

Adopted: 6/18/2026

Revised:

**ROCHESTER BEACON ACADEMY
POLICY No. 621
LITERACY AND THE READ ACT**

[NOTE: By the 2026-2027 school year, the charter school must provide evidence-based reading instruction through a focus on student mastery of the foundational reading skills of phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency, as well as the development of oral language, vocabulary, and reading comprehension skills. Students must receive evidence-based instruction that is proven to effectively teach children to read, consistent with Minnesota Statutes, sections 120B.118 to 120B.124.]

I. PURPOSE

This policy aligns with Minnesota law established in the Read Act and on other topics related to reading.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

Rochester Beacon Academy (RBA) recognizes the centrality of reading in a student's educational experience.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. "Evidence-based" means the instruction or item described is based on reliable, trustworthy, and valid evidence and has demonstrated a record of success in increasing students' reading competency in the areas of phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, and reading comprehension. Evidence-based literacy instruction is explicit, systematic, and includes phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics and decoding, spelling, fluency, vocabulary, oral language, and comprehension that can be differentiated to meet the needs of individual students. Evidence-based instruction does not include the three-cueing system.
- B. "Fluency" means the ability of students to read text accurately, automatically, and with proper expression.
- C. "Foundational reading skills" includes phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics and decoding, and fluency. Foundational reading skills appropriate to each grade level must be mastered in kindergarten, grade 1, grade 2, and grade 3. Struggling readers in grades 4 and above who do not demonstrate mastery of grade-level foundational reading skills must continue to receive explicit, systematic instruction to reach mastery.
- D. "Literacy specialist" means a person licensed by the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board as a teacher of reading, a special education teacher, or a kindergarten through grade 6 teacher, who has completed professional development approved by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) in structured literacy. A literacy specialist employed by the department under Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.123, subdivision 7, or by a charter school as a literacy lead, is not required to complete the approved training before August 30, 2025.
- E. "Literacy lead" means a literacy specialist with expertise in working with educators as adult learners. A charter school literacy lead must support the charter school's

implementation of the Read Act; provide support to school-based coaches; support the implementation of structured literacy, interventions, curriculum delivery, and teacher training; assist with the development of personal learning plans; and train paraprofessionals and other support staff to support classroom literacy instruction. A literacy lead may be employed by one charter school, jointly by two or more charter schools, or may provide services to charter schools through a partnership with the regional service cooperatives or another charter school.

- F. "Multitiered system of support" or "MTSS" means a systemic, continuous improvement framework for ensuring positive social, emotional, behavioral, developmental, and academic outcomes for every student. The MTSS framework provides access to layered tiers of culturally and linguistically responsive, evidence-based practices and relies on the understanding and belief that every student can learn and thrive. Through an MTSS at the core (Tier 1), supplemental (Tier 2), and intensive (Tier 3) levels, educators provide high quality, evidence-based instruction and intervention that is matched to a student's needs; progress is monitored to inform instruction and set goals and data is used for educational decision making.
- G. "Oral language," also called "expressive language" or "receptive language" includes speaking and listening, and consists of five components: phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics.
- H. "Phonemic awareness" means the ability to notice, think about, and manipulate individual sounds in spoken syllables and words.
- I. "Phonics instruction" means the explicit, systematic, and direct instruction of the relationships between letters and the sounds they represent and the application of this knowledge in reading and spelling.
- J. "Progress monitoring" means using data collected to inform whether interventions are working. Progress monitoring involves ongoing monitoring of progress that quantifies rates of improvement and informs instructional practice and the development of individualized programs using state-approved screening that is reliable and valid for the intended purpose.
- K. "Reading comprehension" means a function of word recognition skills and language comprehension skills. It is an active process that requires intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through interactions between the text and reader. Comprehension skills are taught explicitly by demonstrating, explaining, modeling, and implementing specific cognitive strategies to help beginning readers derive meaning through intentional, problem-solving thinking processes.
- L. "Structured literacy" means an approach to reading instruction in which teachers carefully structure important literacy skills, concepts, and the sequence of instruction to facilitate children's literacy learning and progress. Structured literacy is characterized by the provision of systematic, explicit, sequential, and diagnostic instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and oral language development, and reading comprehension. This approach is consistent with the principles identified in the science of reading and is designed to ensure all students develop strong foundational literacy skills.
- M. "Three-cueing system," also known as "meaning structure visual (MSV)," means a method that teaches students to use meaning, structure and syntax, and visual cues when attempting to read an unknown word.
- N. "Vocabulary development" means the process of acquiring new words. A robust vocabulary improves all areas of communication, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Vocabulary growth is directly related to school achievement and is a strong predictor for reading success.

