

# Improving Early Literacy in Mississippi

## Policies, Strategies and Outcomes



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[mdek12.org](https://mdek12.org)



MISSISSIPPI  
DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION

July 2021



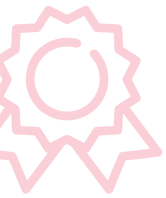
# VISION

To create a world-class educational system that gives students the knowledge and skills to be successful in college and the workforce, and to flourish as parents and citizens



# MISSION

To provide leadership through the development of policy and accountability systems so that all students are prepared to compete in the global community



1

**ALL** Students Proficient and Showing Growth in All Assessed Areas



2

**EVERY** Student Graduates from High School and is Ready for College and Career



3

**EVERY** Child Has Access to a High-Quality Early Childhood Program

**EVERY** School Has Effective Teachers and Leaders

4



**EVERY** Community Effectively Uses a World-Class Data System to Improve Student Outcomes

5



**EVERY** School and District is Rated "C" or Higher

6



## F

### Quality Counts Grades

**F** in K-12 achievement  
**D** for chance for success

## 50<sup>TH</sup>

### National Ranking

**50<sup>th</sup>** in nation for education

## 75.5

### Graduation Rate

**75.5%** second lowest among neighboring states

## NAEP

### NAEP

**4<sup>th</sup> graders** reading more than **one full grade level behind** national average on National Assessment of Educational Progress

## GAP

### Honesty Gap

Large “honesty gap” between state assessment proficiency rates and NAEP results



**C-**

**Quality  
Counts  
Grades**

**B** for equity

**C** for chance  
for success

**39<sup>TH</sup>**

**National  
Ranking**

**39<sup>th</sup>** in nation  
for education

**87.7**

**Graduation  
Rate**

**87.7%**  
Higher than  
the national  
average

**NAEP**

**NAEP**

**No. 1** in the  
**nation** for  
gains  
in 4<sup>th</sup> grade  
reading and  
math, **higher  
than national  
average** in  
math and tied  
for reading

**No. 2**

**Most  
Improved in  
Nation**

**No. 2 state** in  
**nation** with  
greatest  
improvements  
for three  
consecutive  
years



**Reorganized  
state  
education  
department  
around  
Strategic  
Plan goals**



**Adopted  
rigorous,  
college- and  
career-ready  
standards**



**Developed  
assessments  
aligned to  
new  
standards  
and National  
Assessment  
of  
Educational  
Progress  
(NAEP)**



**Implemented  
strong  
accountability  
system for  
schools and  
districts and  
improved data  
quality and  
transparency**



**Built teacher  
and leader  
capacity  
through  
major  
professional  
development  
initiative to  
ensure  
students  
master higher  
standards**



# LEGISLATION AND POLICY



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# Two New Laws Passed in 2013 to Advance Early Literacy

## Early Learning Collaborative Act

- Establishes first state-funded pre-K program
- \$3M first two years; increased to \$16M by 2021

## Literacy-Based Promotion Act

- Makes reading instruction a major focus K-3
- \$9.5M in 2014; \$15M annually thereafter



Both laws support the **Mississippi State Board Strategic Plan**, which makes improving early literacy a major part of its work to improve outcomes for all students

## Key Components



- Provides funding to local communities to establish or expand high-quality early childhood education programs called Early Learning Collaboratives (ELCs)
- ELCs include a lead partner (public school or nonprofit group) and collaborators including school districts, Head Start sites, childcare centers and nonprofit organizations
- Enables state education department to establish first Office of Early Childhood Education
- Professional development offered, for free, to all early childhood providers in public and private settings

## Funding, Enrollment and Tax Credit Support



Year	State Funding	Students	Sites	1:1 Tax Credit**
2014-15	\$3M	1,700	11	\$276,850
2015-16	\$3M	1,800	11	\$812,686
2016-17	\$4M	2,000	14	\$1.6M
2017-18	\$6.5M	3,000	18	\$2.7M
2018-19	\$6.5M	3,000	18	\$3.8M
2019-20	\$6.5M	3,000	18	\$3.3M
2020-21*	\$8M	3,000	18	\$5.6M
2021-22	\$16M	6,000	TBD	TBD

\*Per-student funding rate increased. Enrollment remained the same.

\*\*Tax credits are per calendar year. Most recent is 2020.

### W.K. Kellogg Foundation Grant

- \$6 million grant from W.K. Kellogg Foundation awarded to MDE to build early childhood education infrastructure in Mississippi (state dollars will fund when grant ends)
- Funds support 10 early childhood education coaches and other staff who build the capacity of early childhood education professionals in a variety of pre-K settings statewide
- Family engagement strategies provided to help programs increase parents' participation in their children's education



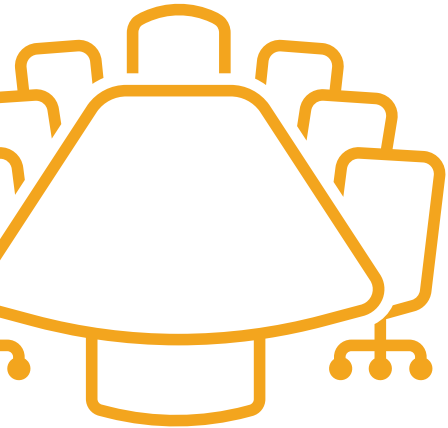
### Role of Coach

- Establish relationship, trust, and respect among teachers and coach
- Observe classroom and teacher practices
- Set goals and action steps for Quality Implementation Plan
- Help teachers identify strengths, areas for growth, and steps to improve instruction
- Provide supportive and constructive feedback
- Model developmentally appropriate practices supported with early learning standards and guidelines
- Share research- and evidence-based knowledge and practices
- Provide resources and support strategies for teachers





## Key Components



- Trains educators statewide to be more effective at teaching reading (teachers trained using Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling/LETRS)
- Deploys literacy coaches to lowest-performing schools to support teachers
- Adds K-3 monitoring and assessment system, including a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading test for students to qualify for 4<sup>th</sup> grade promotion
- Requires schools to engage parents and communicate with them regularly
- Enables state education agency to establish first Office of Elementary Education and Reading

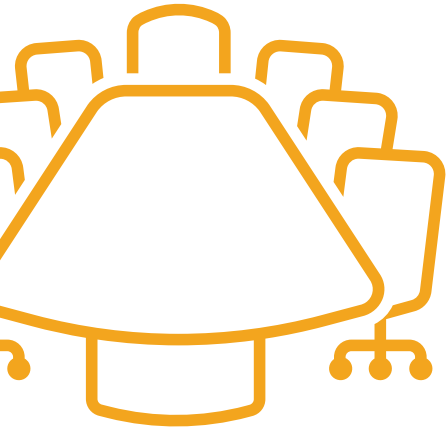
# Laws & Amendments to Enhance Literacy-Based Promotion Act

## Teacher Certification

- Law enacted in 2016 requires elementary education candidates to pass “a rigorous test of scientifically research-based reading instruction and intervention” to ensure they know effective practices for teaching reading
- Mississippi requires candidates to pass the Foundations of Reading Assessment

## Individual Reading Plan

- Amendment in 2016 required educators to create Individual Reading Plans for students to improve reading



### **Dyslexia Awareness Training (2021)**

- Requires districts to conduct four hours of awareness training for dyslexia and other related disorders to all licensed educators and paraprofessionals responsible for instruction

### **Dyslexia Scholarships (2012)**

- Requires local adoption policies to screen students for dyslexia in kindergarten and first grade
- Provides funds for students to attend special purpose non-public school offering Orton-Gillingham based instruction by a licensed dyslexia therapist five days a week

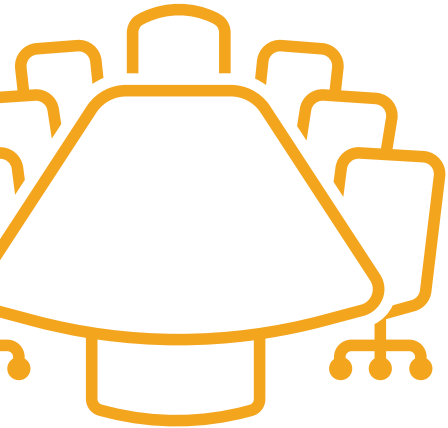
### **Dyslexia Grants (1997)**

- Three-year grant to districts to support students with dyslexia and/or related reading disorders in general education
- Grant funds dyslexia screener, dyslexia interventions, instructional resources, assessments, professional development, and up to 80% of dyslexia therapist salary

## Laws & Amendments to Enhance Literacy-Based Promotion Act

### Higher Expectations for 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading

- Amendment passed in 2016 to raise the passing score on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading test starting in the 2018-19 school year
- Students are now required to score above the lowest **two** achievement levels, which shows they are approaching proficiency
- 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students who fail to meet the academic requirements for promotion to 4<sup>th</sup> grade may be **promoted for good cause** (included in original law)



