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GUIDANCE MEMORANDUM 20-08

TO: All School District Superintendents
State Public Charter School Authority
All Public and Charter School Principals

FROM: Jhone M. Ebert, Superintendent of Public Instruction 

DATE: August 31, 2020

SUBJECT: Modified Requirements of Read by Grade 3 in Response to COVID-19

Introduction

The Nevada Department of Education (NDE) is committed to supporting students and educators through flexibility in the administration of the Read by Grade 3 requirements (AB 289) as we continue to respond to and recover from the COVID-19 virus. This support is grounded in the belief that we must continue to provide all of our students with an excellent education whether they are learning in person, through a hybrid model, or at a distance. At the core of an excellent education is the implementation of rigorous early literacy instruction. In August 2020, NDE convened the Read by Grade 3 (RBG3) Advisory Council to discuss recommendations for the implementation of RBG3. The RBG3 Advisory Council is a dedicated group of literacy professionals and practitioners from the Nevada State Board of Education, school districts, charter schools, Regional Professional Development Programs (RPDPs), and institutions of higher education that represents the literacy needs of children across the state. As we begin the 2020-2021 school year, NDE is dedicated to ensuring the implementation of AB 289. However, with the impact of COVID-19 on Read by Grade 3, NDE has created the following set of modified requirements to guide local implementation.

Recommendations

1. Literacy Specialist Requirements

A. Qualifications of the Read by Grade 3 Literacy Specialist: [AB 289, Section 2, subsection 1 (a-e)]

Traditionally, Literacy Specialists are required to meet the competencies below:

- a. Demonstrate the ability to improve the literacy of pupils;
- b. Demonstrate competency in effective instruction in literacy and the administration of assessments;
- c. Demonstrate an understanding of building relationships with teachers and other adults;
- d. Collaborate with the principal of the public elementary school to develop a schedule of professional development and assist in providing such professional development; and

- e. Assist teachers at the school [to] by implementing a system of support which includes various methods to provide intervention services and intensive instruction [to] for pupils who have been identified as deficient in the subject area of reading.

For the implementation of RBG3, schools that designate a Literacy Specialist are urged to ensure that individual(s) exhibit the competencies listed above. In the event an administrator does not designate a Literacy Specialist, NDE encourages the administrator to meet these competencies through the reading infrastructure already in place.

B. Duties and Responsibilities of the Read by Grade 3 Literacy Specialist:

The following list of duties and responsibilities has been created by NDE's Read by Grade 3 Advisory Council as recommendations for Literacy Specialists. The list of duties and responsibilities should be viewed through the lenses of in-person instruction, hybrid instruction, and virtual instruction.

1. An individual designated as a literacy specialist shall demonstrate leadership in literacy instruction, intervention, assessment, professional learning, and family engagement as outlined in the District/Charters literacy plan as required by [NRS 388.157](#);
2. **Assist teachers at the school by implementing a system of support which includes various methods to provide literacy instruction, intervention services, and intensive instruction for pupils who have been identified as deficient in the subject area of reading;**
3. Support teachers in establishing plans to monitor the growth of pupils in reading by regularly assessing the growth of students in an any area of deficiency in reading; to ensure that programs services continue to increase the proficiency of students in reading;
4. Collaborate with the principal of the public elementary school to develop a schedule of professional development and assist in providing such professional development prescribed by [NAC 388.664](#) for teachers;
5. Provide instruction and support for the parents and guardians of pupils who have been identified as deficient in the subject area of reading;
6. Provide any necessary additional instruction to teachers and administrators concerning the assessments approved in [NAC 388.660](#); and
7. Assist teachers and administrators in analyzing student data and the effectiveness of intervention services and intensive instruction to make strategic and ongoing instructional decisions.

2. Parent/Legal Guardian Notification about Student's Status in Reading: [AB 289, Section 5, subsections 1-10]

Elementary schools should continue to use their notification system for informing parents that their child has been identified as reading below grade level. Each site is to create a system that best fits its local community. The following requirements must be included in the system:

- Methods of written communication are to be utilized (for example, emails or texts).
- Methods for logging the date of the notification are to be established.
- Parents/Legal Guardians must be notified within 30 days after the date on which the student's reading performance indicates that he/she is reading below grade level.

