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NCTQ Databurst

Strengthening Reading Instruction through Better Preparation of Elementary and Special Education Teachers

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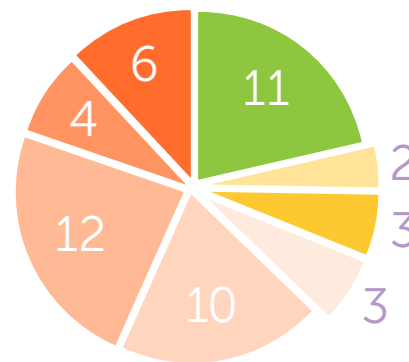
Teaching children how to read is arguably the most important job of both elementary and special education teachers. In 2000, the [National Reading Panel](#) synthesized the findings of 40 years of research by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) studying how children and adults best learn how to read. That effort identified the teaching methods which are most likely to yield the highest percentage of successful readers.¹ These findings have since been affirmed and updated by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) in its [IES Practice Guide](#).²

All states, without exception, continue to struggle to persuade some of their education preparation programs to integrate these methods into initial teacher preparation programs. In fact, only 37 percent of teacher preparation programs in the nation appear to be teaching these methods. For a complete list of how elementary and special education programs in your state compare on reading preparation, see [here](#).

Perhaps the best tool at states' disposal in persuading broader adoption of these methods by programs is a strong licensing test of evidence-based methods of early reading instruction, supported by an annual review of teacher candidates' passage rates on these tests.

The lack of these safeguards is especially notable for special education teacher candidates, with only 11 states in the nation requiring these teacher candidates to demonstrate knowledge of the science of reading on a test. Given that reading disabilities are the primary reason that students are referred for special education services, this oversight is troubling.³

Sufficiency of state reading assessment requirements for elementary and special education teacher candidates



- State requires a sufficient test of the science of reading for both elementary and special education teacher candidates.
- State requires an English Language Arts subtest which elementary and special education candidates can pass without demonstrating sufficient knowledge of the science of reading.
- State requires an English Language Arts subtest which elementary teacher candidates can pass without demonstrating sufficient knowledge of the science of reading. State does not require special education teacher candidates to pass a reading test.
- State maintains multiple options for candidates to demonstrate content knowledge, one of which is an insufficient reading test.
- State requires neither elementary nor special education teacher candidates to pass a reading test.
- State requires a sufficient test of the science of reading for elementary teacher candidates only. State requires an English Language Arts subtest special education candidates can pass without demonstrating sufficient knowledge of the science of reading.
- State requires a sufficient test of the science of reading for elementary teacher candidates only. State does not require special education teacher candidates to pass a reading test.
- State requires a stand-alone reading test that elementary and/or special education teacher candidates can pass without demonstrating sufficient knowledge of the science of reading.

Promising State Policies

Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Indiana, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Virginia, and Wisconsin require sufficient tests of the science of reading for both elementary and special education teacher candidates. These 11 states require these teacher candidates to pass a sufficient reading test as part of the standard certification process.

Specifically, California's Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA) is one of the leading reading tests in the nation and thoroughly tests candidates' knowledge of the science of reading. Indiana, New York, North Carolina, and Oklahoma also use strong state-developed reading tests. Arkansas, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Ohio, Virginia, and Wisconsin use strong, commercially-developed reading tests by Pearson or Educational Testing Services (ETS). Notwithstanding the source of the test, each of these states demonstrates a commitment to effective early reading instruction for elementary and special education teachers.