**Teacher Certification Requires Test of Knowledge of Research-Based Reading Instruction and Intervention (2016)**

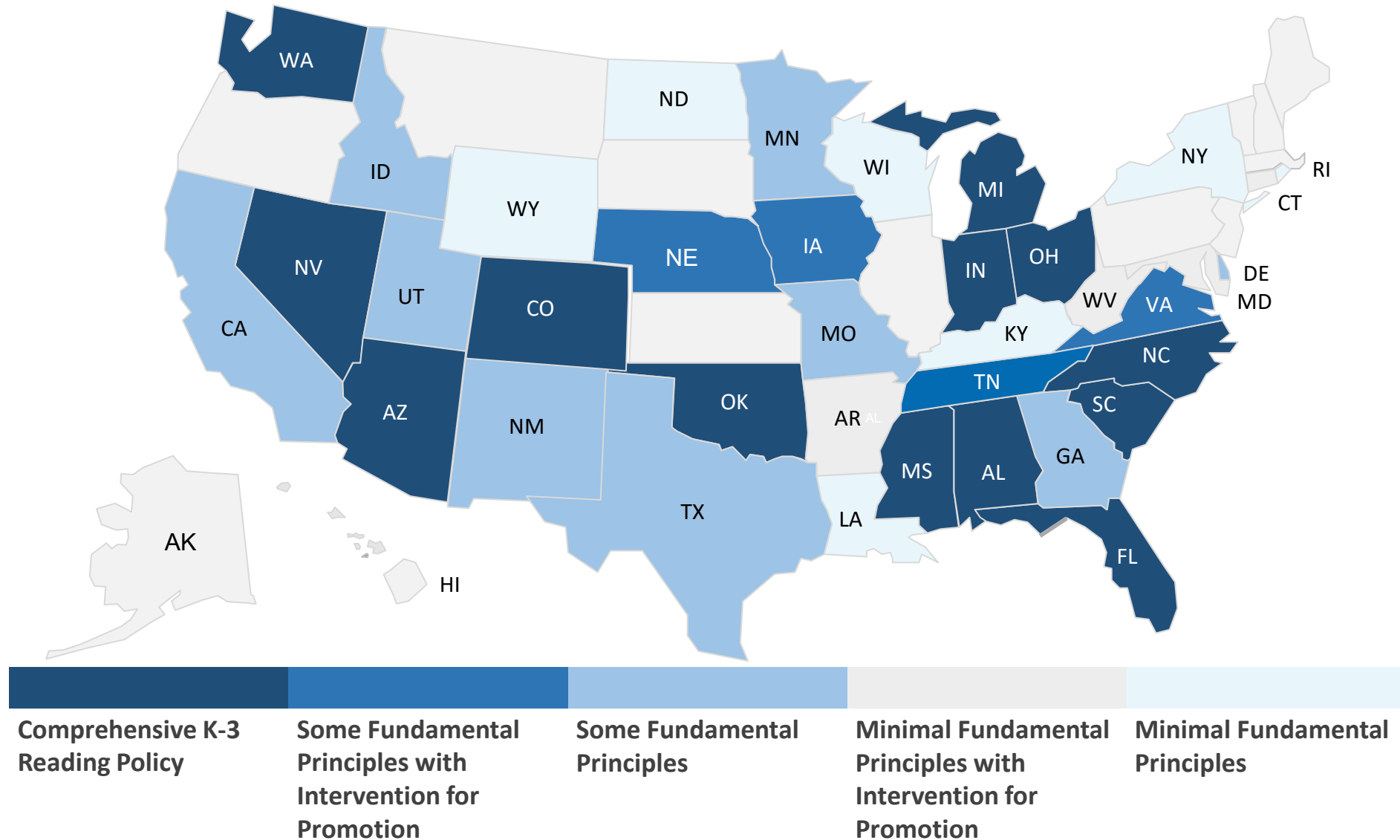
**Individual Reading Plan (2016)**

**Higher Expectations for 3rd Grade Reading Assessment (2018-19)**

**Early Childhood Education Coaches (2018-19)**

# K-3 Reading Policy by State

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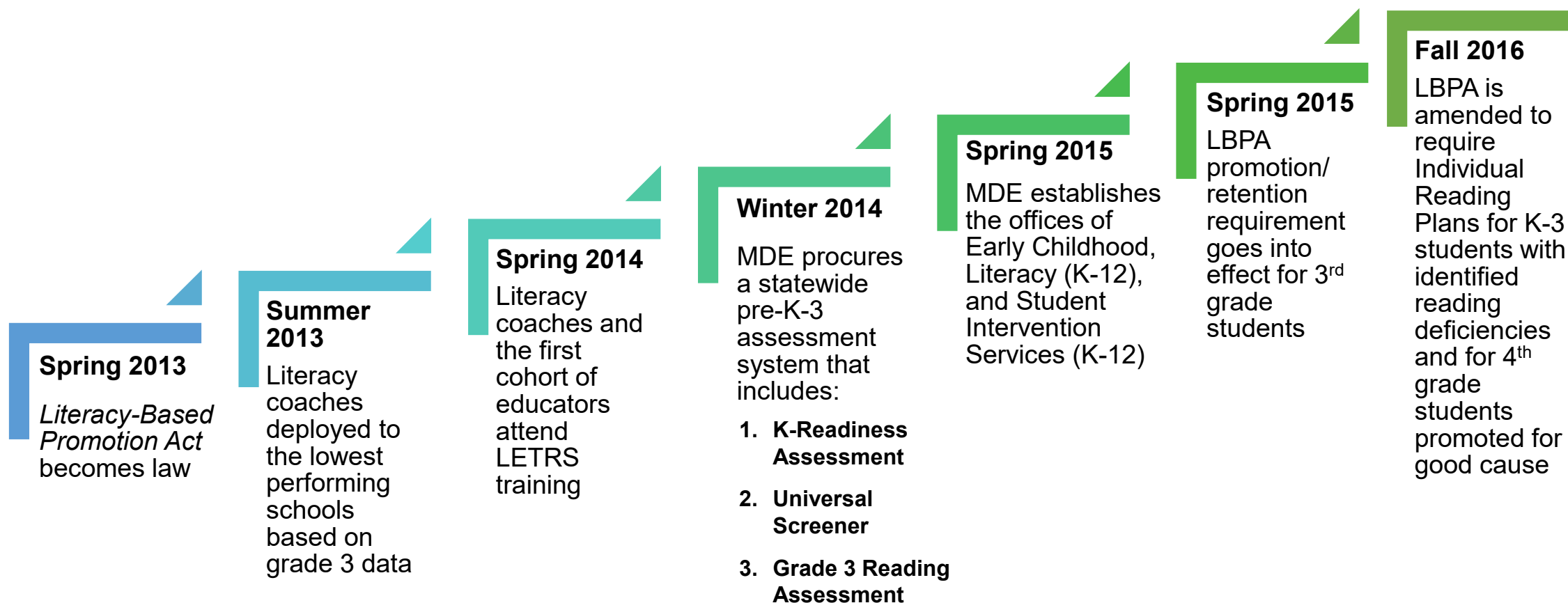




# LITERACY STRATEGIES & IMPLEMENTATION



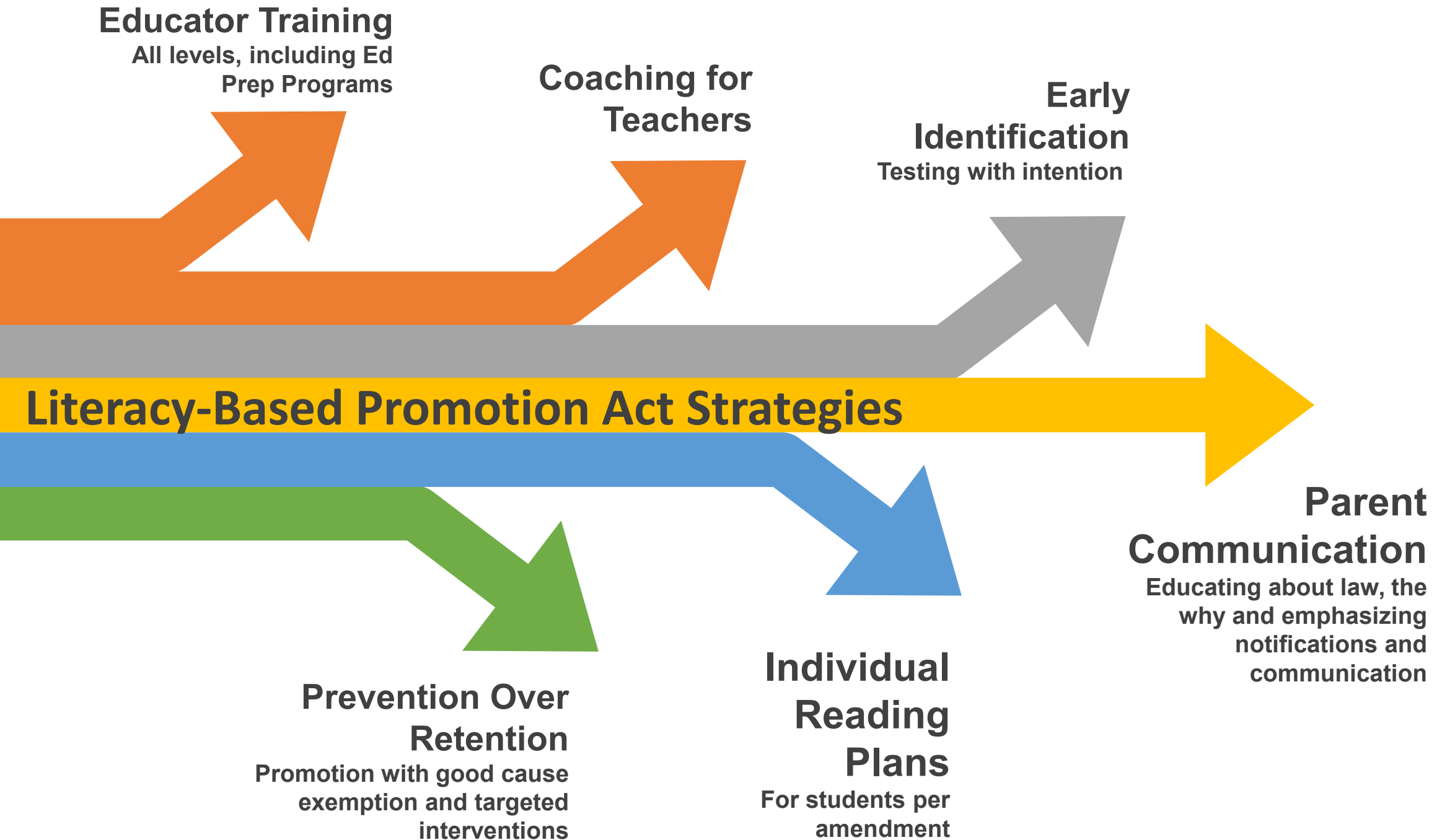
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**Ongoing supports:** Distribution of parent resources; opportunities for regional professional development on best practices in literacy instruction; and, communication to stakeholders through the Strong Readers = Strong Leaders public awareness campaign.



