

# Five states' efforts to improve adolescent literacy



Institute of Education Sciences

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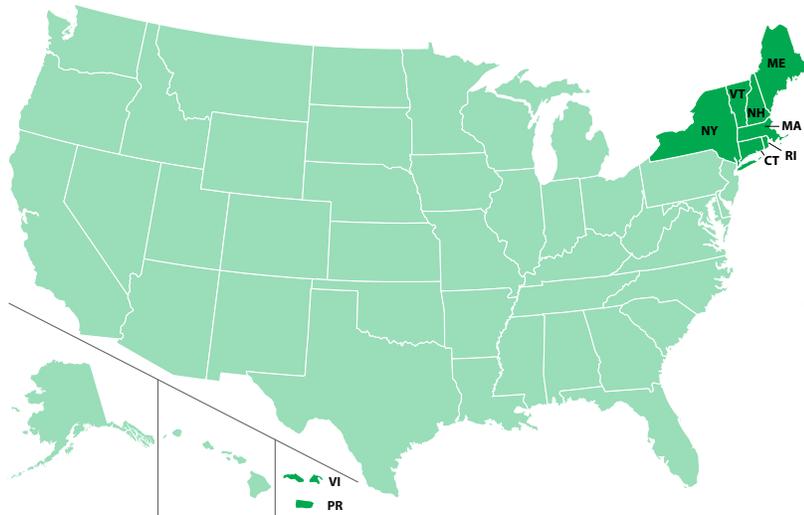
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# Five states' efforts to improve adolescent literacy

**This report describes efforts by five states—Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, New Jersey, and Rhode Island—to improve adolescent literacy. Highlighting common challenges and lessons, the report examines how each state has engaged key stakeholders, set rigorous goals and standards, aligned resources to support adolescent literacy goals, built educator capacity, and used data to measure progress.**

Responding to questions from state education agency staff members and policymakers, the report describes what each state has done to promote effective adolescent literacy practices in schools and districts. The researchers collected information from policy documents and through interviews with key staff members at state education agencies.

Five state case studies describe how state educators and policymakers tailored their policy strategies to the needs of each state.

- Alabama cultivated community support to develop and fund a pilot K–12 literacy program, used investments in K–3 literacy to sustain a commitment to literacy across grades K–12, reformulated its program to better address adolescent needs, and built school instruction capacity.
- Florida passed laws to spur change and to support program expansion, built teacher capacity with state-level training and endorsement, and enlisted parents to promote literacy at home.
- Kentucky collaborated with higher education institutions, took advantage of state, federal, and private funds, and changed systems to support adolescent literacy.
- New Jersey—which piloted and was gradually scaling up its program—provided state funds and professional development and used teacher-to-teacher communication to influence teachers' attitudes toward adolescent literacy.
- Rhode Island engaged stakeholders outside the state government and state education agency to make adolescent literacy a priority, ensured consistent messages by articulating the alignments among various policies and regulations, formed a clear research-based vision for adolescent literacy instruction, phased in parts of its policy, and integrated literacy improvement into state institutions.

Following the state case studies, a cross-state analysis examines how each state applied five types of strategies for improving adolescent

literacy. The five strategies—also used as criteria for selecting states for this study—were applied with considerable variation across the five states. The cross-state analysis also relates what officials at the five state education agencies learned about framing state policies to support adolescent literacy and about putting such policies into practice.

The report does not compare the merits of the five states' different approaches. Instead, it describes policies crafted by different states. Those policies reflect a range of challenges faced by state-level educators working to support struggling adolescent readers.

The report highlights common challenges and insights into how states used the five types of strategy to support their adolescent literacy improvement policies:

