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## Best Practices in Early Literacy Policy and Implementation

- **Supports for Teachers and Policy**
  - Science of Reading (SOR) Training
  - Literacy/Reading Coaches
  - EPP Coursework Alignment to Science of Reading
  - EPP Science of Reading Assessment for Elementary Licensure
  - Funding for Literacy Efforts
- **Assessment and Parent Notification**
  - Universal Reading Screener 3 x year (K-3)
  - Dyslexia Screener
  - Parent Notification of Reading Deficiency
- **Instruction and Intervention**
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  - Elimination of Three-Cueing Instructional Materials in early literacy and EPPs
  - Individual Reading Plans for Intervention
  - Regularly Monitor Student Progress
  - Evidence-based Interventions
  - Summer Reading Camps
  - Parent Read-At-Home Resources
- **Retention and Intensive Intervention**
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  - Multiple Pathways for Promotion
  - Good Cause Exemptions for Some Students

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**Effective Policy, Strategically Implemented,  
Improves Student Outcomes**


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## State of the States

- 30+ states have adopted policies to improve early literacy
- 18 states have passed/improved early literacy policies in 2023
- Legislators in 10 states have passed policy to prohibit the three-cueing system in early literacy instructional materials

**Policy Implementation Impact:**

- **Florida:** 1<sup>st</sup> to pass comprehensive early literacy policy and continues to strengthen
- **Mississippi:** LBPA (2013) moved from 49<sup>th</sup> in 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading (NAEP) to 21<sup>st</sup> in 2022
- **North Carolina:** overhauled law in 2021, in 2<sup>nd</sup> year of teacher training on SoR; mid-year K-3 screener data demonstrates growth in all subgroups and higher results than other states/districts using the same assessment
- **Alabama:** 2019 policy adopted, showed growth in 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading (NAEP) when majority of nation regressed
- **Tennessee:** New policy in 2021, Reading 360 early indicators show positive growth



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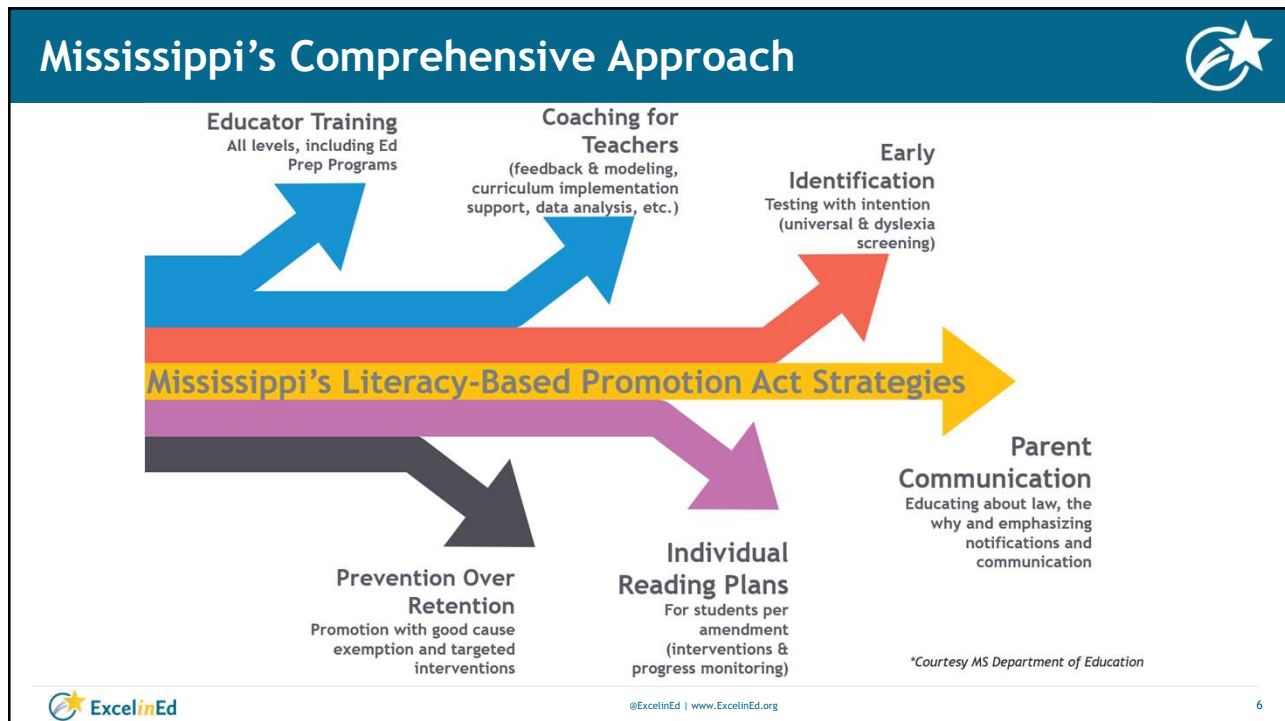
## Mississippi's Early Literacy Landscape