STATE	DOES THE STATE REQUIRE A SUFFICIENT TEST ON THE SCIENCE OF READING FOR ELEMENTARY TEACHERS?		DOES THE STATE REQUIRE A SUFFICIENT TEST ON THE SCIENCE OF READING FOR ELEMENTARY SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS?	
AL	Yes	Alabama requires a sufficient test of the science of reading, the Praxis Teaching Reading: Elementary Education (5204).	Partially	Alabama's Praxis Multiple Subjects (5001) test assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed.*
AK	No	Alaska's teacher candidates have the option of taking one of the following tests: Praxis Multiple Subjects (5001) test, which assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading and therefore a stand-alone test is needed; Praxis Content Knowledge (5018) test or the Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment (5017) test, neither of which provide a separate English Language Arts subscore.	No	Alaska does not require a reading test for special education candidates.
AZ	No	Arizona's National Evaluations Series Elementary Education Subtest I, assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts, as well as at least one other core subject to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed. However, in lieu of passage of a content test, candidates can meet the content knowledge requirement with a bachelor's degree or higher in a relevant content area, national board certification, prior teaching or relevant work experience.	No	Arizona does not require a reading test for special education candidates.
AR	Yes	Arkansas requires a sufficient reading test of the science of reading, the Foundations of Reading.	Yes	Arkansas requires a sufficient test of the science of reading, the Foundations of Reading.
CA	Yes	California requires a sufficient test of the science of reading, the Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA).	Yes	California requires a sufficient test of the science of reading, the RICA.
CO	Partially	Colorado's Praxis Multiple Subjects (5001) test assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed.*	Partially	Colorado's Praxis Multiple Subjects (5001) test assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed.*
CT	Yes	Connecticut requires a sufficient test of the science of reading, the Foundations of Reading.	Yes	Connecticut requires a sufficient test of the science of reading, the Foundations of Reading.
DE	Partially	Delaware's Praxis Multiple Subjects (5001) and Content Knowledge for Teaching (7801) tests assess the science of reading, but integrate this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed.*	Partially	Delaware's Praxis Multiple Subjects (5001) test and Praxis Content Knowledge for Teaching (7801) tests assess the science of reading, but integrate this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed. Additionally, only special education candidates adding this license to an elementary license are required to pass one of these tests.
DC	Partially	The District of Columbia's Praxis Multiple Subjects (5001) test assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed.	No	The District of Columbia does not require a reading test for special education candidates.
FL	Partially	Florida's required Florida Teacher Certification Examinations (FTCE) Elementary Education test assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed.*	No	Florida does not require a reading test for special education candidates.*
GA	Partially	Georgia's Assessments for the Certification of Educators (GACE) Early Childhood Education Assessment assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts, as well as at least one other core subject, to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed.*	Partially	Georgia's GACE Early Childhood Special Education General Curriculum test assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts as well as at least one other core subject to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed. Additionally, only candidates applying for the PreK-5 special education license have to pass this test. PreK-12 candidates are not required to pass this test.
HI	No	Hawaii's Praxis Multiple Subjects (5001) test assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed. However, in lieu of passage of a content test, candidates can meet the content knowledge requirement with additional coursework or degrees in the content area or national board certification.	No	Hawaii does not require a reading test for special education candidates.
ID	Partially	Idaho requires the Comprehensive Literacy Assessment. While the assessment addresses all five instructional components of the science of reading, the test description includes references to standards that are not aligned with the science of reading.	Partially	Idaho requires the Comprehensive Literacy Assessment. While the assessment addresses all five instructional components of the science of reading, the test description includes references to standards that are not aligned with the science of reading.
IL	Partially	Illinois's required Illinois Licensure Testing System (ILTS) Elementary Education (grades 1-6) test assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed.*	Partially	Illinois's required ILTS Special Education General Curriculum test assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed.
IN	Yes	Indiana requires a sufficient test of the science of reading, the CORE Elementary Education Generalist test, which contains equivalent of a stand-alone reading test.	Yes	Indiana requires a sufficient test of the science of reading, the CORE Exceptional Needs – Mild Intervention: Reading Instruction.
IA	No	Iowa does not require a reading test for elementary candidates.*	No	Iowa does not require a reading test for special education candidates.
KS	Partially	Kansas's Praxis Content Knowledge for Teaching (7801) test assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed.*	No	Kansas does not require a reading test for special education candidates.*
KY	Partially	Kentucky's Praxis Multiple Subjects (5001) test assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed.	No	Kentucky does not require a reading test for special education candidates.
LA	Partially	Louisiana's Praxis Multiple Subjects (5001) test assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed.*	Partially	Louisiana's Praxis Multiple Subjects (5001) test assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed.*
ME	Partially	Maine's Praxis Multiple Subjects (5001) test assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed.	No	Maine does not require a reading test for special education candidates.
MD	Partially	Maryland's required Praxis Content Knowledge for Teaching (7801) test assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed.*	No	Maryland does not require a reading test for special education candidates.*
MA	Yes	Massachusetts requires a sufficient test of the science of reading, the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL) Foundations of Reading Test (90) or MTEL Reading Specialist Test (08).	Yes	Massachusetts requires a sufficient test of the science of reading, the MTEL Foundations of Reading Test (90) or MTEL Reading Specialist Test (08).
MI	No	Michigan does not require a reading test for elementary candidates.*	No	Michigan does not require a reading test for special education candidates.
MN	Yes	Minnesota requires a sufficient test of the science of reading, the Minnesota Teacher Licensure Examinations (MTLE) Elementary Education test, which contains the equivalent of a stand-alone reading test.	Partially	Minnesota requires the MTLE Special Education Core Skills test, which assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts as well as at least one other core subject to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed.*
MS	Yes	Mississippi requires a sufficient test of the science of reading, the Foundations of Reading.	No	Mississippi does not require a reading test for special education candidates.
MO	Partially	Missouri's Educator Gateway Assessment (MEGA): Elementary Education Multi-Content test assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed.	Partially	Missouri's MEGA Elementary Education Multi-Content test assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed.*