- *Engaging key stakeholders to make adolescent literacy a priority.* Alabama, Kentucky, New Jersey, and Rhode Island reported efforts to inform adolescent literacy policies using stakeholder expertise and feedback. Florida used family literacy programs to develop parent and community capacity and to make literacy a priority for more stakeholders.
- *Setting rigorous state literacy goals and standards, with other state policies aligned to support them.* Interviewees in all five states reported that rigorous standards for literacy had been developed or were in development. Interviewees in Alabama and Rhode Island described how their states ensured collaboration among state education agency departments. And Florida, Kentucky, and Rhode Island aligned adolescent literacy initiatives with early literacy initiatives.
- *Aligning resources to support adolescent literacy goals.* State policies take local context into account when aligning resources to promote adolescent literacy. Each state had at least one state education agency staff member devoted to adolescent literacy, and each state required that schools provide reading interventions to struggling readers. The five states had various ways to fund adolescent literacy improvement. Funding was a special challenge for the three states lacking statewide initiatives.
- *Building educator capacity to support adolescent literacy programs at state, school, and classroom levels.* Leaders in all five states described professional development and new staff hires as key to supporting state adolescent literacy programs. State education agencies in Florida and Kentucky partnered with colleges and universities to build the agencies' capacity. All five states used a combination of direct training for teachers and training for coaches, usually with a focus on content-area literacy instruction and intervention with struggling readers. All used school-based coaches, and state-based coaches or literacy specialists were critical to professional development in all states but Florida. Yet the five states assigned different functions to such coaches and specialists, reflecting important differences among their literacy improvement strategies. All states had systems for two-way communication between reading coaches or specialists and state-level staff.

- *Measuring progress and using data to make decisions and provide oversight.*

All five states reported a commitment to using data for decisionmaking. All viewed assessment as an important element of their policies—yet none was satisfied with the assessments available. Respondents described their efforts, and the efforts of schools, to use assessments formatively and collectively to push for better student literacy outcomes. They reported the use of screening, diagnostic, and assessment data to measure progress, inform placement,

and support instruction, although they have differing guidelines for doing so. And they described their engagement in various oversight activities: communicating with reading coaches, collecting data on the numbers of students receiving interventions, collecting data from assessments, and monitoring school compliance with certain demands. Still, the interviewees described a need for greater oversight capacity.

**April 2009**

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**This report describes efforts by five states—Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, New Jersey, and Rhode Island—to improve adolescent literacy. Highlighting common challenges and lessons, the report examines how each state has engaged key stakeholders, set rigorous goals and standards, aligned resources to support adolescent literacy goals, built educator capacity, and used data to measure progress.**

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## WHY THIS STUDY?

Although reading instruction traditionally is relegated to the early elementary grades, recent research has challenged the assumption that learning to read ends at grade 3. Experts now believe that literacy policy needs to focus on grades K–12. Moreover, research suggests that adolescent literacy development is fundamentally different from early literacy development and requires different instruction strategies. There is now “a substantial body of research on instructional methods for adolescent struggling readers” (Scamacca et al. 2007, p. 5). There is also substantial research on the challenges faced by that population (appendix A).

Despite growing agreement among researchers on the need to focus on adolescent literacy, few studies are available to inform states as they shape their policies and practices to improve adolescent literacy outcomes. Efforts to improve reading instruction over the past decade have focused largely on early reading skills. State policymakers have less guidance in promoting adolescent literacy.

This report describes the measures that five states have taken to support adolescent literacy through state policy. It also discusses the experiences of state policymakers in those states who have framed various policies to improve adolescent literacy, defined for this report as literacy among students in grades 4–12 (other key terms are defined in appendix B).

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### Why should states focus on adolescent literacy?

Many adolescents struggle when their studies require them to shift from simple word recognition to complex comprehension of content (Biancarosa and Snow 2006). According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, approximately two-thirds of students in grades 8 and 12 fail to read at a proficient level and more than a quarter fail to reach the most basic level of reading ability (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics 2006). The same achievement

**According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, approximately two-thirds of students in grades 8 and 12 fail to read at a proficient level and more than a quarter fail to reach the most basic level of reading ability**

pattern is found throughout the Northeast and Islands Region states. In New York, for example, student performance on the state literacy assessment drops when students reach middle school. Although 70 percent of students perform at or above proficiency in grade 4, only 48 percent do so in grade 8.

The statistics for student performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress are also striking. In New York just 32 percent of grade 8 students—and just 20 percent of poor grade 8 students and grade 8 students of racial or ethnic minority—perform at or above proficiency in literacy (National Assessment of Educational Progress 2007). Literacy performance throughout the Northeast and Islands Region is similar to that in New York. In Connecticut, 41 percent of grade 8 students read at or above the proficient level; in Maine, 36 percent; in Massachusetts, 49 percent; in New Hampshire, 41 percent; in Rhode Island, 31 percent; and in Vermont, 41 percent (National Assessment of Educational Progress 2007).