### 2022 NAEP Results

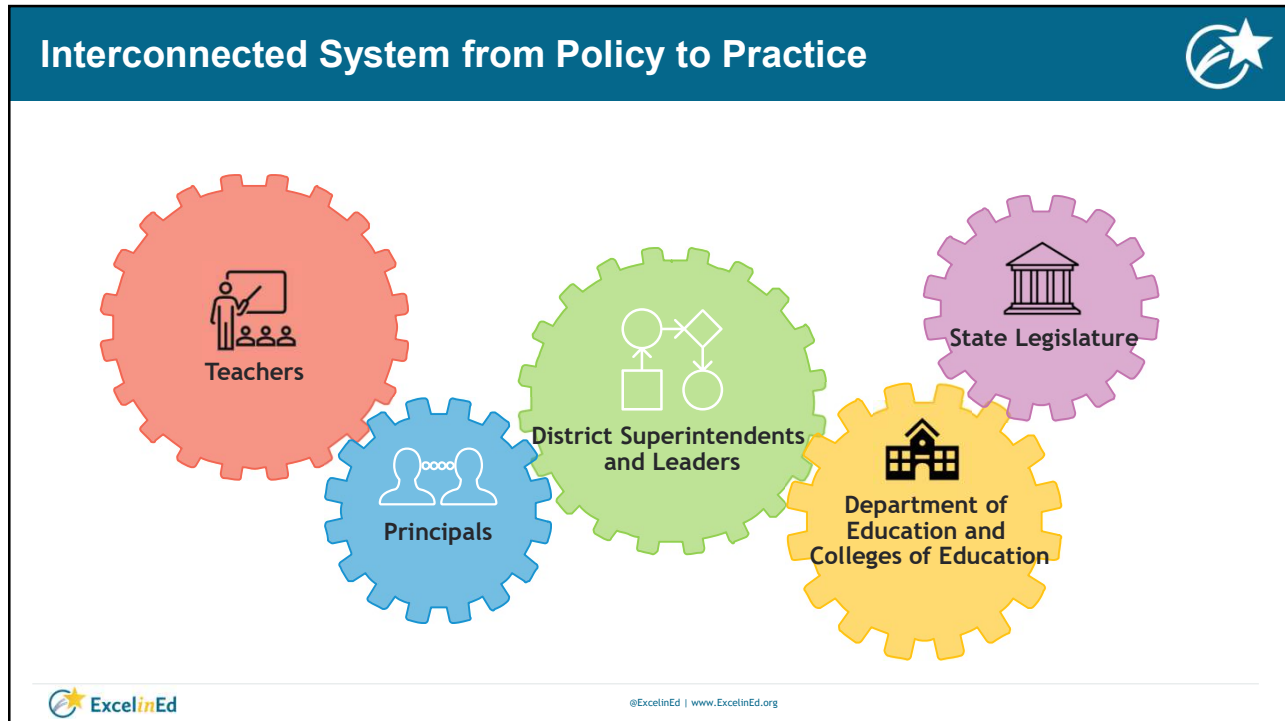
2022 NAEP	Mississippi			National Public	
Grade 4 Reading	Scale Score	Rank	Gap	Scale Score	Gap
All Students	217	21		216	
White	230	11		226	
Black	204	5	25	198	28
Hispanic	214	5	16	204	22
FRL	212	2	25	203	28

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## Wheelock Study of Mississippi Retention Policy

**BU**  
Baylor University Wheelock College of Education & Human Development  
Wheelock Educational Policy Center

**WEPC**

### The Effect of Retention Under Mississippi's Test-Based Promotion Policy

Kristen Stangard Mumma and Marcus A. Winters

**POLICY ISSUE**  
Motivated by a need to improve early literacy, over a dozen states have implemented test-based promotion policies that require students who score below a minimum standardized test score threshold to repeat the third grade. These policies are intended to support the most struggling learners, providing them with an additional year of instruction, intervention, and academic reinforcement to build essential reading skills. Research finds generally positive impacts from test-based promotion policies targeted to early grades, though the results are not uniform across locations. This makes it critically important to measure the impacts of such policies in a variety of contexts so that local policymakers can understand the impacts on their constituents, and to provide a broad view to policymakers considering similar policies in hopes of improving outcomes for young students who are struggling to read.