- The message (provided in English and/or Spanish)¹ must include:
 - a clear statement that indicates that their child is reading below grade level.
 - a description of the programs and services that the student will be receiving as a component of Read by Grade 3.
 - information that the student will receive these services at this school as long as it is deemed necessary by the site’s literacy team.
 - home reading strategies that are available for in-person and/or virtual support.
 - references to NWEA parent resources for understanding the MAP Growth Reading Assessments.
 - a description of the monitoring process that will be used to measure the student’s growth in reading.
 - for English learners, notification of the student’s WIDA level and WIDA home resources.
 - a statement that the parent will be notified should any adjustments be made regarding the services the student will be receiving.

3. Required Training/Professional Development Requirements

The following lists have been created by NDE’s Read by Grade 3 Advisory Council as recommendations for the implementation of RBG3.

A. Literacy Specialist Training Requirements:

The Literacy Specialist shall complete the following training or professional development opportunities. NWEA will provide sessions that cover the assessment requirement noted as item 5. NDE will facilitate the training sessions for the remaining items. Information regarding the various trainings can be found [here](#).

1. The Nevada Academic Content Standards for English Language Arts for all grades at an elementary school adopted by reference in [NAC 389.232](#), [389.2418](#), [389.2431](#) and [389.247](#);
2. The current Nevada State Literacy Plan and the local literacy plan;
3. Evidence-based instructional resources and methods for instruction and intervention in literacy, including, without limitation, the instruction and intervention required by [NRS 392.750](#) to [392.770](#), inclusive;
4. Methods for screening for and intervention concerning dyslexia and other reading disabilities, including, without limitation, the screening and intervention described in [NRS 388.439](#), [388.441](#) and [388.443](#), the minimum standards prescribed by the State Board for the special education of pupils with dyslexia pursuant to [NRS 388.419](#) and the Dyslexia Resource Guide published by the Department pursuant to [NRS 388.447](#);
5. Using the assessments approved by the State Board in [NAC 388.660](#);
6. Methods for using diagnostic and progress monitoring assessments;
7. Guiding teachers in data analysis and data-based decision making to inform instruction;
8. National standards for coaching teachers in literacy instruction, including methods for effectively delivering and receiving feedback.

B. Teachers Employed to Teach Elementary School: NAC 388.664 Required professional

¹ Other languages may be used if the site has demonstrated capacity.

development for teachers employed to teach elementary school students. [[NRS 385.080](#), [388.159](#)]

A teacher who is employed by a school district or charter school to teach elementary school students shall complete differentiated professional development provided by NDE and/or NWEA.

1. The Nevada Academic Content Standards for English Language Arts for all grades at an elementary school adopted by reference in [NAC 389.232](#), [389.2418](#), [389.2431](#) and [389.247](#);
2. The current Nevada State Literacy Plan and the local literacy plan;
3. Evidence-based instructional resources and methods for instruction and intervention in literacy, including, without limitation, the instruction and intervention required by [NRS 392.750](#) to [392.770](#), inclusive;
4. Methods for screening for and intervention concerning dyslexia and other reading disabilities, including, without limitation, the screening and intervention described in [NRS 388.439](#), [388.441](#) and [388.443](#), the minimum standards prescribed by the State Board for the special education of pupils with dyslexia pursuant to [NRS 388.419](#) and the Dyslexia Resource Guide published by the Department pursuant to [NRS 388.447](#);
5. Using the assessments approved by the State Board in [NAC 388.660](#);
6. Methods for using diagnostic and progress monitoring assessments;
7. Application of data analysis and data-based decision-making strategies to inform instruction;
8. Collaborative practices that focus on student learning by effectively participating in professional learning and/or coaching.

4. Intervention Requirements: [[AB 289, Section 4, subsection 1 \(a\) and \(b\)](#); [Section 7, subsection 1 and subsection 2 \(a\) and \(b\)](#)]²

A. Monitoring Intervention Services and Intensive Instruction

Elementary school sites are required to develop a site-level monitoring system for monitoring student plans and required intervention services and intensive instruction requirements. NDE recommends that this system is one that best fits the local community whether learning occurs in-person, through a hybrid model, or at a distance.

B. Daily Reading Instruction

Every student at an elementary school, regardless of reading proficiency, shall be provided at least 90 minutes of instruction each day that is based on evidence-based research. NDE recommends that students attending in-person continue to receive instruction in a 90-minute block. Students that are enrolled in distance learning or hybrid models should have time periods that best fit the planning and preparation of instruction.