Although these percentages exceed the national average (32 percent), more than half of students in the five states studied leave high school unprepared for daily reading tasks—in banking, in their jobs, in health-related activities, and in general citizenship (Jacobs 2008; Snow, Martin, and Berman 2008). Increasing evidence strongly associates educational attainment, especially literacy, with better health, longer life expectancy, lower rates of dependence on welfare and unemployment services, lower incarceration rates, greater lifetime income, and greater contributions to a community's tax base over time (Alliance for Excellent Education 2006, 2007; Darling-Hammond 2007; Muennig 2005; Wong et al. 2002).

Policymakers across the Northeast and Islands Region are acutely aware of the need to

improve adolescent literacy. Although states in the region are at different stages of developing and putting into practice their statewide policy approaches, all need information to guide those approaches.

### What the study sought to learn about state adolescent literacy policy in Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, New Jersey, and Rhode Island

This exploratory study was proposed to address questions asked by leaders at the New York State Department of Education about district and state support for literacy improvement at the middle and high school levels. While the study was under way, other state education agency officials made additional requests for information about states' adolescent literacy plans and about state supports for adolescent readers.

The researchers for the study responded to the policymakers' questions by gathering information from five states that have focused considerable attention and resources on state adolescent literacy policy. The five states studied for this report have adolescent literacy policies that experts praise as being in the vanguard of their field.

Two research questions guided the study:

1. What policies and practices have states adopted to promote effective adolescent literacy practices at the school and district level?
2. What did state education agency officials learn about developing and putting into practice state policies to support adolescent literacy?

The researchers drew on interviews and document reviews to answer these questions; a brief account of their methods is in box 1. (More detailed accounts of state selection, data collection, and analysis are in appendix C. Advisors to the study are listed in appendix D. Interview questions are in appendix E.)

## BOX 1

**Research methods**

The researchers used five criteria to select states for the study:

- Engaged key stakeholders to make adolescent literacy a priority.
- Set rigorous state literacy goals and standards, with other state policies aligned to support them.
- Aligned resources to support adolescent literacy goals.
- Built educator capacity to support adolescent literacy progress at state, school, and classroom levels.
- Measured progress and used data to make decisions and provide oversight.

Seven adolescent literacy experts from the research, policy, advocacy, and funding communities were advisors to the study and identified states that best met the selection criteria. Because the study aimed to illustrate various adolescent literacy approaches, the advisors were urged to take the distinctiveness of approaches into account. Five states—Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, New Jersey, and Rhode Island—were invited to participate through a key contact person in each state. All agreed.

Researchers searched the Internet for adolescent literacy policy documents from each participating state, reviewed web sites on the states' adolescent literacy programs, and emailed each state's contact person to locate additional information sources and to ask about adolescent literacy program structure and staffing. Document and web site reviews generated state-specific questions for researchers' interviews for that state. In addition, while visiting each state department of education, researchers collected policy documents and other supporting materials not found on the Internet.

The researchers developed a pool of general and state-specific interview questions (appendix E). They created protocols for each interviewee by selecting from the pool only the questions on which each interviewee was likely to have firsthand knowledge. Each question was asked two times in each state to test for consistency in responses.

The researchers made one-day site visits to meet with the state-level educators whom state contact people had named as most responsible for developing or supporting adolescent literacy policy (for the interviewees' roles in each state see table C2 in

appendix C). Four interviews were conducted in each state. All interviewees consented to being recorded and to being identified in the report. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Researchers' notes supplemented the transcribed documents.

Interview files and documents on each state's adolescent literacy policy were uploaded into a qualitative data analysis software program (Atlas.ti). Using established case study methodology, researchers built descriptions for each state, interpreted and coded information using categorical aggregation, and looked for patterns within and across states (Creswell 2007; Stake 1995; Yin 2003). The coding enabled researchers to identify distinct aspects of policy in each state and to confirm those findings with analyses run in the software program. The case studies and overall findings were reviewed by the state contact persons, whose comments were incorporated into the final report.

This report aims to inform educators and policymakers about the states' various approaches. It does not examine the impact of any policy on student outcomes, so it cannot support inferences about the efficacy of any approach.