Program Component	Percentage
<b>Literacy Coaching Supports:</b> Educators-in-residence and contractual coaches providing support in target schools; coaches and literacy staff providing training across the state	61%
<b>Professional Development:</b> Statewide professional development for teachers and principals; literacy conferences for school coaches, interventionists, and principals	17%
<b>Materials:</b> Materials and resources for trainings and for coaches and teachers in literacy support schools; materials for statewide literacy conferences and communications	4%
<b>Mississippi K-3 Assessment Support System:</b> Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, K-3 universal screener, and 3rd Grade MAAP-ELA Retest	15%
<b>K-3 Literacy Supports Salaries:</b> Employed personnel to provide supports to schools and districts around supporting students who exhibits a substantial deficiency in reading, including but not limited to English Learners, students with dyslexia, etc.	3%



### Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS)

1. Challenges of Learning to Read
2. Speech Sounds of English – Phonetics, Phonology, and Phoneme Awareness
3. Spellography for Teachers
4. Building Vocabulary and Oral Language
5. Developing Fluency
6. Teaching Text Comprehension
7. Teaching Phonics, Word Study, and Alphabetic Principle
8. Teaching Beginning Spelling and Writing



More than 15,000 educators have completed LETRS training, including K-3 general education teachers, K-8 special education teachers, elementary principals, and Institutions of Higher Learning Reading faculty.

### Regional Educational Laboratory at Florida State University (REL Southeast)

REL Southeast found professional development provided by the Mississippi Department of Education to K-3 teachers improved teachers' knowledge and practice of early literacy instruction

News release

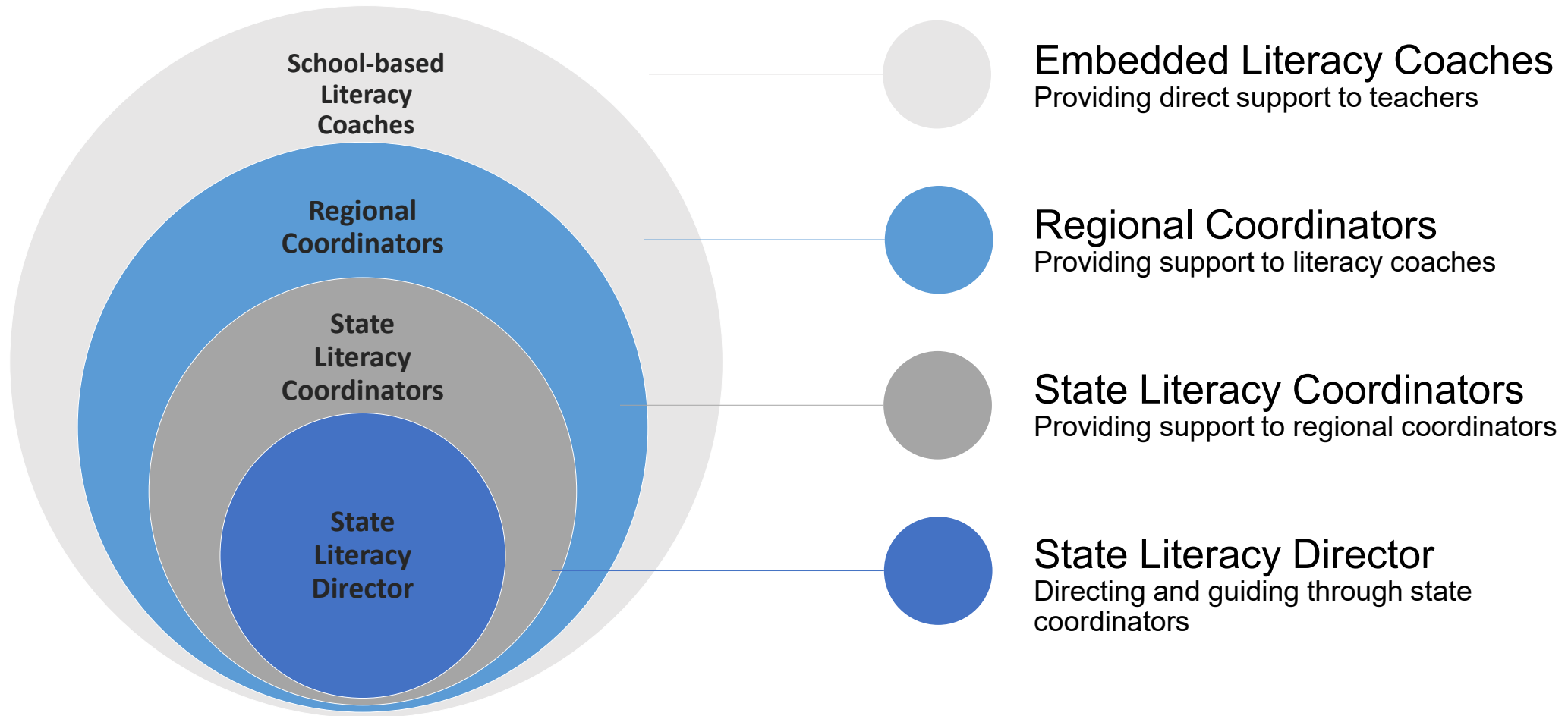
[mdek12.org/OCGR/mdeliteracy](https://mdek12.org/OCGR/mdeliteracy)

Research paper

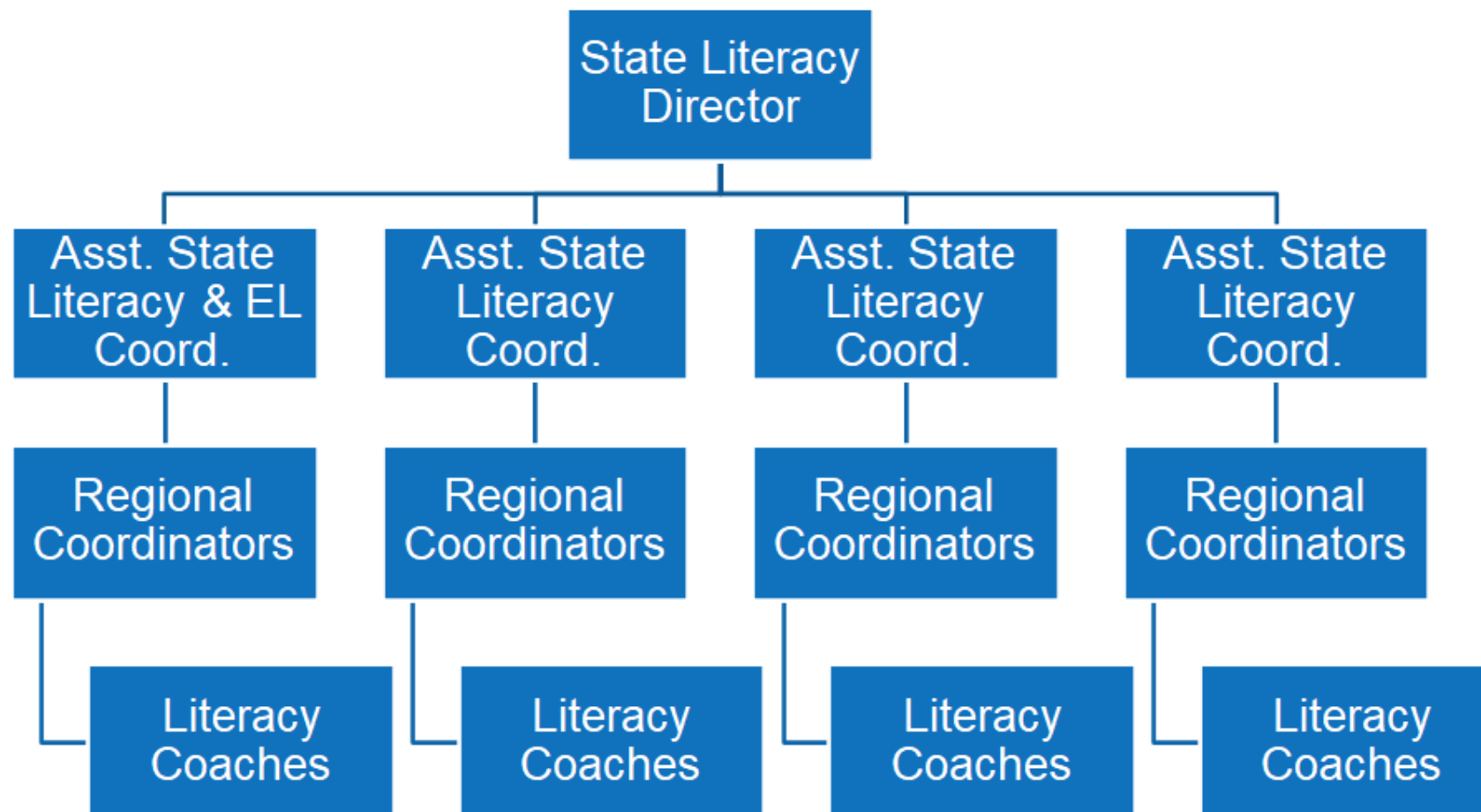
[bit.ly/MSLiteracyResearch](https://bit.ly/MSLiteracyResearch)