IV. IDENTIFICATION AND REPORT

- A. Students in grades 4 and above, including multilingual learners and students receiving special education services, who are not reading at grade level, must be screened for reading difficulties, including characteristics of dyslexia, using a screening tool approved by MDE and must continue to receive evidence-based instruction, interventions, and progress monitoring until the students achieve grade-level proficiency. A parent, in consultation with a teacher, may opt a student out of the literacy screener if the parent and teacher decide that continuing to screen would not be beneficial to the student. In such limited cases, the student must continue to receive progress monitoring and literacy interventions.
- B. Reading screeners in English, and in the predominant languages of RBA students where practicable, must identify and evaluate students' areas of academic need related to literacy. RBA also must monitor the progress and provide reading instruction appropriate to the specific needs of multilingual learners. RBA must use an approved, developmentally appropriate, and culturally responsive screener and annually report summary screener results to the MDE Commissioner ("Commissioner") by June 15 in the form and manner determined by the Commissioner.
- C. RBA must include in its local literacy plan a summary of the school's efforts to screen, identify, and provide interventions to students who demonstrate characteristics of dyslexia as measured by a screening tool approved by MDE. With respect to students screened or identified under Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.12, subdivision 2, paragraph (a), the report must include:
 - 1. a summary of RBA's efforts to screen for characteristics of reading difficulties, including dyslexia;
 - 2. the number of students universally screened for that reporting year;
 - 3. the number of students demonstrating characteristics of dyslexia for that year; and
 - 4. an explanation of how students identified under this subdivision are provided with alternate instruction and interventions under Minnesota Statutes, section 125A.56, subdivision 1.

V. INTERVENTION

- A. For each student identified under the screening identification process, RBA shall provide aligned and targeted reading intervention to accelerate student growth and reach the goal of reading at or above grade level by the end of the current grade and school year.
- B. RBA must implement progress monitoring, as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.119, for a student not reading at grade level.
- C. RBA must use evidence-based curriculum and intervention materials at each grade level that are designed to ensure student mastery of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, and reading comprehension. If RBA purchases new literacy curriculum, or literacy intervention or supplementary materials, the curriculum or materials must be evidence-based as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.119.

[NOTE: Starting in the 2026-2027 school year, a charter school must use only evidence-based literary interventions. The 2025 Minnesota legislature amended Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.12, subdivision 3, to delay the

2025-26 requirement for one school year.]

- D. If a student does not read at or above grade level by the end of the current school year, RBA must continue to provide aligned and targeted reading intervention as defined by the MTSS framework until the student reads at grade level. RBA intervention methods shall encourage family engagement and, where possible, collaboration with appropriate school and community programs that specialize in evidence-based instructional practices and measure mastery of foundational reading skills, including phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding, fluency, and oral language.
- E. By the 2025-2026 school year, intervention programs must be taught by an intervention teacher or special education teacher who has successfully completed training in evidence-based reading instruction approved by MDE. Intervention may include but is not limited to requiring student attendance in summer school, intensified reading instruction that may require that the student be removed from the regular classroom for part of the school day, extended-day programs, or programs that strengthen students' cultural connections.
- F. RBA must determine the format of the personal learning plan in collaboration with the student's educators and other appropriate professionals. The school must develop the learning plan in consultation with the student's parent or guardian. The personal learning plan must include targeted instruction that is evidence-based and ongoing progress monitoring, and address knowledge gaps and skill deficiencies through strategies such as specific exercises and practices during and outside of the regular school day, group interventions, periodic assessments or screeners, and reasonable timelines. The personal learning plan may include grade retention, if it is in the student's best interest; a student may not be retained solely due to delays in literacy or not demonstrating grade-level proficiency. A school must maintain and regularly update and modify the personal learning plan until the student reads at grade level. This paragraph does not apply to a student under an individualized education program.

VI. LOCAL LITERACY PLAN

- A. RBA must adopt a local literacy plan to have every child reading at or above grade level every year beginning in kindergarten and to support multilingual learners and students receiving special education services in achieving their individualized reading goals. RBA must update and submit the plan to the Commissioner by June 15 each year. The plan must be consistent with the Read Act, and include the following:
 - 1. a process to assess students' foundational reading skills, oral language, and level of reading proficiency and the screeners used, by school site and grade level, under Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.123;
 - 2. a process to notify and involve parents;
 - 3. a description of how RBA will determine the targeted reading instruction that is evidence-based and includes an intervention strategy for a student and the process for intensifying or modifying the reading strategy in order to obtain measurable reading progress;
 - 4. evidence-based intervention methods for students who are not reading at or above grade level and progress monitoring to provide information on the effectiveness of the intervention;
 - 5. identification of staff development needs, including a plan to meet those needs;
 - 6. the curricula used by school site and grade level and, if applicable, the charter school plan and timeline for adopting evidence-based curricula and materials

