

Kentucky Reading Academies

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is this initiative needed?

The impact of COVID-19 has been pronounced among early learners, for whom development of reading and writing skills is critical to success in all subjects and later grades. As research indicates, students who are not reading proficiently by the end of third grade are four times more likely to not finish high school.

K-PREP grade three reading data reveals that Kentucky has been losing ground in reading achievement since 2017, and as a result, there is an urgent need to address reading growth. Specifically, in 2019, approximately 50 percent of Kentucky's third graders did not score at or above proficiency in reading.

Additionally, results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reveal the downward trend in grade 4 reading results, leaving Kentucky ranked 23rd in the nation, based on 2018-2019 data. Most alarmingly, 33% of Kentucky students scored below basic on the 4th grade assessment in reading.

While teachers are the most essential factor in student success, only 49 percent of teaching institutions nationally effectively prepare teachers for literacy instruction. To counteract unfinished learning and improve the trajectory for student outcomes, KDE is offering professional learning reading academies for K-5 educators.

What is the research base for this initiative?

LETRS is an evidence-based training that provides professional learning grounded in reading research for educators. The reading research represents a body of comprehensive and multi-disciplinary evidence for how students learn to read and write proficiently, why some students struggle and how educators can teach and intervene, if necessary.

- This article from the [Institute for Multisensory Education](#) includes an overview of the research on reading and teaching approaches.
- Louisa Moats, the primary author of LETRS, updated her seminal paper "[Teaching Reading IS Rocket Science](#)" in 2020.
- The Association for Supervision and Curriculum (ASCD) [summarizes the research around reading](#) and what this means for teachers.

- The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) and the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Southeast [evaluated educator outcomes in Mississippi](#) with their implementation of an early literacy professional development initiative.

Are teachers required to participate?

Participation is not required by the KDE, but there are numerous benefits for participating. The Kentucky Reading Academies will help educators utilize evidence-based approaches to reading and writing instruction designed to improve reading and writing proficiency. Because reading and writing proficiently are building blocks to success in future grades and courses and in postsecondary pursuits, the Reading Academies will provide educators with the tools needed to help students be successful lifelong readers and writers. Thus, teachers are strongly encouraged to participate.

Will training sessions be live or virtual?

Participants will attend live virtual training sessions. Multiple sessions are offered with a variety of times. Participants can choose to participate in two separate three-hour sessions or one six hour session throughout the day, in the evening, or on Saturdays.

Why should teachers participate in the Kentucky Reading Academies?

Participating educators will be equipped with evidence-based professional learning on HOW students learn to read that can be used and applied in their classrooms throughout their careers.

What should participants expect?

Participants will spend time each week in asynchronous instruction, including videos and independent reading and will apply information from the week's lesson through an activity with their students and complete short checks for understanding. Participants should plan to spend approximately **an hour each week** on these activities. At the end of each unit, which will take 6-8 weeks to complete, educators will complete the unit assessment and **attend training with a facilitator to reinforce content from that unit.**

How can districts encourage participation and ensure their teachers' success in this professional learning series?

Districts may encourage groups of educators to participate together, allowing time in Professional Learning Communities to reflect on their learning. Districts also may choose to offer a stipend, or honorarium, to teachers who complete all requirements of the Reading Academies with federal relief funds (ESSER I, II and III). Title II, Part A, funds may be an option IF general funds are not available and IF the training meets an identified need

and is outside of the instructional day. District funds also may be used to further the initiative to additional grade levels. Interested educators should check with their district for specific information.

For information about federal coronavirus relief funding, please see the [American Rescue Act FAQs](#).

Questions?

For questions about the Kentucky Reading Academies, contact Christie Biggerstaff, Director of Early Literacy, at christie.biggerstaff@education.ky.gov.