This study examines the impact of third grade retention under Mississippi's test-based promotion policy, adopted in 2013 as part of a comprehensive statewide effort to improve early literacy. Under the policy, students who score below a set threshold on the third-grade state reading exam must repeat the third grade and receive intensive reading instruction and interventions, unless they qualify for specific "good cause" exemptions. Mississippi has received considerable attention in recent years for its substantial improvements in student reading outcomes, and many states are looking to Mississippi for evidence of promising early literacy initiatives that could work in other locations. The results of this study contribute new knowledge to this important conversation by clarifying the causal effects of being retained in the third grade under Mississippi's test-based promotion policy.

**STUDY DATA AND FINDINGS**  
This study focuses on the first cohort of students subject to Mississippi's policy, those who were in third grade in the 2014-15 school year. Stangard Mumma and Winters compare the later test scores, absences, and special education statuses of approximately 4,700 students who scored just above and just below the 2013 state reading test score that determined promotion to the fourth grade. In particular, they examine the differences in these outcomes when both groups of students—those who were retained and those who were promoted—were in sixth grade, the latest grade for which both groups had available end-of-year test score data. More information is available in the full report.

**KEY FINDINGS**  
For students who were in the 3rd grade in 2014-15, retention under Mississippi's policy led to:

- Substantially higher 6th grade ELA scores
- No significant impact on 6th grade math scores
- No significant impact on absences in 6th grade or 4 years after retention
- No significant impact on special education identification in 6th grade or 4 years after retention

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This study was commissioned by the Foundation for Excellence in Education.

