



Evaluation Systems  
Updates on Policy and Practice in  
Teaching, Learning and Assessment

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In education, interactions between policy, practice, and evaluation shape the landscape of teaching and learning. Policy serves as the guiding framework, setting the stage for how educational institutions operate, whereas practice puts policies into play in real-world educational settings. At Evaluation Systems, we are working to bridge the gap between policy and practice by ensuring that our assessments reflect the dynamic needs of educational environments investing in educators and learners.

In recent years, a palpable shift has occurred in educational preparation at the state level aimed at the educator workforce. Policymakers nationwide are engaging in efforts to address educator workforce challenges regionally and in critical subjects. Additionally, because critical indicators have shown significant learning loss post-2020, policymakers have also renewed focus on foundational skills for learners—specifically in literacy and mathematics.

A restructuring of literacy instruction is underway in many states, pivoting from traditional balanced literacy approaches to evidence-based practices aligned with the science of reading. This momentum has led to 37 states and the District of Columbia adopting legislation focused on evidence-based instructional practices and policies to further strengthen literacy education.

These policy shifts have prompted states to recognize the importance of equipping teachers with the tools for effective literacy instruction. Consequently, science of reading legislation has influenced states to mandate provisions requiring pre-service and in-service teachers to demonstrate proficiency in scientifically based reading instruction skills, often through the Foundations of Reading assessment.

For example, Iowa's legislature passed HF2618, legislation mandating Iowa's educator preparation programs (EPPs) to administer the Foundations of Reading assessment to pre-service educators. This requirement aims to enhance aspiring Iowa educators' literacy instruction skills, with the overarching goal of increasing literacy proficiency among Iowa students.

Additionally, this year, states including South Carolina, Indiana, Georgia, and Kansas have passed legislation aimed at strengthening literacy education to improve reading proficiency among their young learners. Concurrently, more than 10 states—such as Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Florida, Indiana, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas, West Virginia, and Wisconsin—have banned the use of the three-cueing literacy system, prioritizing phonics for beginning readers.

Legislative efforts have included a variety of measures to elevate literacy in education, including aligning instruction with the science of reading; requiring scientifically-based literacy training or examinations for educators; providing literacy training and professional development opportunities for educators; using universal screeners to effectively progress

monitor students; and requiring collaboration between institutions of higher learning and Departments of Education for curriculum alignment.

Similarly, states have enacted recent changes to enhance mathematics numeracy and conceptual understanding in mathematics instruction. This has been reflected in legislation such as the Kentucky Numeracy Act, Alabama Numeracy Act, Colorado HB 23-1231, and West Virginia's Third Grade Success Act. These measures mandate evidence-based curricula, assessments, and interventions; offer professional development and training; provide support through math coaches; and require collaboration and curriculum alignment between educational institutions.

Among these transformative shifts, alternative pathways to teacher certification have also emerged to address teacher vacancies. States have broadened pathways for candidates seeking licensure extending beyond traditional avenues offered at institutions of higher education. These alternative pathways—which include programs operated by independent non-profit and for-profit organizations—have witnessed a surge in enrollment and completion since 2020, reflecting their growing popularity among aspiring educators.

Montana's recent approval of the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE) and New York's substantial investment of \$13.7 million in alternative certification programs at both state and independent colleges and universities highlight state commitments to address teacher shortages. Similarly, Alabama and Virginia have implemented endorsements of iTeach, which offers alternative teacher certification programs that are designed to address teacher shortages in their respective states. These programs offer alternative pathways for individuals to attain teacher certification, often through accelerated training and support mechanisms designed for aspiring educators who may not have pursued traditional routes into the profession.

Alternative pathway programs emphasize practical classroom experience, mentorship, and ongoing professional development to prepare candidates for success in their teaching roles. By diversifying these pathways into teaching and facilitating the entry of talented individuals, states seek to maintain a steady flow of qualified professionals into the educator workforce.

In conclusion, the transformative shifts in literacy and mathematics instruction, alongside the emergence of alternative pathways to teacher certification, underscore a collective commitment to advancing educational outcomes. Legislative efforts in literacy and mathematics, coupled with initiatives to address teacher shortages, exemplify a proactive commitment to foster effective teaching and learning.

Evaluation Systems remains dedicated to serving as a reliable and innovative resource for states that are navigating the complexities of policy implementation and educator credentialing reform, supporting a brighter future for aspiring teachers and students.