MT	No	Montana does not require a reading test for elementary candidates.	No	Montana does not require a reading test for special education candidates.
NE	No	Nebraska does not require a reading test for elementary candidates.	No	Nebraska does not require a reading test for special education candidates.
NV	No	Nevada does not require a reading test for elementary candidates.	No	Nevada does not require a reading test for special education candidates.
NH	Yes	New Hampshire requires a sufficient test of the science of reading, the Foundations of Reading.	No	New Hampshire does not require a reading test for special education candidates.
NJ	Partially	New Jersey's Praxis Multiple Subjects (5001) test assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed. New Jersey allows a test exemption to candidates with a GPA of 3.5 or higher who fail by 5% or less.	Partially	New Jersey's required Praxis Multiple Subjects (5001) test assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed. New Jersey allows a test exemption to candidates with a GPA of 3.5 or higher who fail by 5% or less.
NM	Yes	New Mexico requires a sufficient test of the science of reading, the New Mexico Teacher Assessments (NMTA) Essential Components of Elementary Reading Instruction.	No	New Mexico does not require a reading test for special education candidates.*
NY	Yes	New York requires a sufficient test of the science of reading, the New York State Teacher Certification Exams (NYSTCE) Multi-Subject: Teachers of Childhood (Grades 1-6), Part One: Literacy and English Language Arts, which contains the equivalent of a stand-alone reading test.	Yes	New York requires a sufficient test of the science of reading, the NYSTCE Multi-Subject: Teachers of Childhood (Grades 1-6), Part One: Literacy and English Language Arts, which contains the equivalent of a stand-alone reading test.
NC	Yes	North Carolina requires a sufficient test of the science of reading, the Foundations of Reading. However teachers may have until their second year to pass these tests, provided that they attempt to pass them during their first year.	Yes	North Carolina requires a sufficient test of the science of reading, the Foundations of Reading. However teachers may have until their second year to pass these tests, provided that they attempt to pass them during their first year.
ND	No	North Dakota does not require a reading test for elementary candidates.	No	North Dakota does not require a reading test for special education candidates.
OH	Yes	Ohio requires a sufficient test of the science of reading, the Foundations of Reading.	Yes	Ohio requires a sufficient test of the science of reading, the Foundations of Reading.
OK	Yes	Oklahoma requires a sufficient test of the science of reading, the Certification Examinations for Oklahoma Educators (CEOE) Elementary Education Subtest 1, which amounts to a stand-alone reading test.	Yes	Oklahoma requires candidates to pass a sufficient science of reading test as a condition of program completion.
OR	Partially	Oregon's National Evaluation Series (NES) Elementary Education test assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts as well as at least one other core subject to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed.	No	Oregon does not require a reading test for special education candidates.
PA	Partially	Pennsylvania's required Pennsylvania Educator Certification Test (PECT) PreK-4 assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts as well as at least one other core subject to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed.*	Partially	Pennsylvania's required PECT PreK-4 assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts as well as at least one other core subject to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed.* Only special education candidates adding their license to a PreK-4 license are required to pass this test.
RI	Partially	Rhode Island's required Praxis Multiple Subjects (5001) test assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed.	Partially	Rhode Island's required Praxis Multiple Subjects (5001) test assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed.