## CASE STUDIES OF STATE ADOLESCENT LITERACY POLICIES

The state case studies describe the history, development, and practice of state-level adolescent literacy policies in Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, New Jersey, and Rhode Island (summarized in table 7 at the end of the report). Highlighted in the case studies are the features that distinguished each state's approach (outlined for all five states in box 2).

The formats of the case studies vary—because the five states had various policy approaches and because the states had reached different stages in developing their policies and putting them into practice.

### Alabama

Alabama began addressing adolescent literacy in 1998 with the Alabama Reading Initiative, a reading intervention and professional development

BOX 2

**Features that distinguished five states' efforts to improve adolescent literacy**

Approaches to state-level adolescent literacy policy in Alabama, Kentucky, Florida, New Jersey, and Rhode Island had much in common (see the five criteria for study state selection, box 1 and appendix C, and the cross-state analysis below). Nevertheless, the specific structures and features of state adolescent literacy programs varied considerably.

Alabama:

- Cultivated community support to develop and fund the Alabama Reading Initiative, a K–12 literacy program.
- Used investments in K–3 literacy to sustain a commitment to literacy across grades K–12.
- Reformulated the Alabama Reading Initiative to better address adolescents' needs.

- Built schools' instruction capacity.

Florida:

- Passed laws to spur change and to help expand Just Read, Florida!, the state's literacy program.
- Built teacher capacity with state-level training and endorsement.
- Enlisted parents to promote literacy at home.

Kentucky:

- Collaborated with higher education institutions through the Collaborative Center for Literacy Development.
- Took advantage of state, federal, and private funds.
- Changed systems to support adolescent literacy.

New Jersey:

- Built Literacy is Essential to Adolescent Development and Success (LEADS), the state's adolescent literacy program, on a

research- and experience-based model.

- Provided state funds and professional development.
- Used teacher-to-teacher communication to influence content-area teachers' attitudes about adolescent literacy.
- Piloted and then gradually scaled up its program.

Rhode Island:

- Engaged stakeholders outside the state government and the department of education to make adolescent literacy a priority.
- Ensured consistent messages by articulating the alignment among various policies and regulations.
- Formed a clear research-based vision for adolescent literacy instruction.
- Phased in parts of its policy.
- Worked to integrate literacy improvement into state institutions.

program for grades K–12. The initiative is regarded as the first state-level adolescent literacy program in the United States (Alliance for Excellent Education 2007a). In 2004 participation in the initiative became mandatory for elementary schools, but remained voluntary for middle and high schools, so that the initiative became focused on grades K–3 (Mitchell and Betts 2006). The state estimated that in 2007 the initiative had 900 schools participating, including 123 secondary schools.

In 2006 the Alabama Reading Initiative piloted its Project for Adolescent Literacy—adapted from the initiative's original model—in 14 middle schools (Alabama State Department of Education 2007a). The initiative and the project were coordinated but separate. Both existed without formal statewide policy. To maintain both, state education agency

staff relied on program policy documents, professional development, and contact with schools.

*Cultivating community support to develop and fund a pilot K–12 literacy program.* Throughout the creation of the Alabama Reading Initiative and the early stages of putting it into practice (table 1), the initiative's leaders sought knowledge and support from the state's broader education and business communities. In 1996 the assistant state superintendent of education for reading convened the Alabama Reading Panel to investigate K–12 literacy. The reading panel included 25 members from diverse stakeholder groups: teachers, college and university educators, business and industry professionals, and grassroots organization members (O'Neal, Spor, and Snyder 2001). By 1998 the reading panel had published its findings, and the

TABLE 1

**Alabama state adolescent literacy policy timeline, 1996–2007**

Year	Action
1996	The Alabama Reading Panel is convened.
1998	The Alabama Reading Initiative pilot is privately funded in 16 schools.
1999	The Alabama Reading Initiative is funded by the state, with elementary, middle, and high schools gradually added through competitive application.
2002	Alabama's governor asks that the initiative shift its focus to K–3 schools, with secondary schools that choose to participate required to fund their own participation.
2004	All Alabama elementary schools are participating in the Alabama Reading Initiative.
2006	The Project for Adolescent Literacy (adapted from the Alabama Reading Initiative) is piloted in 14 schools.
2007	The Project for Adolescent Literacy gains state funding for 2009/10.

Source: Authors' compilation.