THE EFFECT OF RETENTION UNDER MISSISSIPPI'S TEST-BASED PROMOTION POLICY 2023

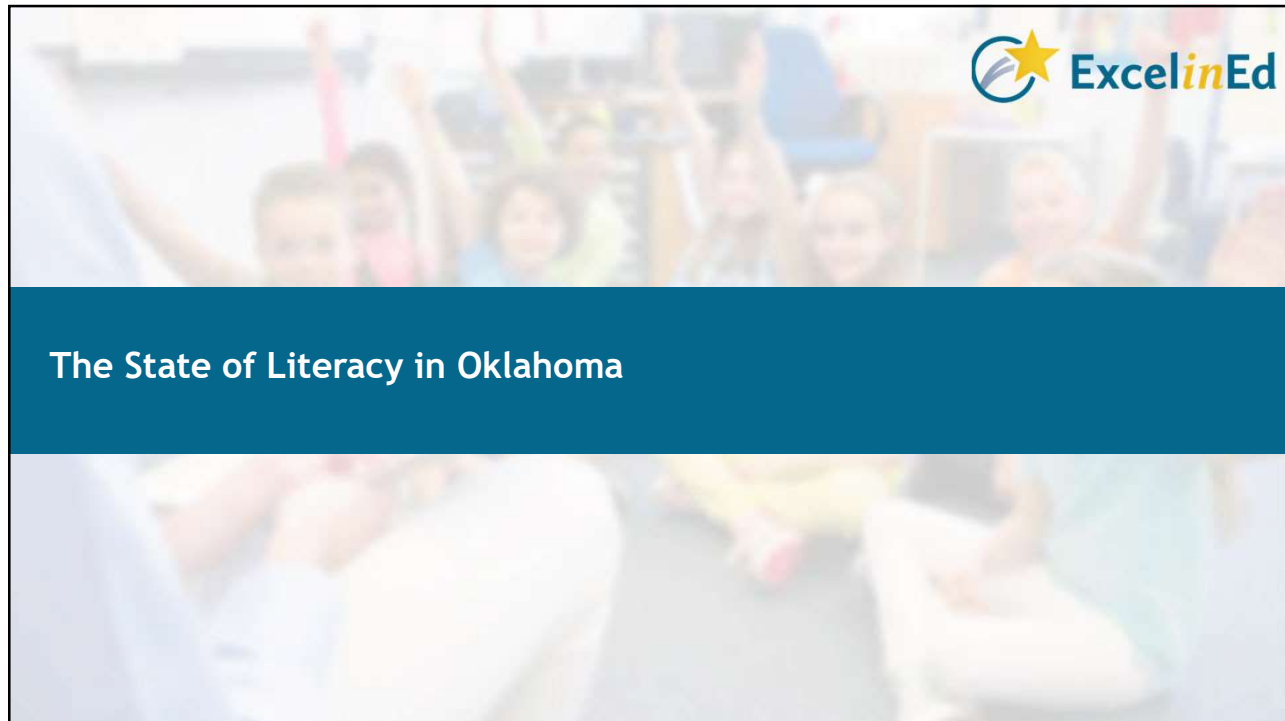
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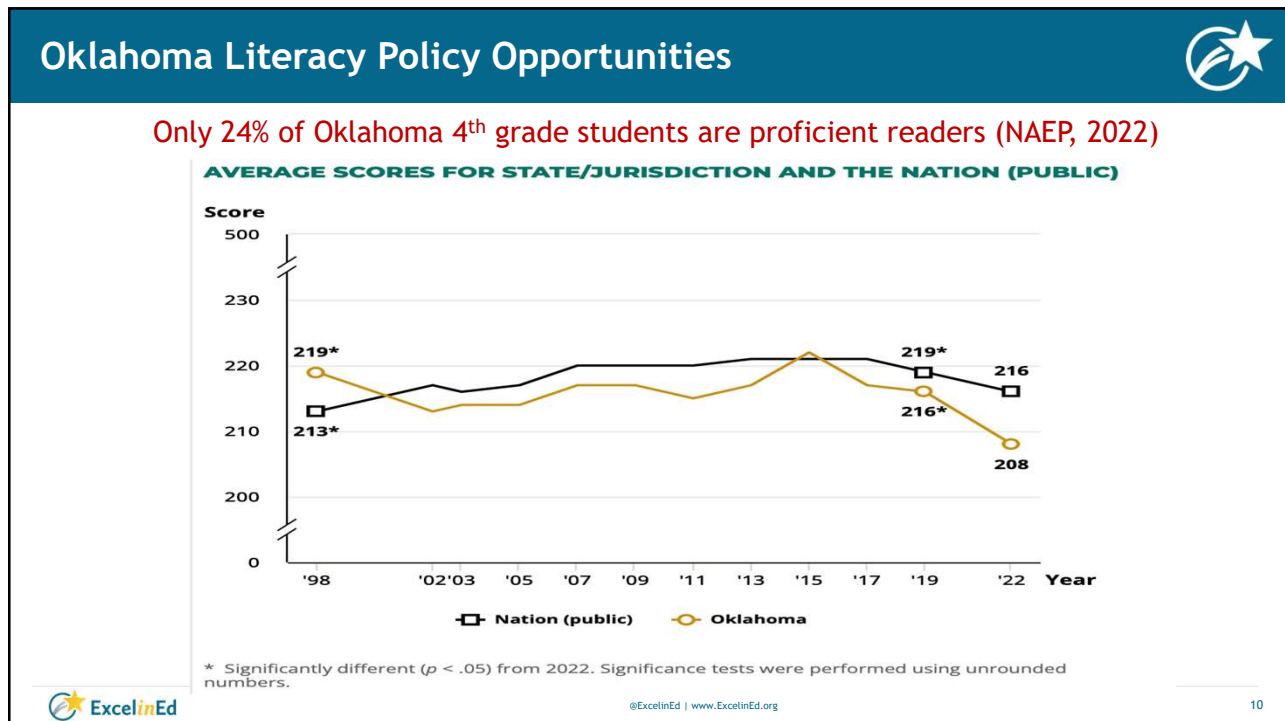
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## Opportunities to Strengthen Early Literacy in Oklahoma



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## Why the Three-Cueing Systems Model Does NOT Teach Children to Read



- The Three-Cueing Systems Model, embedded within whole-language and balanced literacy programs, is a widespread problem with how early reading instruction is taught.
- This model of teaching reading lacks empirical evidence (Seidenberg, 2017) and “goes directly against what is known from the science of reading” (Petscher, et al, 2020).

### Red Flags

#### The Three-Cueing Systems Model:

- Promotes strategies used by poor readers (guessing at words using pictures and clues)
- Undermines sound-spelling relationships and obscures phonemic awareness and phonics
- Is the basis for popular balanced literacy and whole language reading and intervention programs
- Continues to mislead teachers and hinder student’s progress even though it is predicated upon ideas of reading development which have been demonstrated to be false

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“America’s low literacy crisis is largely ignored, historically underfunded and woefully under-researched, despite being one of the great solvable problems of our time.”

- British A. Robinson  
President & CEO, Barbara Bush Foundation

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Thank You!

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