SC	Partially	South Carolina's Praxis Multiple Subjects (5001) test assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed.*	Partially	South Carolina's Praxis Multiple Subjects (5001) test assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed. Only special education candidates adding this license to an elementary license are required to pass this test.
SD	No	South Dakota's teacher candidates have the option of taking one of the following tests: Praxis Multiple Subjects (5001) test or Praxis Content Knowledge for Teaching (7801), both of which assess the science of reading, but integrate this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading and therefore a stand-alone test is needed; Praxis Content Knowledge (5018) test or the Early Childhood Education (5025) test, neither of which provide a separate English Language Arts subscore.	No	South Dakota does not require a reading test for special education candidates.
TN	Partially	Tennessee's Praxis (5203) Teaching Reading: Elementary Education test includes some items assessing candidates' reading knowledge, but the concepts are not addressed in depth. Candidates can pass this test without a comprehensive understanding of scientifically-based reading instruction. Additionally, Tennessee allows teachers to delay passage of content and pedagogy tests if they possess a bachelor's degree in a core content area.	Partially	Tennessee's Praxis (5203) Teaching Reading: Elementary Education test includes some items assessing candidates' reading knowledge, but the concepts are not addressed in depth. Candidates can pass this test without a comprehensive understanding of scientifically-based reading instruction. Additionally, Tennessee allows teachers to delay passage of content and pedagogy tests if they possess a bachelor's degree in a core content area.
TX	Partially	Texas's required Texas Examinations for Educator Standards (TExES) Core Subjects EC-6 (291) test assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed.*	No	Texas does not require a reading test for special education candidates.*
UT	Partially	Utah's Praxis Multiple Subjects (5001) test assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed.*	No	Utah does not require a reading test for special education candidates.
VT	Partially	Vermont's Praxis Multiple Subjects (5001) test assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed.*	No	Vermont does not require a reading test for special education candidates.
VA	Yes	Virginia requires a sufficient test of the science of reading, the Praxis Reading for Virginia Educators (5306).	Yes	Virginia requires a sufficient test of the science of reading, the Praxis Reading for Virginia Educators (5306).
WA	Partially	Washington's National Evaluation Series (NES) Elementary Content test assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts as well as at least one other core subject to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed.*	No	Washington does not require a reading test for special education candidates.
WV	Partially	West Virginia's Praxis (5203) Teaching Reading: Elementary Education test includes some items assessing candidates' reading knowledge, but the concepts are not addressed in depth. Candidates can pass this test without a comprehensive understanding of scientifically-based reading instruction.	No	West Virginia does not require a reading test for special education candidates.
WI	Yes	Wisconsin requires a sufficient test of the science of reading, the Foundations of Reading.	Yes	Wisconsin requires a sufficient test of the science of reading, the Foundations of Reading.
WY	Partially	Wyoming's Praxis Multiple Subjects (5001) test assesses the science of reading, but integrates this topic with too many other topics related to English Language Arts to serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. A stand-alone test is needed.	No	Wyoming does not require a reading test for special education candidates.