C. Intervention Services and Intensive Instruction

The site shall monitor intervention services and intensive instruction by reviewing and evaluating the plans for monitoring the growth of students who are reading below grade level. NDE recommends that regularly scheduled sessions in small group and specific instruction designed to target reading deficiencies remain required for identified students regardless of the method of instructional delivery.

² The administrator, in consultation with the literacy specialist and any teacher with knowledge and expertise related to providing intervention services and intensive instruction to the student, may retain the student in grade 3 rather than promote students to grade 4 when authorized pursuant to [NRS 392.125](#) [[NRS 392.760 2\(b\)](#)] and if there is agreement that it is in the best interest of the student's education.

D. Teacher Providing Intensive Instruction

Intensive instruction and intervention services for students who are reading below grade level must be provided by a licensed teacher. Sites may provide literacy supports conducted by trained paraprofessionals who are regularly monitored. However, it is strongly recommended that paraprofessional support be targeted to students reading at grade level or above regardless of the method of instructional delivery.

E. Intervention Duration

The administrator, in consultation with the literacy specialist and any teacher with knowledge and expertise related to providing intervention services and intensive instruction to the student, shall ensure that the student continues to be provided intervention services and intensive instruction in the subject of reading.

5. Monitoring Growth Requirements [AB 289, Section 6, subsections 1-3]

A. Site-Level Student Monitoring System

Schools are required to create a progress monitoring system for monitoring the reading growth of students who are receiving Read by Grade 3 intensive instruction and intervention services. This system is to be based on what best fits the community.

B. Timeframe for Establishing Plans to Monitor Growth

Within 30 days of notifying the parent/legal guardian that their child is reading below grade level, the school shall establish a plan to monitor the student's reading growth.

C. Teacher Plan Requirements

NDE recommends that a licensed teacher or elementary or any other relevant school personnel shall establish a plan to monitor the growth of a student who is reading below grade level [[NRS 392.765.1b](#)]. The plan must be approved by the parent/legal guardian in a format that best fits the school community.

D. Regular Assessment of Growth

The school shall establish a growth plan that regularly assess the student's growth until the student is reading at grade level [[NRS 392.755 3](#)]. NDE recommends that this be included in the site-level system.

6. Instructional Options [AB 289, Section 9, subsection 1-3]

In addition to intervention services and intensive instruction, the site may offer the parent/legal guardian of a student who is reading below grade level at least one of the following instructional options on an as-needed basis.

A. Supplemental Tutoring

Supplemental tutoring based on evidence-based reading research [[NRS 392.770.1](#)].

B. Home Reading Plan

A plan for reading with the student at home and participating in workshops that may be available to assist the parent/legal guardian with reading with his/her student at home [[NRS 392.770.2](#)]. NDE is currently engaged in a partnership with Renaissance Learning that provides the myON virtual reading library and resources to support Nevada students.

C. Mentors or Tutors

Provide the student with a mentor or tutor who has received specialized training in teaching student how to read [[NRS 392.770.3](#)].

Conclusion

The Nevada Department of Education recognizes that these are, indeed, trying times. NDE further recognizes that Nevada literacy educators are tenaciously working to navigate the unprecedented terrain of COVID-19. This Guidance Memo is meant to provide clarity around the implementation of Nevada's Read by Grade 3 Program. Under the leadership of Nevada's Read by Grade 3 Advisory Council, the above-noted AB 289 requirements have been adapted to lessen the impacts of COVID-19. These changes have been made to provide local educators additional freedom in developing plans that best fit their community. Much of the complexity required in the implementation requirements of AB 289 have been reduced and many of the complicated components of the law have been streamlined. All of these measures have been taken to ensure a dynamic literacy education for all Nevada elementary students.³

Please contact a member of the Read by Grade 3 Team if you have any questions or require further information.

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³ LEA reporting requirements and requirements for Literacy Plans for Read by Grade 3 will continue for the 2020-2021 school year as they were implemented during the 2019-2020 school year. Modifications to the Read by Grade 3 Assessment requirements are addressed in the Nevada Department of Education's memorandum titled *State and Federal Assessments* (August 6, 2020).