# Literacy Coach Support: Multi-Layered Strategy

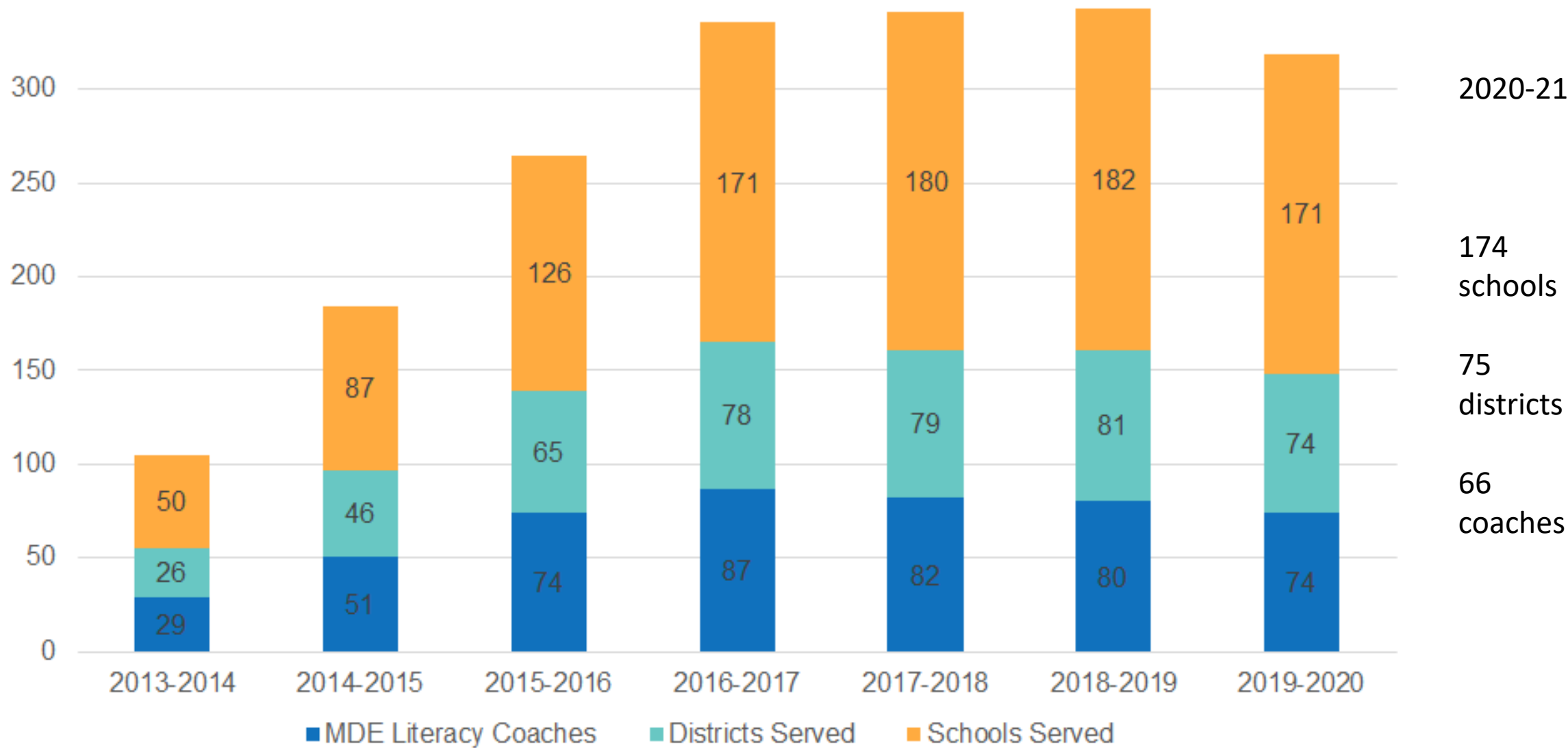


Coaching model replicated for **School Improvement, Special Education, and Early Childhood Education.**  
**Math coaches** coming in 2021-22.

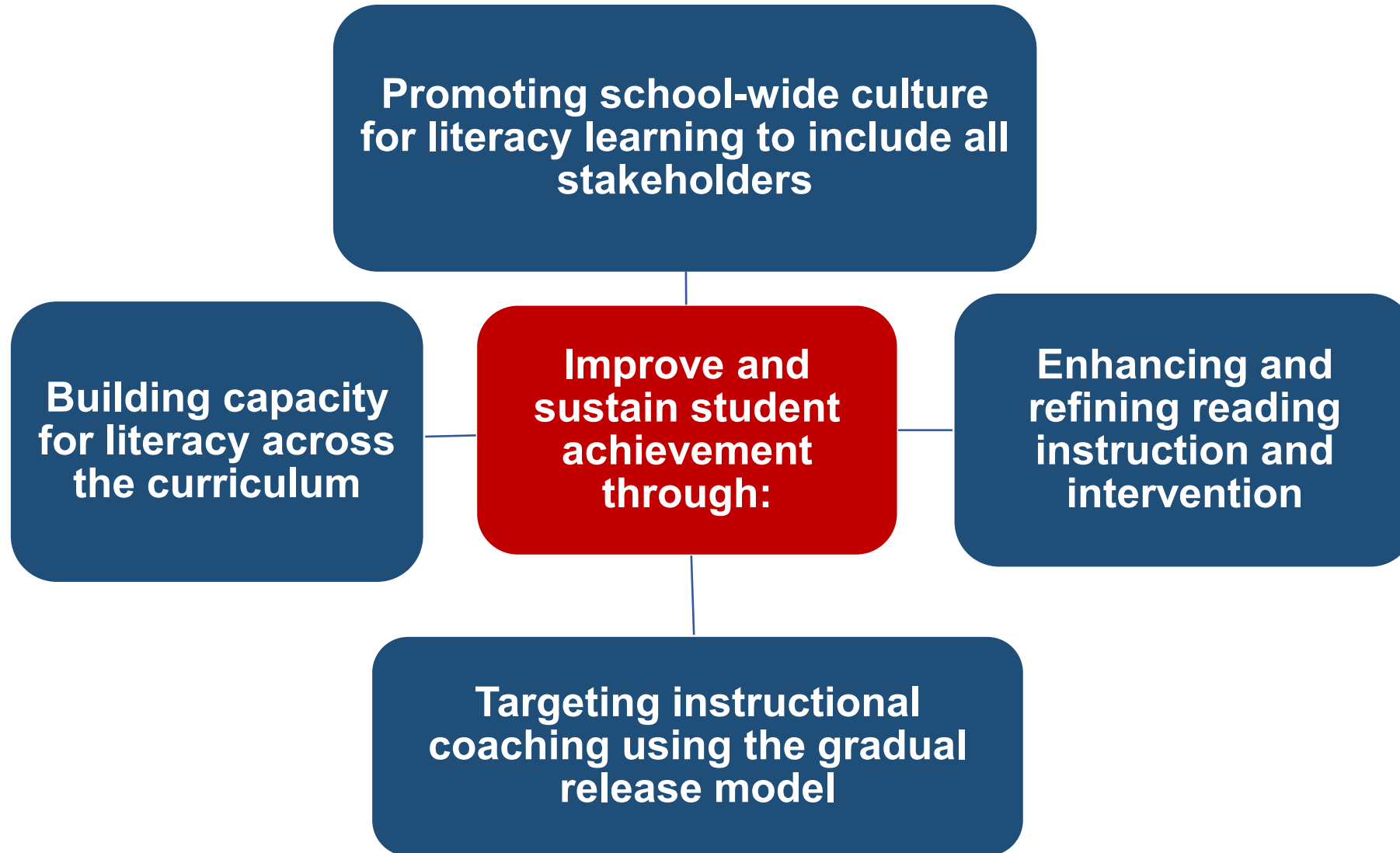


### Educator in Residence (EIR) Model

- This model is designed to build reciprocal capacity across educational entities.
- EIRs work with MDE program offices for a specified period of time.
- EIRs remain employed by their school district or other educational entities – Institution of Higher Learning, Community / Junior College, etc.
- A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is signed by all parties (MDE, school district, EIR), if in agreement to proceed.
- The school district/other entity serves as the fiscal agent.



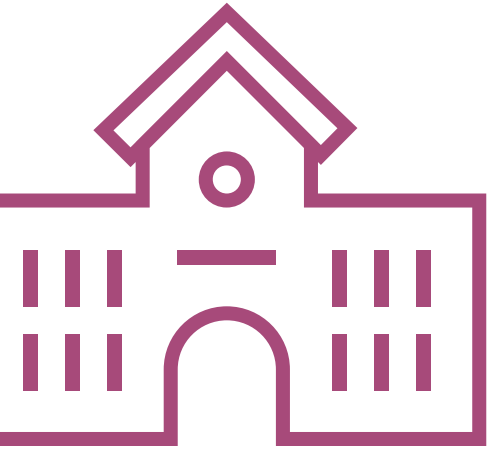






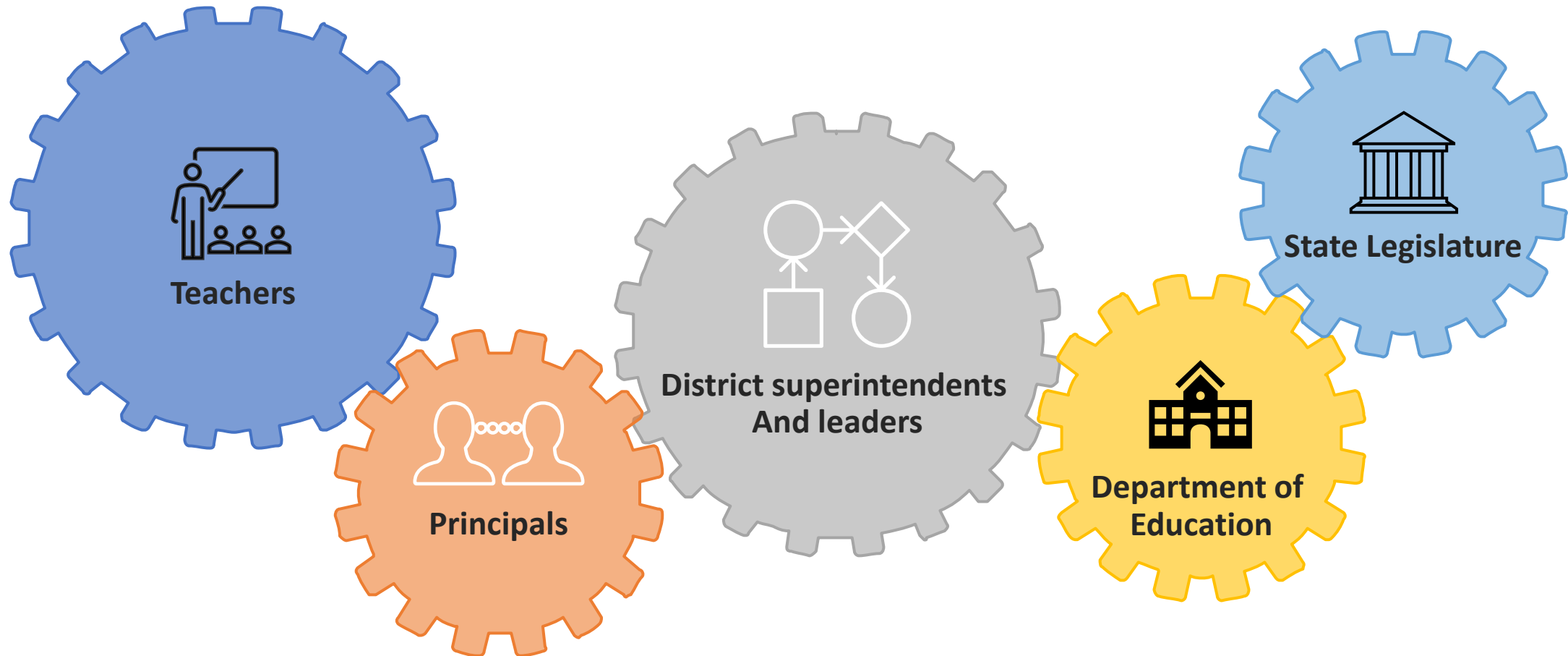
- LETRS training for K-3 teachers, administrators, and IHL professors
- Statewide parent/stakeholder meetings
- Regional literacy professional development
- Literacy coaching support (select schools)
- Literacy resources for educators and parents
- Data coaching support (select schools)