Notes:

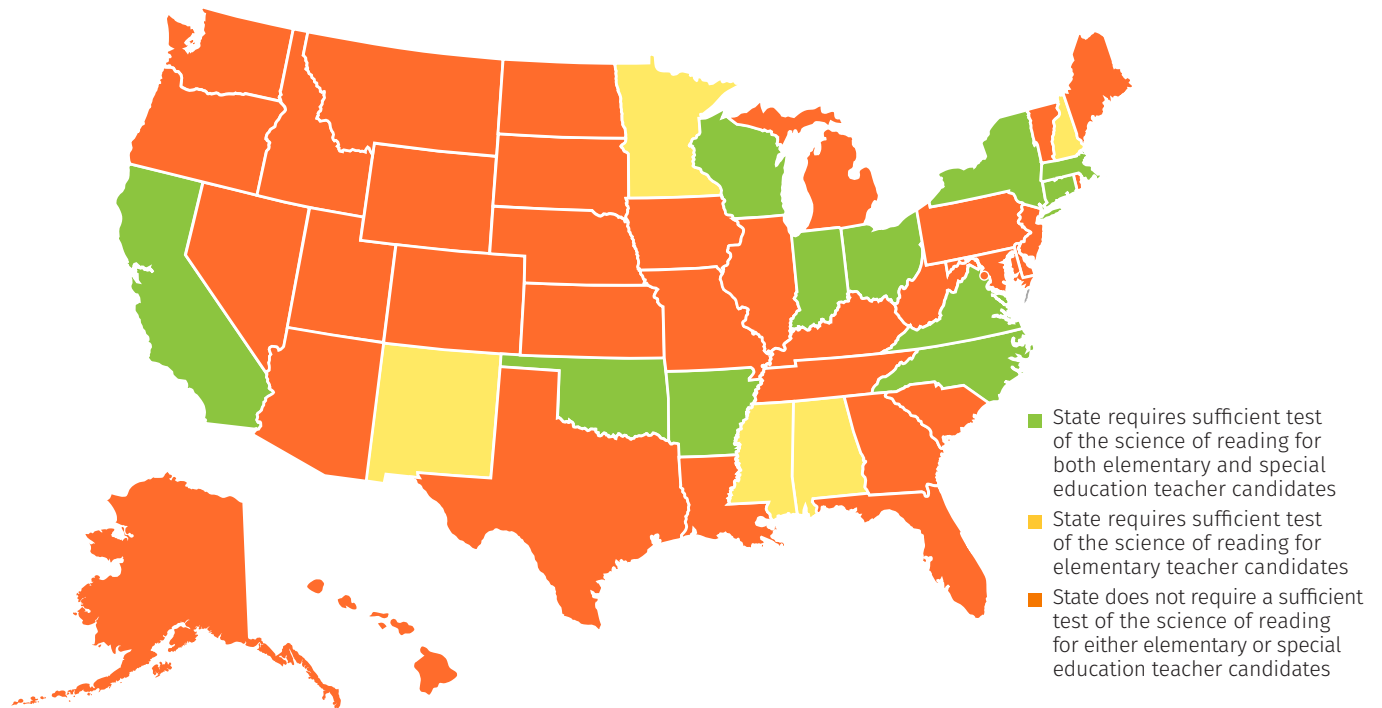
These data do not reference state testing requirements for reading specialists. For more information on elementary preparation reading requirements see [here](#) and [here](#).

Citations for state-specific data are available [here](#).

A sufficient test of the science of reading must clearly test the knowledge and skills related to the science of reading and address all five instructional components of scientifically-based reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. If the test is combined with an assessment that also tests general pedagogy or elementary content, it should report a separate subscore for the science of reading, specifically, so that a low score in the science of reading cannot be effectively masked by a higher score in another area to result in an overall passing score on the assessment.

* This state is among the 20 states with either an insufficient or no reading test that has standards requiring programs to teach the science of reading. While commendable, NCTQ finds considerable evidence that over half of all programs in these states do not adhere to these standards. To review program adherence to standards in your state, see, [here](#).

National Overview



Recommendations

To maintain elementary and special education students' access to teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to provide sufficient reading instruction, **these five states should retain their strong reading assessment policies.**

To increase special education students' access to teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to provide sufficient reading instruction, **these 11 states should require special education teacher candidates to pass the same assessment of the science of reading as is required of elementary teacher candidates.** Although some of these states maintain preparation program standards that address the science of reading, standards alone are insufficient.

To increase elementary and special education students' access to teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to provide sufficient reading instruction, **these 35 states should require elementary and special education teacher candidates to pass an assessment of the science of reading.** If these states elect to adopt an assessment that also tests general pedagogy or elementary content, they should require that such assessment provides a separate subscore that explicitly reflects whether a candidate has demonstrated sufficient knowledge of the science of reading. Although some of these states maintain preparation program standards that address the science of reading, standards alone are insufficient.

To increase transparency regarding licensure assessment passage rates, ALL states should examine, review with programs and publish first time pass rates on licensure exams by program candidates.

State Quotes to Note

"If we are asking students to demonstrate their content knowledge, then we must ensure teachers have the content knowledge to teach. The MTEL ensures that teacher candidates have critical reading and writing skills. Massachusetts 4th and 8th graders have placed first in the nation on national tests of reading for over a decade. We believe this is linked to our educators' solid and demonstrated content knowledge."

-Heather Peske, *Massachusetts Senior Associate Commissioner, Center for Instructional Support*

"Virginia's language arts standards reflect the components of effective reading instruction, including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary development and comprehension. The commonwealth's expectations for teacher preparation — including assessment requirements — are aligned with this research-based approach to reading instruction."

-James F. Lane, *Ed.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction, Virginia Department of Education*



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