

Midwestern Legislative Conference
Chair's Initiative Plenary Session

Literacy In Action

August 31, 2026

Presented By | Carey M. Wright, Ed.D., State Superintendent of Schools

Mississippi & Maryland Policies and Initiatives

Laying the Foundation for Success (MS and MD)

- **Organize state education department** around strategic goals
- Adopt **rigorous academic standards**
- **Build teacher and leader capacity** through professional learning to ensure students master higher standards
- Develop **assessments aligned to academic standards** and **National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)**
- Implement **strong accountability system** for schools and districts and improved data quality and transparency

2013 Mississippi Legislation

- **Early Learning Collaborative Act:** Establishes first state-funded pre-K program. Funding grew from **\$3M** in first year to **\$21.2M** in **FY27**.
- **Literacy-Based Promotion Act:** Makes reading instruction a major focus K-3. **\$9.5M** appropriated in FY14; **\$15M** annually thereafter.
- **A-F Accountability System:** Districts and schools earn annual A-F letter grades based on student performance and growth.

Key Components of Mississippi's Literacy Law

- **Trains educators statewide** to be more effective at teaching reading grounded in the science of reading
- **Deploys state literacy coaches** to lowest-performing schools to support teachers
- **Adds K-3 monitoring and assessment system**, with student screening and parental notification every nine weeks
- **Requires schools to engage parents/guardians** and communicate with them regularly

Legislation to Enhance Mississippi's Literacy Law

- **Teacher Certification (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 (Foundations of Reading Assessment)
- **Individual Reading Plan (2016):** Requires educators to create Individual Reading Plans for students to improve reading
- **Dyslexia (2017):** K-1 screening required; **(2021):** Requires districts to conduct four hours of dyslexia awareness training and other related disorders to all licensed educators and paraprofessionals responsible for instruction

Mississippi Philanthropy Leads to State Support

- **W.K. Kellogg Foundation provided a \$6M** multi-year grant to the Mississippi Department of Education in 2018 to hire **early learning coaches** to strengthen pre-K quality, expand professional development, and support early learning collaboratives
- By FY22, **state funds** for Early Learning Collaboratives had **increased** from \$3M in the initial year to \$16M, with **\$1.5M appropriated for early learning coaches**
- In FY27, **state funds increased to \$3.3M for early learning coaches**

Maryland's Literacy Reform Strategy

State Board Resolution: Maryland State Board of Education issues **resolution** directing statewide adoption of **Science of Reading** instructional practices in K-12 schools (Jan. 2024)

Philanthropy: Maryland State Department of Education **awarded \$6.85M** from the **Ibis Group** to fund high-quality **professional learning in the Science of Reading** for 5,000+ educators (May 2024)

State Board Policies:

- **Comprehensive PreK–3 Literacy Policy** (Oct. 2024)
- **Mathematics Policy** (March 2025)
- **Adolescent Literacy Policy** released for public comment (Jan. 2026); combined with preK-3 policy (August 2026)

Maryland: Total Philanthropic Support (\$20.9M)

State Implementation Partnership Grant (\$1.735M): Funds literacy and math coaching initiative as part of the Academic Excellence Program (AEP) Pilot.

Ibis Group: (\$6.85M): Funds enable over 5,000 teachers and leaders to access high-quality professional learning in the Science of Reading (SoR) and earn a micro-credential through **SUNY or the AIM Institute**.

Anonymous Donor (\$1.6M): Supports K-3 SoR aligned literacy coaching in Prince George's County Public Schools as part of AEP Pilot.

Anonymous Donor (\$730K): Funds partnership with Maryland Initiative for Literacy and Equity (MILE) to pilot Maryland's forthcoming adolescent literacy policy using a comprehensive, practitioner-centered approach.

Arnold Ventures (\$10M): Multiyear funding to support targeted improvements in middle and high school mathematics, particularly in algebra readiness and success through high-dosage tutoring and data-informed instructional practices.

State Funding and Legislation Followed Task Force Work, Policies & Philanthropy

- **Assessment and Accountability Task Force** and **Accountability Advisory Committee** helped shape **legislative changes** to the **statewide accountability system** during 2026 General Assembly Session
- **Academic Excellence Program (AEP) instructional coaching** piloted in **2025-26** in Prince George's County Public Schools
- Governor Wes Moore and Maryland General Assembly appropriated **\$14.2M in FY27** for **statewide implementation** of **AEP instructional coaching program**

Maryland's PreK-12 Literacy Policy

- Early Literacy PreK-3 with Science of Reading Focus
- Adolescent Literacy Grades 4-8
- Adolescent Literacy Grades 9-12
- Parental Notification
- Research-based Interventions
- Student Reading Intervention Plan
- Universal Screeners for All Grades
- Parental Approval for Retention

Maryland School Library Media Specialist Support

School Library Media Specialists support literacy instruction by:

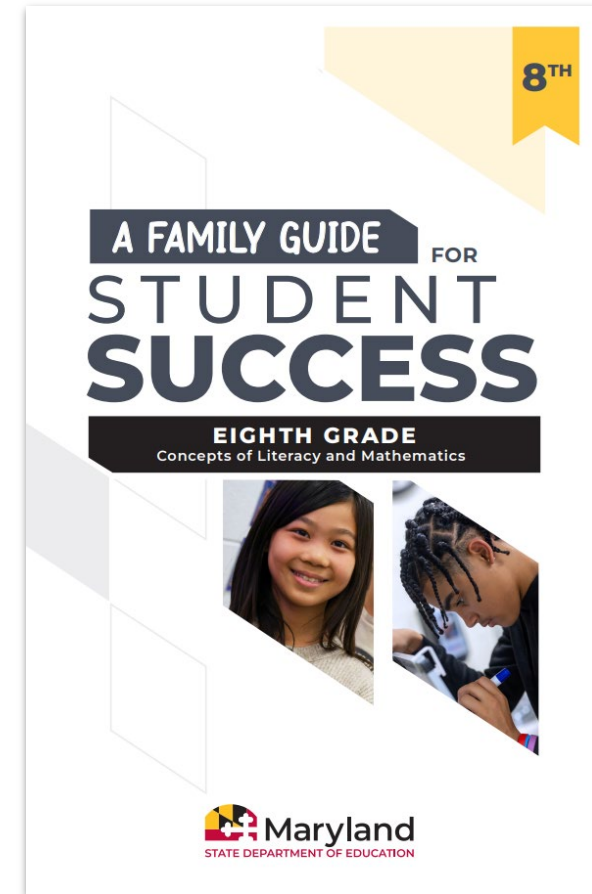
- Selecting grade-level materials and reinforcing what students are learning in the classroom
- Leading small-group instruction, including literacy interventions grounded in the Science of Reading
- Teaching students how to use the full range of media available in the library
- Running book fairs, family literacy nights, and book clubs that build a culture of reading

Maryland's PreK-12 Mathematics Policy

- Acceleration
- Flexible grouping
- Equitable Access
- Procedural Fluency
- Integrated Algebra
- College and Career Readiness Math Standard Progression
- Quantitative Reasoning
- Data and Data Analysis
- Algebraic Foundations of Calculus

Key to Maryland's Literacy and Mathematics Policies

- Strong Core Instruction
- High-Quality Instructional Materials
- Multi-tiered System of Support
- Professional Learning for Teachers and Other Staff
- Resources for Families



Common Drivers in Mississippi and Maryland

- Strong, engaged State Boards of Education
- Philanthropic support
- State support and funding from Governor, Lt. Governor, and Legislature/General Assembly
- State Education Agency in charge of implementation



Discussion & Questions

Carey M. Wright, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Schools