### Strengthening Education Preparation Programs



- Requiring professional learning and testing for Educator Preparation Program (EPP) faculty teaching Early Literacy I and II
- Redesign the 15-hour sequence for Reading
- Requiring additional clinical experiences for candidates
- Requiring all programs embed culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy to support [Mississippi's Equity Plan](#)

# Interconnected system from policy to practice



A woman with dark hair and glasses, wearing a black shirt and a blue lanyard, is sitting at a desk. She is smiling and gesturing with both hands raised, palms facing forward. In front of her is a laptop. The background shows a classroom or office setting with various items on shelves and a large letter 'B' on the wall.

# **RESOURCES FOR SCHOOLS & FAMILIES**

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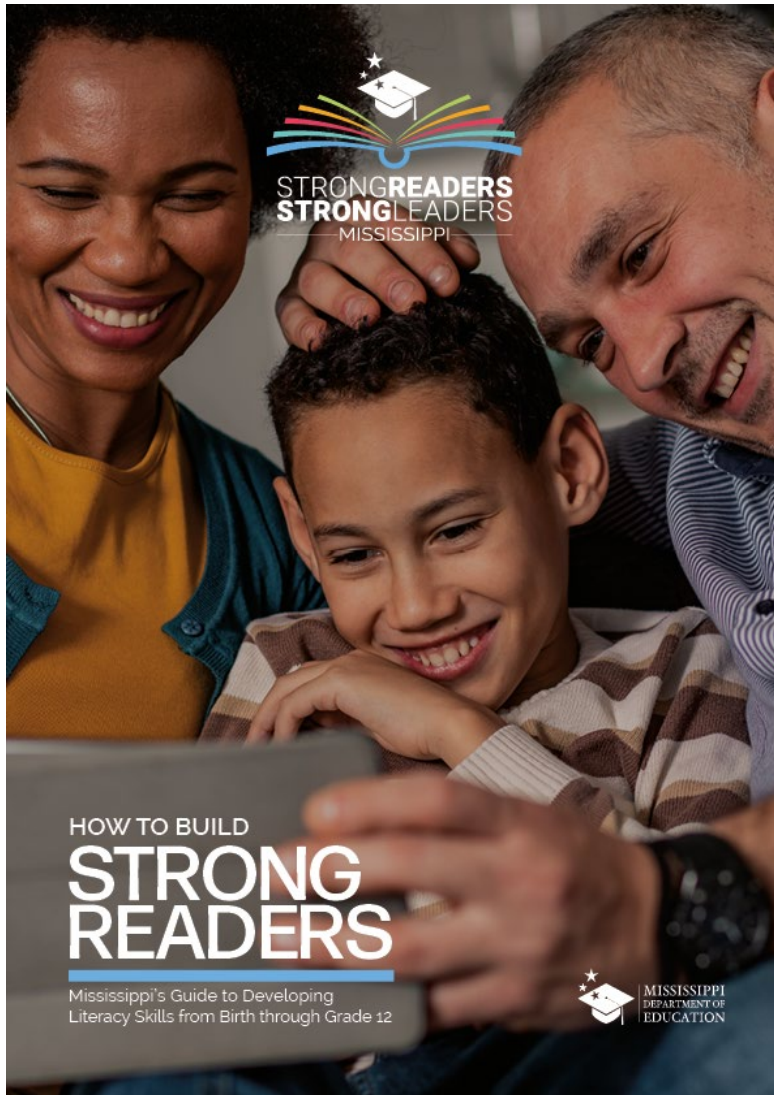
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## High-Quality Instructional Materials Website

MDE partnered with Mississippi First to launch a new website for Mississippi teachers to increase their access to high-quality instructional materials. The site, [msinstructionalmaterials.org](https://msinstructionalmaterials.org), provides a central location for math and social studies teachers to review high-quality, standards-aligned materials that have been evaluated and adopted by other Mississippi teachers and school districts. English Language Arts (ELA) materials will be added to the site in 2021.



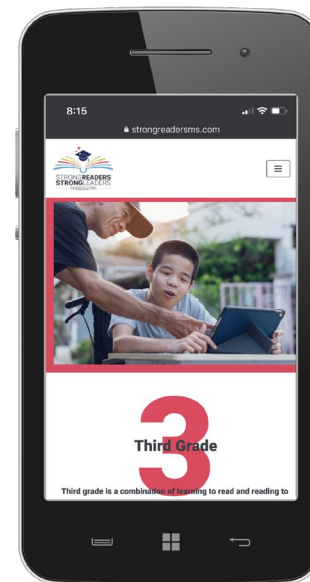


## How to Build Strong Readers

### Mississippi's Guide to Developing Literacy Skills from Birth-Grade 12

- Provides clear vision and comprehensive guide for educators to implement effective, evidence-based literacy instruction throughout the state
- Promotes strong language and literacy acquisition and supports literacy reform efforts across the educational continuum in districts, schools, and communities
- Effective implementation of state plan will ensure literacy instruction for birth through grade 12 will be of uniformly high quality and sufficient quantity to make a measurable difference in literacy achievement statewide

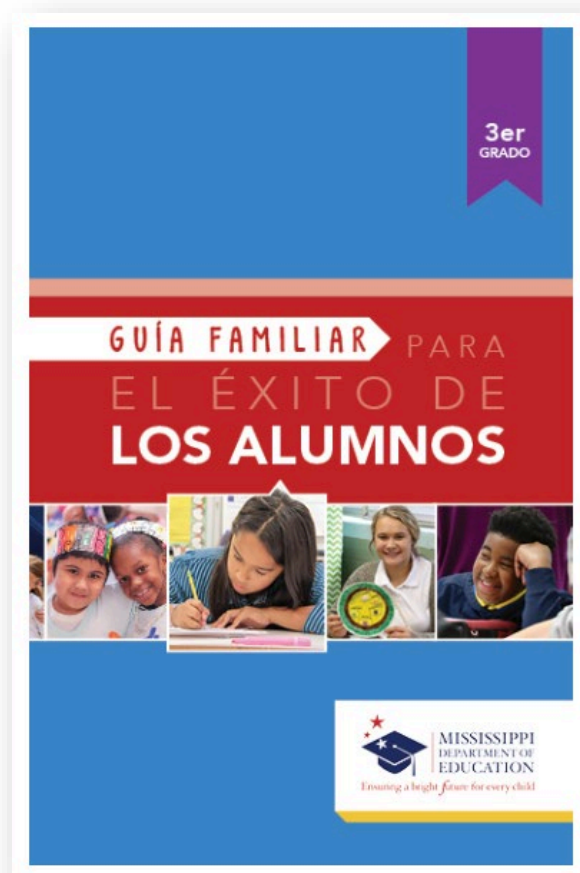
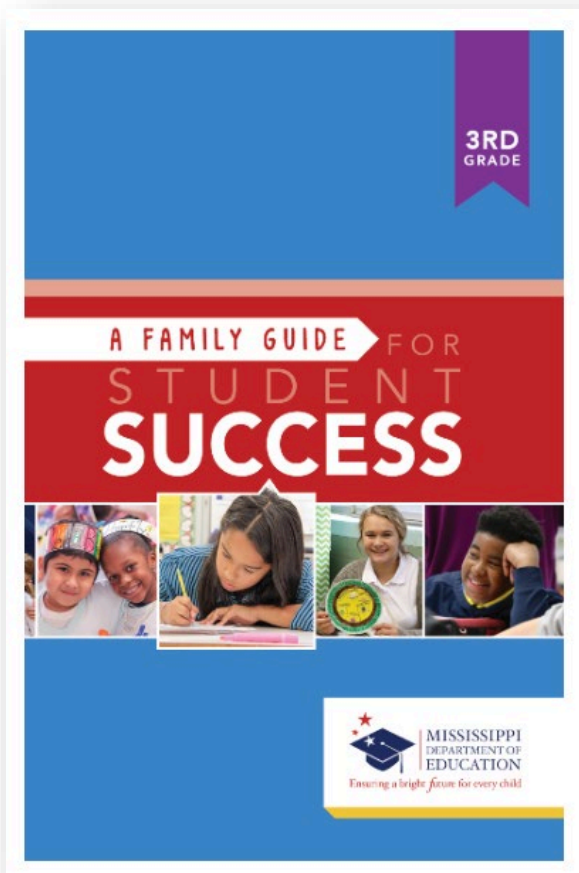
*Updated state plan to be released August 2021*



## Strong Readers Strong Leaders Mississippi

Strongreadersms.com website developed to help families assist children with building their reading skills. The site provides activities, resources and information for children from birth through grade 5 to become strong readers.





## Family Guide for Student Success

Guides outline what children should learn at each grade level from pre-kindergarten through eighth grade.

