, ADE compiles an annual report, tailors its professional development offerings, and shares best practices with schools in need of assistance. The plans are the only comprehensive and compiled source of data and information on the items listed above. Developing a literacy plan also facilitates discussion, analysis and action at the LEA level.

Approximately 221 LEAs (48%) are not required to submit literacy plans every year. This creates gaps in data that impede the improvement of student outcomes. It also may result in fewer discussions, analysis and action at the local level proven critical to early literacy success.

Recommendation 1: Require all schools to submit literacy plans every year

Literacy Plan Submissions

52% 48%

■ LEAs that Submit Literacy Plans Every TWO Years

■ LEAs that Submit Literacy Plans Every Year
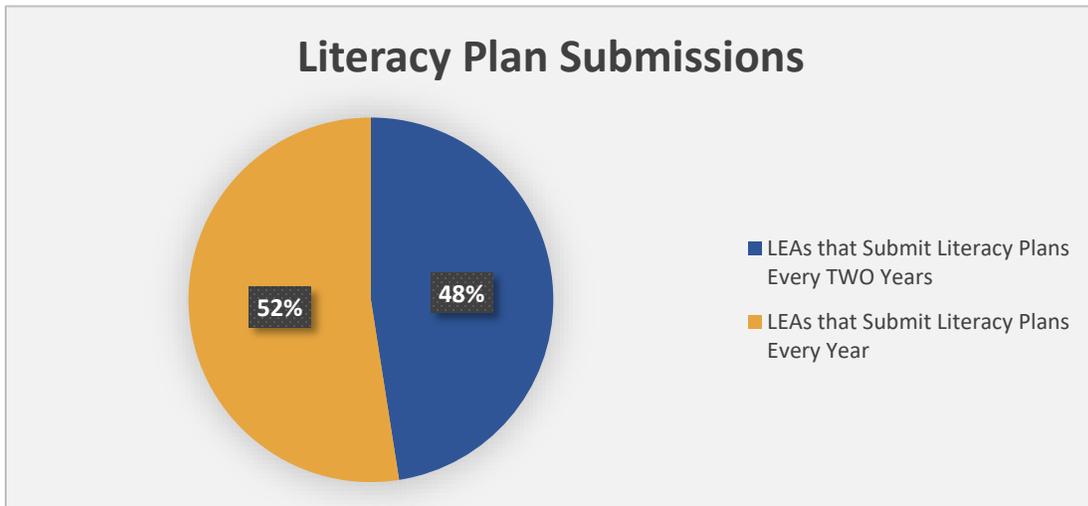
2. The collection and use of data to inform instruction and policy

Arizona's K-3 assessment system is a mix of statewide and local assessments, which includes a statewide kindergarten entry tool, universal screeners, benchmarks, diagnostic assessments and progress monitoring tools. With the exception of the statewide kindergarten entry tool and the statewide assessment administered in 3rd grade, the system does not have standardized literacy assessments across grades K-3, preventing statewide monitoring of data, identification of trends and comparison of results. Such an addition would:

- Yield baseline and progress data for all K-3 students to facility early identification, intervention and the targeting of additional resources;
- Provide comparable information to stakeholders looking to assess the effectiveness and progress of MOWR and other state programs;
- Reduce the cost and administrative burden on schools that currently procure their own benchmark assessment and enter data in to the ADE portal manually; and
- Allow the state to implement more targeted and effective policies like those described later in this report.

Recommendation 2a: Establish a statewide K-3 benchmark tool. Ensure all parts of the assessment system are accessible to students with disabilities and develop a plan to make them available to students with significant cognitive disabilities

In addition to literacy plans, LEAs manually submit benchmark assessment data to the state. More resources are needed to effectively extract, compile and analyze this information and to update the data portal that collects it. Investments would allow for the collection and analysis of: benchmark data by subgroup (i.e. economically disadvantaged, special education), achievement data for students by disability category, and longitudinal achievement data for students who are exempt from retention.

Recommendation 2b: Provide $1.24 million one-time and $40,000 ongoing to fund enhancements to the state data portal system to support the collection and analysis of outcomes to identify effective practices across various student populations. Require data reporting on students who qualify for an exemption from retention.

3. The written parental notifications required in statute and the feasibility of notifications for parents of students in grades four through twelve.

Due to a lack of research and data supporting its efficacy, the Board does not recommend expanding parental notifications to grades four through twelve at this time.

