

Assessing Literacy Instruction in Massachusetts Education Preparation Programs and K–3 Classrooms

ED# 2019-R1-I-0003



High-Leverage Problem

The Massachusetts 2019 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Grade 4 reading results showed that nearly one quarter of students scored below basic. Only 45% of students scored proficient or higher on the reading assessment. Moreover, the 2019 scores represent a decline in the percentages of students reading at basic, proficient, or higher levels. Coupled with demonstrable and consistent gaps in academic achievement for students from low-income households, students of color, and other historically disadvantaged student groups, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is prioritizing improving early literacy proficiency as the foundational element for success later in education.

DESE believes current literacy instructional practices are not well-aligned with evidence-based practices and that the lack of alignment may be contributing to the current decline in reading rates and persistent literacy achievement gaps.



R1CC Approach

This project supported DESE by assessing the state's current K–3 literacy instruction, both in educator preparation programs (EPPs) and in-school practices. For EPPs, R1CC led a review of 64 early childhood and elementary certification pathways course syllabi from nine EPPs. The syllabi were reviewed using two of the Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability and Reform (CEEDAR) Center's Innovation Configurations rubrics. The rubrics assess the degree to which Massachusetts EPPs for individuals pursuing certification in early childhood (Grades PreK–2) or elementary (Grades 1–5) taught evidence-based K–3 literacy instruction strategies

To understand the degree to which K–3 literacy educators implemented evidence-based strategies, R1CC designed and analyzed a survey that garnered 479 responses from educators. The survey will help inform the technical assistance and professional development support DESE will provide to LEAs to increase their use of evidence-based literacy strategies.

Key Partner(s): Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and CEEDAR Center

● — ⊙ — ⊙ → Key Milestones

- Recruited EPPs to participate in the program review.
- Requested and deidentified EPP course syllabi.
- Calibrated syllabi reviewers on a customized CEEDAR Center course syllabi protocol.
- Reviewed 64 course syllabi.
- Developed a memo summarizing EPP course syllabi review findings.
- Developed customized EPP reports summarizing findings from the program review.
- Developed and administered a survey of K–3 reading/literacy teachers, coaches, and specialists at districts and schools.
- Analyzed 479 survey responses and developed a report-out summarizing results.

The contents of this one-pager were developed under a grant from the Department of Education. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

? → Outputs

- EPP recruitment materials, including a recorded webinar and communication collateral that provides a project overview
- EPP course syllabi review protocol, based on the CEEDAR Center’s Innovation Configuration process
- Memo to DESE summarizing EPP course offerings focusing on evidence-based strategies
- A survey of K–3 literacy instructional practices completed by general education instructors, special education instructors, English as a second language instructors, reading/literacy specialists, and reading/literacy coaches.
- Memo on the survey findings covering the state of literacy instruction in K–3 classrooms across the state
- Published blog, *Assessing Educator Preparedness in Massachusetts to Effectively Teach Early Literacy Instruction*
- Published report, *Early Literacy in Massachusetts: Part 1*

Outcomes

“I’m really happy with the way that [the project] went and I think the R1CC has been incredibly helpful. They come to us with suggestions. ... They come to us and ask, ‘How can we help you?’ That’s rare, and we really appreciated it.”