[mdek12.org/OAE/OEER/FamilyGuidesEnglish](http://mdek12.org/OAE/OEER/FamilyGuidesEnglish)



# STUDENT OUTCOMES

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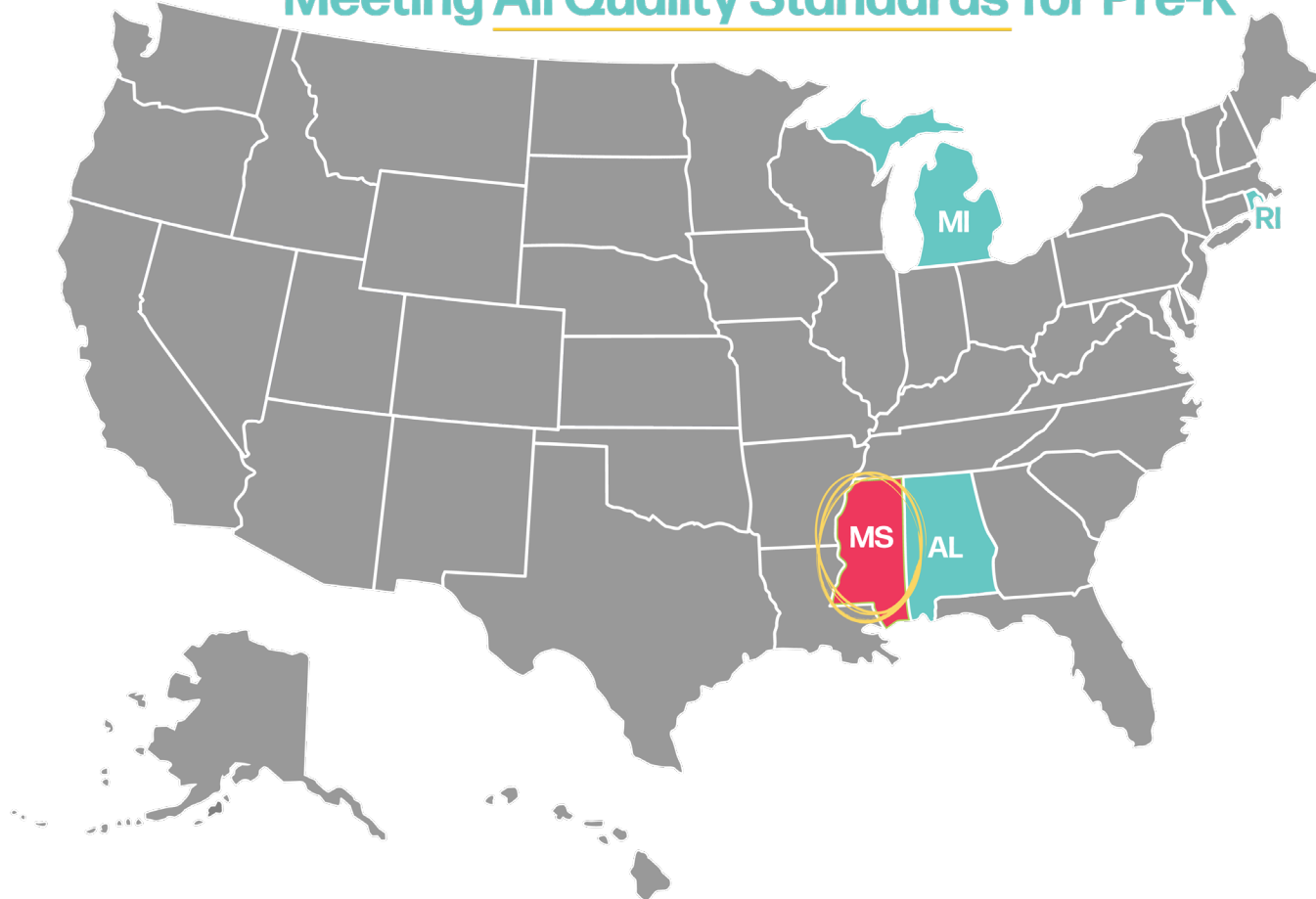
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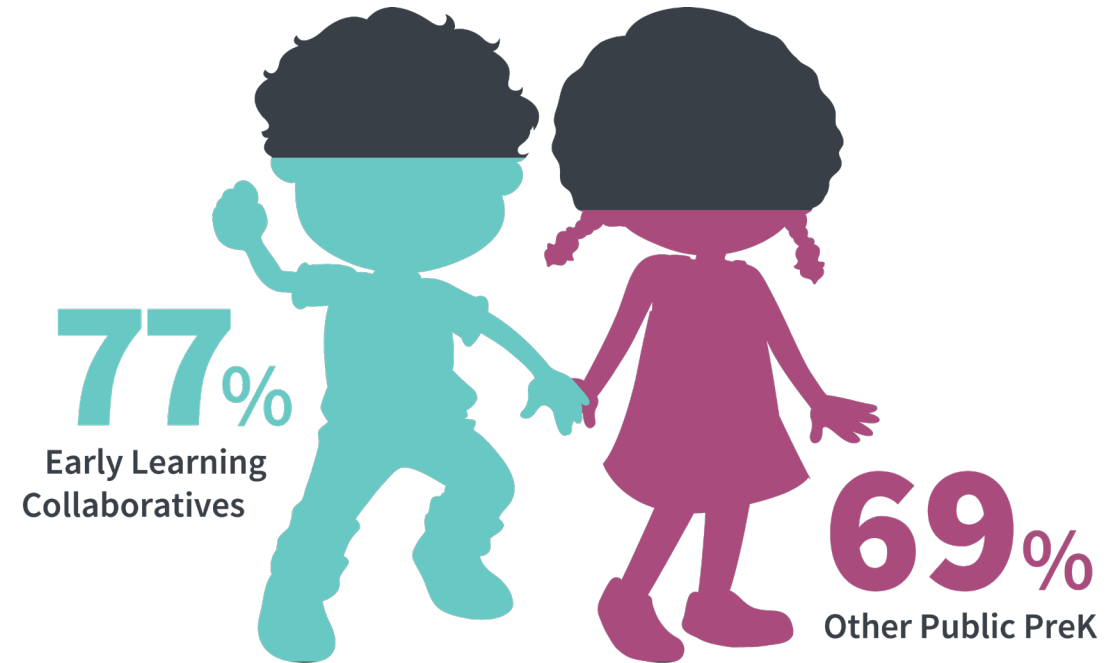
### National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) Names Mississippi One of Only Four States Meeting All Quality Standards for Pre-K

- Mississippi's Early Learning Collaboratives meet all 10 of NIEER's new quality standards in 2020.
- NIEER tracks state-funded preschool access, resources and quality.
- Since the launch of the Early Learning Collaboratives, Mississippi annually ranks one of only several states that meet all of NIEER's original standards.

**ONE** of Only **FOUR** States  
Meeting All Quality Standards for Pre-K

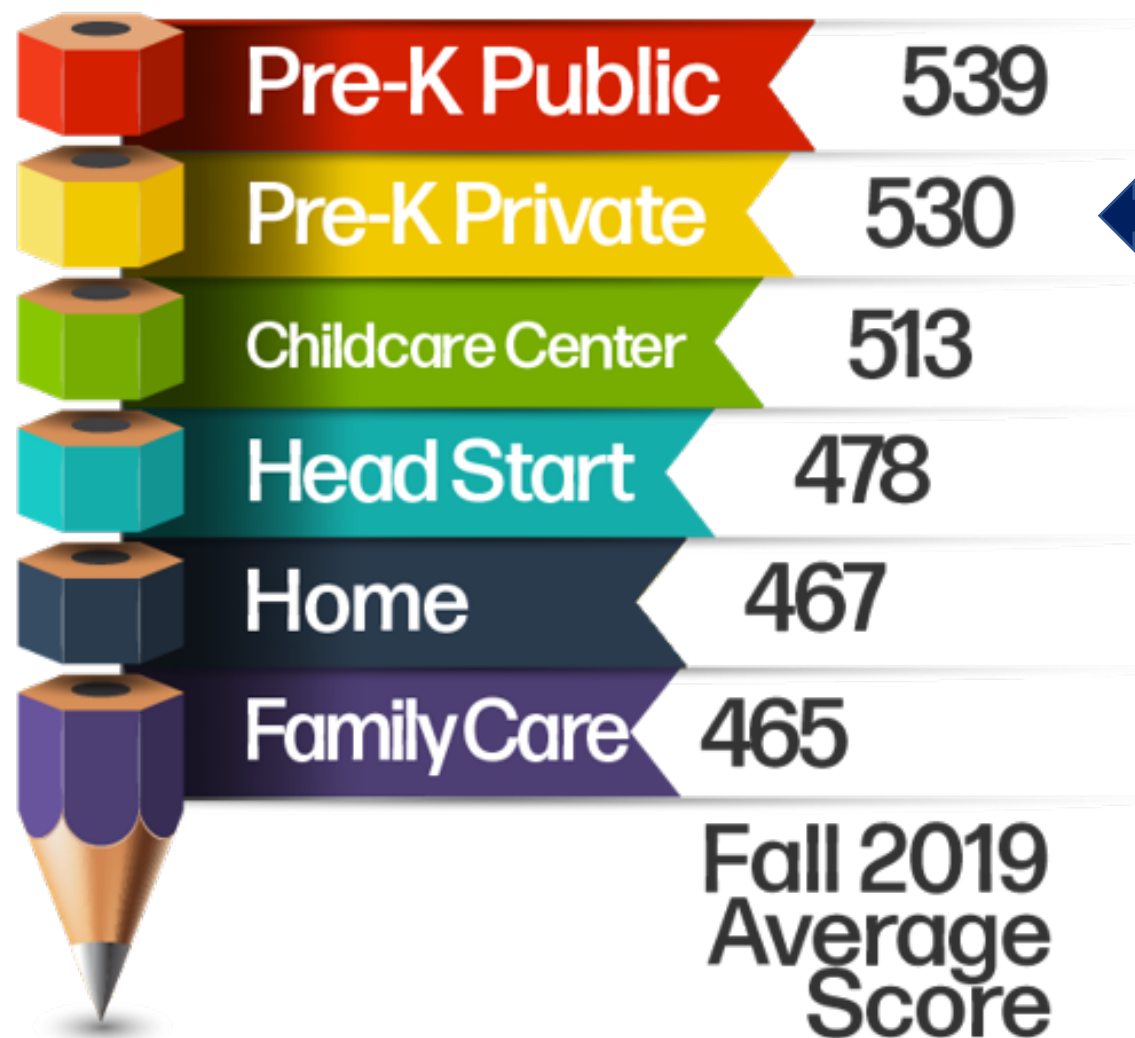


- 77% of Early Learning Collaborative (ELC) students met target kindergarten-readiness score in 2019, an increase from 59% in 2015
- ELC students show higher rates of kindergarten readiness (77%) than students in other public pre-K classes (69%)