4. Intervention and remedial strategies

In the 2020-2021 school year, 80,280 3rd grade students enrolled in a public school. Approximately 47,000 of these students scored below proficient on the ELA portion of the statewide assessment. At least 277 schools were below the statewide average on the 3rd grade ELA portion**.** To accelerate progress, the state needs tiered and targeted support for the students and schools below proficiency.

All schools and parents could benefit from a clearinghouse of easily accessible and evidence-based early literacy resources. The clearinghouse can compile existing work (IES, ELA standards resources, ReadOn Arizona, etc) and serve as a free one-stop shop for educators, school leaders and parents.

Recommendation 4a: Provide $650,000 over three years to establish and maintain an online clearinghouse of evidence-based early literacy resources and trainings for all schools, educators and parents.

The state invested $3.1 million in FY 2022 to deploy 25 literacy coaches to 50 of the lowest performing schools in the state. Coaches will provide technical assistance to support, improve and sustain effective teaching and literacy practices. Modelled after Mississippi, which saw the largest 4th grade reading gains in the country, this initial investment is just the first step to achieve the ultimate goal of deploying 75 literacy coaches to serve 60,000 students across 150 schools by FY 2024. The impact of COVID-19 on learning and attendance, especially at the early grades, has placed new urgency on fully funding this targeted support.

Recommendation 4b: Fully fund the Swarm at $8.1 million to serve 150 schools and 60,000 students.

	Literacy Coaches	Schools Served	K-3 Students Served	Annual Budget
✓ **FY 2022**	✓ 25	✓ 50	✓ 20,000	✓ $3.1M
FY 2023	50	100	40,000	$5.6M
FY 2024	75	150	60,000	$8.1M

**4. Intervention and remedial strategies (continued)**

Some schools consistently struggle to improve early literacy results and need more comprehensive intervention than the Swarm and a clearinghouse of resources.

The Board recommends identifying the most struggling schools over a three-year period to allocate resources that support evidence-based intervention strategies for all learners. The intervention strategies may include collaborating with a qualified mentor or school improvement expert targeted at early literacy, increasing the quality of professional development for teachers, increasing the amount of time teachers have for collaboration, supporting more literacy coaches, interventionists and paraprofessionals, enhancing parent engagement and scaling existing evidence-based early literacy activities.

The strategies should be evidence-based (strong or moderate ESSA levels) and improve literacy results for all learners including students in poverty, English learners and students with disabilities. This recommendation should work in tandem, not duplicative or on top of, the other tiers of intervention, literacy plans, ADE's school improvement activities, ADE's other support functions including from the Exceptional Student Services division and other early literacy and school improvement activities in the state.

Recommendation 4c: Identify the schools with the most struggling readers over the last three years and provide financial support and interventions to improve their reading proficiency

Tiered Supports and Interventions for Schools

Highest Tier of Support and Intervention

25 Schools

Expanded Swarm

150 Schools

Resource Clearinghouse
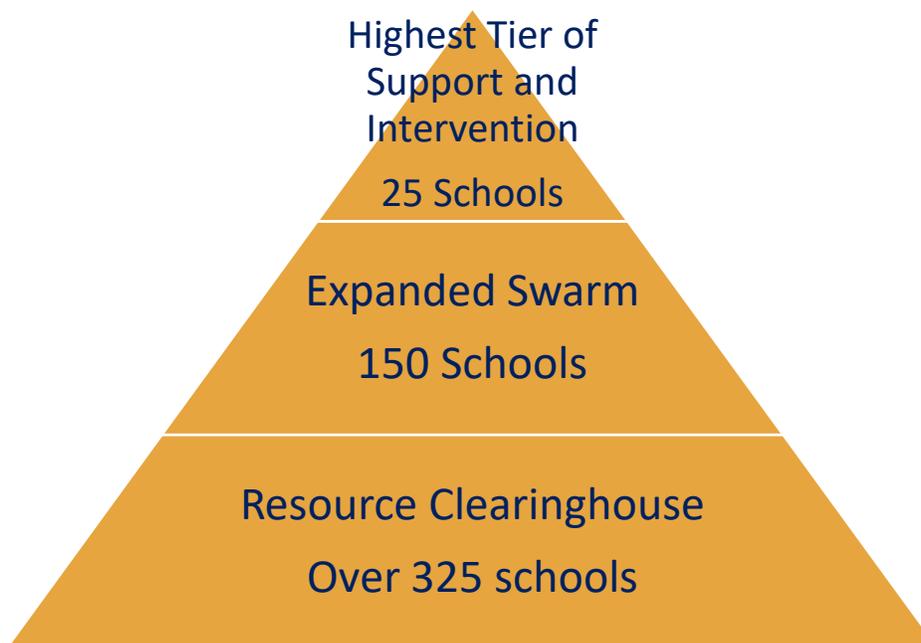
Over 325 schools

5. Any changes to statute, policy or administration to improve the reading proficiency of students

The state needs strong literacy policies and supports to accelerate Arizona's reading proficiency and fight the headwinds that COVID-19 has created.