- starting in the 2025-2026 school year;
- 7. a statement of whether RBA has adopted an MTSS framework;
- 8. student data using the measures of foundational literacy skills and mastery identified by MDE for the following students:
 - a. students who demonstrate characteristics of dyslexia; and
 - b. students in grades 4 to 12 who are identified as not reading at grade level.
- 9. the number of teachers and other staff that have completed training approved by the department.
- 10. the number of teachers and other staff proposed for training in structured literacy;
- 11. how RBA used funding provided under the Read Act to implement the requirements of the Read Act; and
- 12. beginning as soon as practicable after the end of fiscal year 2026, how RBA used literacy aid funding received under Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.98.
- B. Annually by June 15, RBA must post its literacy plan on the official charter school website and submit it to the Commissioner using the template developed by the Commissioner.
- C. RBA must use a streamlined template developed by the Commissioner for local literacy plans that meets the requirements of Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.12, subdivision 4a, and requires all reading instruction and teacher training in reading instruction to be evidence-based.

VII. STAFF TRAINING

- A. RBA must provide training from a menu of approved evidence-based training programs to the following teachers and staff by July 1, 2026:
 - 1. reading intervention teachers working with students in kindergarten through grade 12;
 - 2. all classroom teachers of students in kindergarten through grade 3 and children in prekindergarten programs;
 - 3. kindergarten through grade 12 special education teachers responsible for foundational reading instruction;
 - 4. curriculum directors;
 - 5. instructional support staff, contractors, and volunteers who assist in providing reading interventions under the oversight and monitoring of a trained licensed teacher;
 - 6. employees who select literacy instructional materials for a charter school; and
 - 7. teachers holding English as a second language teaching licenses.
- B. RBA must provide training from a menu of approved evidence-based training programs to the following teachers by July 1, 2027:

1. teachers who provide foundational reading instruction to students in grades 4 to 12;
2. teachers who provide instruction to students in a state-approved alternative program; and
3. teachers who provide instruction to students in dual language immersion programs.

The Commissioner may grant a charter school an extension to these deadlines.

- C. By August 30, 2025, RBA must employ or contract with a literacy lead or be actively supporting a designated literacy specialist through the process of becoming a literacy lead. The school board may satisfy the requirements of this subdivision by contracting with another school board or cooperative unit under Minnesota Statutes, section 123A.24 for the services of a literacy lead by August 30, 2025. The literacy lead must collaborate with RBA administrators and staff to support RBA's implementation of requirements under the Read Act.
- D. Training provided by the following may satisfy the professional development requirements under this Article:
 1. a certified trained facilitator; or
 2. a training program that MDE has determined meets the professional development requirements under the Read Act.

VIII. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

- A. RBA must provide training programs on evidence-based structured reading instruction to teachers and instructional staff in accordance with Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.12, subdivision 1, paragraphs (b) and (c). The training must include teaching in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, reading comprehension, and culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy.
- B. RBA shall use the data under Article V. above to identify the staff development needs so that:
 1. elementary teachers are able to implement explicit, systematic, evidence-based instruction in the five reading areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension with emphasis on mastery of foundational reading skills as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.119 and other literacy-related areas including writing until the student achieves grade-level reading and writing proficiency;
 2. elementary teachers have sufficient training to provide students with evidence-based reading and oral language instruction that meets students' developmental, linguistic, and literacy needs using the intervention methods or programs selected by the charter school for the identified students;
 3. licensed teachers employed by the charter school have regular opportunities to improve reading and writing instruction;
 4. licensed teachers recognize students' diverse needs in cross-cultural settings and are able to serve the oral language and linguistic needs of students who are multilingual learners by maximizing strengths in their native languages in order to cultivate students' English language development, including academic language development, and build academic literacy; and

5. licensed teachers are well trained in culturally responsive pedagogy that enables students to master content, develop skills to access content, and build relationships.

IX. LITERACY AID USES

RBA must use its literacy aid to meet the requirements and goals adopted in the school's local literacy plan.

Legal References: Minn. Stat. § 120B.119 (Read Act Definitions)
Minn. Stat. § 120B.12 (Read Act Goal and Interventions)
Minn. Stat. § 120B.123 (Read Act Implementation)
Minn. Stat. § 123A.24 (Withdrawing from a Cooperative Unit; Appealing Denial of Membership)
Minn. Stat. § 124D.68 (Graduation Incentives Program)
Minn. Stat. § 124D.98 (Literacy Incentive Aid)
Minn. Stat. § 125A.56 (Alternate Instruction Required before Assessment Referral)