**STUDENTS MEETING**  
Kindergarten-Readiness Score in 2019

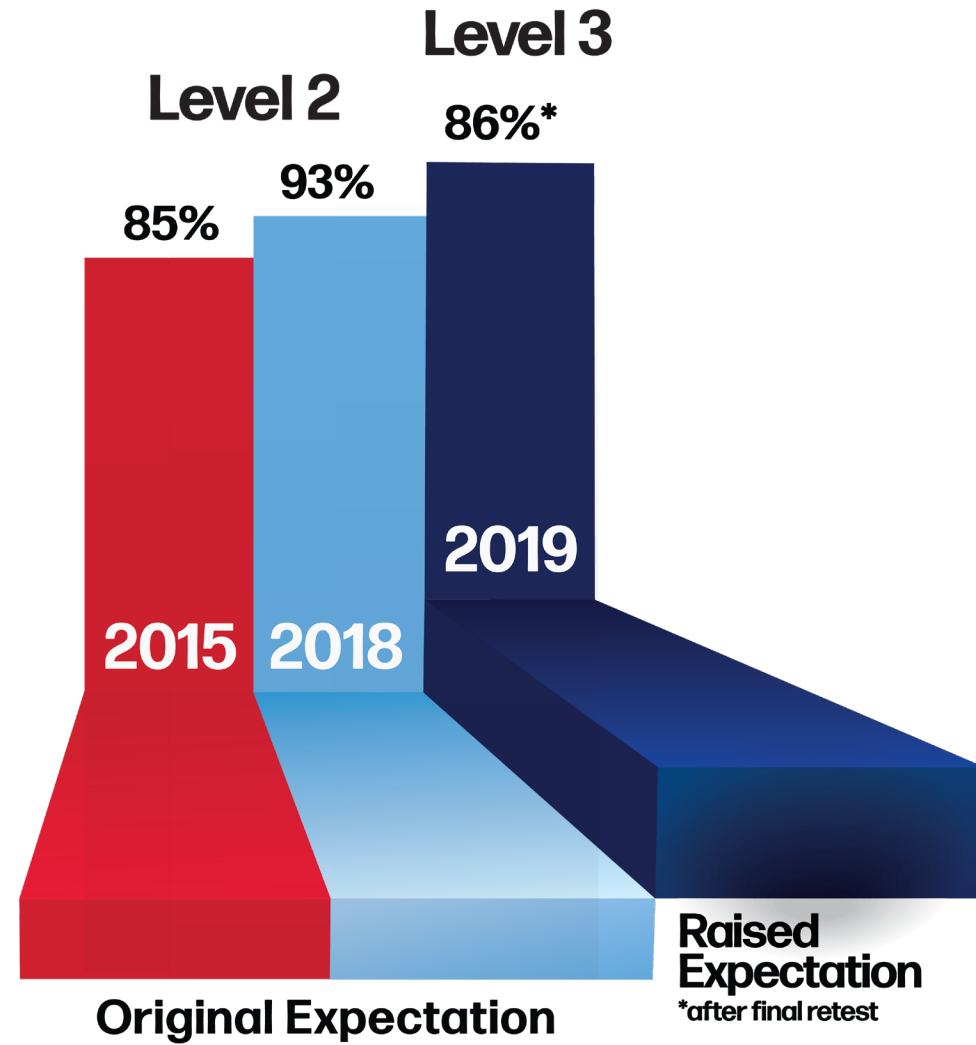
## Pre-K Impact on Kindergarten Readiness