Decoding What Works, a series of case studies conducted by ADE and ReadOn Arizona, highlighted four Title I schools from across the state that showed exceptional growth in 3rd grade reading proficiency. These four schools averaged *28 percentage points* of improvement in 3rd grade proficiency from 2015 to 2019 proving that all schools, even those facing socioeconomic challenges, can rapidly increase student achievement.

State policies and funding structures act, intentionally or not, as incentives for schools. The state does not have a system designed specifically to financially incentivize student growth in early literacy. Such a policy would reward schools for accelerating early literacy progress, provide schools like those described above with the resources to build upon their successes and incentivize other schools to do the same.

Recommendation 5a: Provide additional funds to schools that show significant improvement in 3rd grade reading proficiency.

The MOWR Program is a comprehensive early literacy program designed to deliver evidence-based literacy instruction, interventions and strategies to reach the state's goal of 72% proficient by 2030. These evidence-based strategies are supported by over 50 years of research and focus on Phonological Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension. They are proven to work with all students to empower them to become lifelong readers, including students with disabilities, English language learners, struggling readers, and typically developing readers.

Recommendation 5b: All policy and funding proposals regarding early literacy should be evidence-based (strong, moderate or promising ESSA levels) and prove capable of accelerating the state's progress towards its goal.

A.R.S. § 15-501.01(C)(2)(3)(a) requires K-5 certified teachers providing literacy instruction to demonstrate the ability to effectively teach phonemic awareness. The correct terminology is phonological awareness. This is a small but important distinction as phonemic awareness is a subset of phonological awareness.

Recommendation 5c: As a technical change, modify the terminology in the literacy endorsement requirement from phonemic awareness to phonological awareness.

The Board finds that two modifications to statute are necessary for clarification and alignment with best practices.

Recommendation 5d: 1) clarify that a student can be retained at the end of third grade no more than once; and 2) increase the EL exemption from two years to three years.

Accomplishments to Date

In the past several years, the Board, and others have studied ways to accelerate the state's early literacy rates. This had led to important policies and investments in the state:

1. The adoption of a statewide kindergarten entry tool to determine school readiness for young learners receiving early literacy supports,
2. Establishing a literacy endorsement to support K-5 teachers in obtaining the knowledge and skills necessary for providing quality early literacy instruction,
3. Investments in "The Swarm" to deploy master literacy coaches to the state's lowest-performing schools,
4. Providing training and state supports for the identification and intervention of students with dyslexia,
5. Receiving the Comprehensive State Literacy Development Grant, and more.

This builds on years of work shown here:
https://azsbe.az.gov/sites/default/files/Draft%20Literacy%20Timeline.pdf

Evidence, Reports, and Convenenings used as the Support and Foundation

1. Decoding What Works - 2019
2. Education Commission of the States and the Third Grade State Policy Academy - 2020
3. Education in a Pandemic, U.S. Department of Education, 2021
4. Estimates of Learning Loss in the 2019-2020 School Year, The Center for Research on Education Outcomes, Stanford University, 2020
5. Higher Education Early Literacy Committee – 2021 and Ongoing
6. K-3 Benchmark Analysis, Dr. Robert Vagi, 2021
7. Mississippi Learning Exchange - June 2020
8. Move on When Reading Annual Report - 2020
9. ReadOn Arizona's Early Literacy Policy Framework – 2020 and 2021
10. State Board of Education K-3 Literacy Ad Hoc Committee Report - 2018
11. The Path Forward Partnership with the Hunt Institute – 2021 and Ongoing
12. Understanding Pandemic Learning Loss and Learning Recovery: The Role of Student Growth & Statewide Testing, National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment, 2021
13. Using Data to Support Success for Arizona Students, Assessing COVID-19 Impact on Student Learning, Arizona State Board of Education, 2021