← Kindergarten-ready score

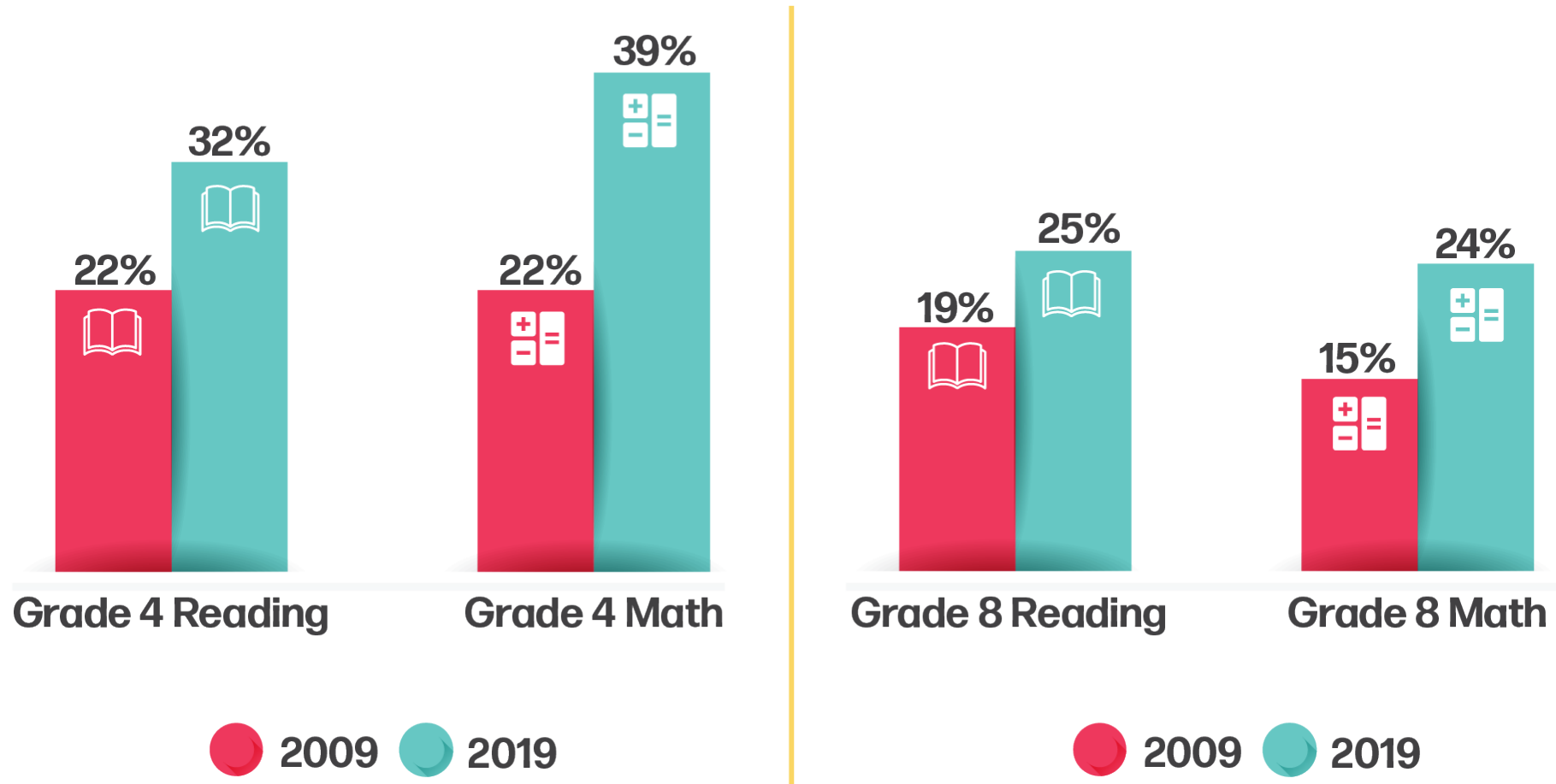
Fall 2019  
Average  
Score

# 3rd Grade Reading Achievement



# National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

## Mississippi Students Scoring Proficient or Above



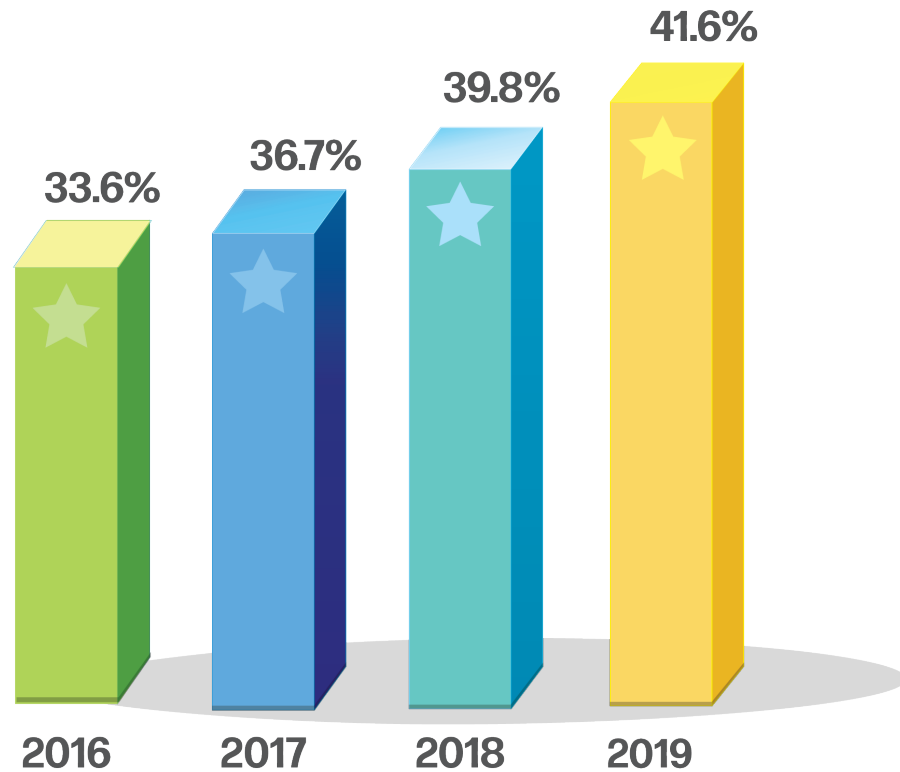
# Mississippi National Rankings

## NAEP Gains

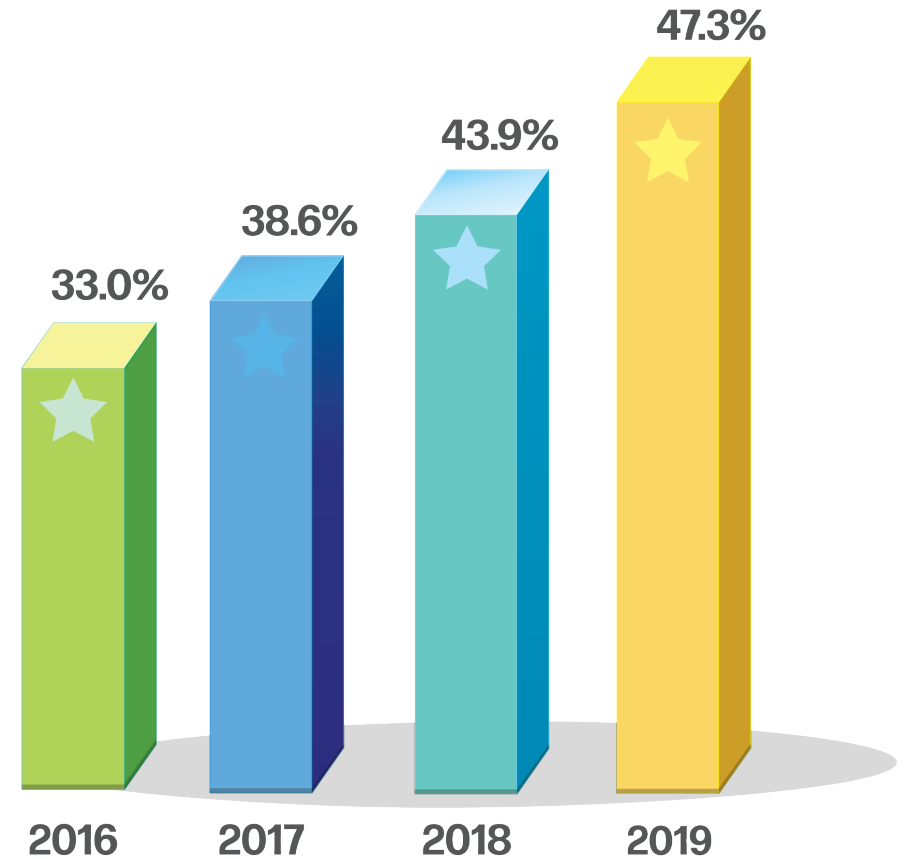




# Mississippi Academic Assessment Program (MAAP) <sup>45</sup>

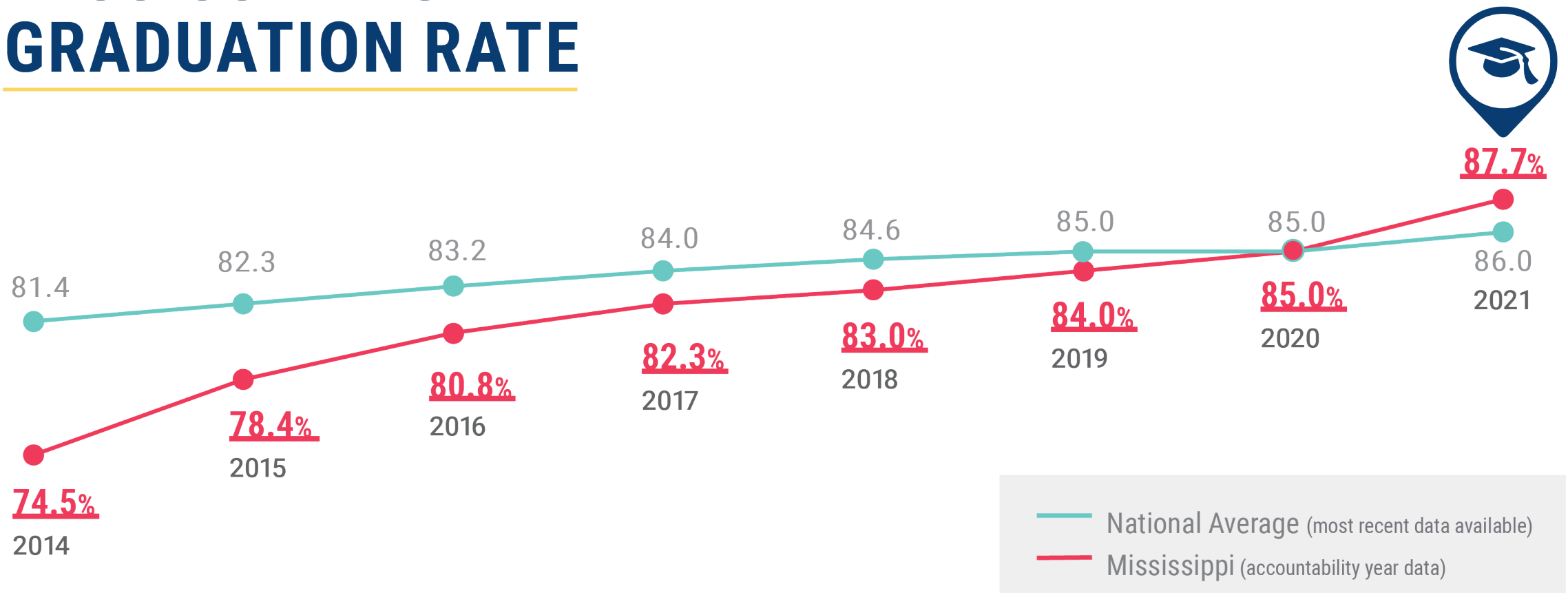


English Language Arts (ELA)  
Levels 4 & 5

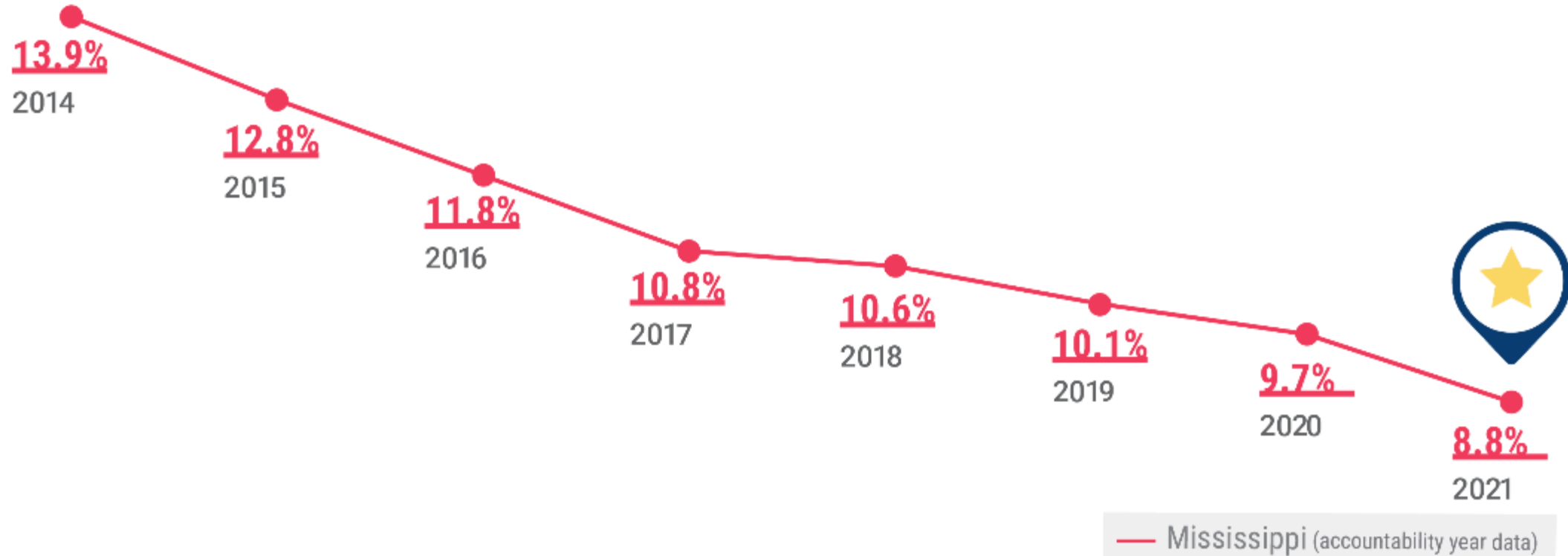


Mathematics  
Levels 4 & 5

# MISSISSIPPI'S GRADUATION RATE



# MISSISSIPPI'S DECLINING DROPOUT RATE



# 2020 QUALITY COUNTS

## Mississippi 2nd Most Improved State

- Earned national recognition for progress in education for the **3<sup>rd</sup> consecutive year**
- **No. 2 state** or jurisdiction with the **greatest improvement**
- C grade in chance-for-success index
- C- overall grade, just shy of the nation's grade of C
- Key advances in 4th grade reading and 8th grade math drove Mississippi's improvement

STATE	SCORE / GRADE	CHANGE 2018-2019
District of Columbia	77.8 <b>C+</b>	2.8 ↑
Mississippi	70.5 <b>C-</b>	2.1 ↑
Louisiana	69.9 <b>C-</b>	2.0 ↑
Nevada	68.6 <b>D+</b>	1.7 ↑
South Dakota	74.2 <b>C</b>	1.6 ↑

Source: EdWeek Research Center, 2020  
Category: Overall Most Improved States



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