Alabama Reading Initiative was formulated. But the state could not fund implementation—so the nonprofit A+ Education Foundation and several business partners funded a pilot in 16 schools for 1998/99 (Vaughn 2001). The governor and state legislature began funding the initiative in 1999/2000. In 2006/07 the state provided \$56 million for 900 initiative schools (Mitchell and Betts 2006).

*Using K–3 literacy investments to sustain a commitment to literacy efforts across grades K–12.*

During the Alabama Reading Initiative's first four years the initiative quickly grew in funding and size—adding elementary, middle, and high schools through competitive application. In 2002 the newly elected governor of Alabama asked the state education agency to focus the initiative's growth on grades K–3 until all the state's elementary schools were included. To respond to the governor's request and the needs of middle and high schools, initiative staff came up with a compromise: the state would fund schools with grades K–3, and selected intermediate and secondary sites

would participate in the initiative without financial support. Such unfunded schools could send staff to some initiative trainings, and they could receive limited numbers of visits from an initiative regional secondary coach.

At the time of the study, participation in the initiative remained voluntary for middle and high schools. However, state education agency interviewees reported that, by 2004, all Alabama schools with grades K–3 had become part of the initiative.

*Reformulating the program to better address adolescents' unique needs.*

From 1998 to 2004 the Alabama Reading Initiative offered the same instruction model to all participating schools without regard to teachers' needs, school composition, or student age and skill level. Interviews with state department of education staff revealed that in 2004 four regional secondary coaches began rewriting the training modules to make their content more applicable to middle and high schools. In 2005 the initiative hired a secondary literacy coordinator to manage the work of the state's four secondary regional coaches and to build the initiative's leadership capacity. Later a panel of advisors revised the initiative in light of recommendations in a report (Biancarosa and Snow 2006), five external evaluations of the initiative (Alabama State Department of Education 2006), and lessons learned from the roughly 130 middle and high schools participating in the initiative (Alabama State Department of Education 2007a).

In 2006 the state created the Alabama Reading Initiative–Project for Adolescent Literacy, requiring that all instruction be aligned with the 15 practices recommended by the report that had informed the revisions to the initiative (Biancarosa and Snow 2006). The recommended practices included

**Recommended practices in the Alabama Reading Initiative–Project for Adolescent Literacy included intensive writing, self-directed learning, instruction embedded in content from all subject areas, and ongoing assessment of students and programs**

intensive writing, self-directed learning, instruction embedded in content from all subject areas, and ongoing formative and summative assessment of students and programs.

Expectations for Alabama Reading Initiative–Project for Adolescent Literacy teachers were set in a best-practices document that tied the state’s “strategic teachers” concept together with research on brain development, vocabulary, and content-area literacy. Strategic teachers were expected to tie reading instruction to content, informally assess reading fluency, build and analyze class data profiles, use activities appropriate for adolescents, engage in explicit instruction, and focus on vocabulary (Alabama Department of Education 2007b). One interviewee described what happened in a project classroom:

*We integrated vocabulary, comprehension, and writing strategies into the content and elective areas in order to teach the standards and objectives. The strategy used at the close of the lesson assesses the learning for that day so teachers know where to begin the next lesson.*

The project did not rely on formal statewide policy, other than by referring to the expectations in the best-practices document. Another interviewee stated: “We don’t have policy on the books. Putting money into subject-specific literacy rather than teacher raises, that’s a policy decision.”

**Building schools’ instruction capacity.** Building school capacity was central to the Alabama Reading Initiative and to its Project for Adolescent Literacy. Through the initiative the state provided initial training in the summer, then ongoing job-

embedded professional development throughout the school year (Alabama State Department of Education 2006). Initiative teachers, reading coaches, and principals at all grade levels completed seven training modules: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency,

vocabulary, comprehension, assessment, and effective intervention. Initiative teachers were expected to modify their instruction to incorporate strategies presented in the modules, to assess students, and to intervene with struggling readers. Each school’s reading coach was expected to intervene with struggling readers and to coach teachers on reading instruction. The state reportedly provided monthly training to reading coaches, who, in turn, were expected to provide embedded training to teachers. The state’s regional coaches were expected to visit sites at least monthly to meet with principals, reading coaches, and teachers.

Training through the Project for Adolescent Literacy included topics specific to adolescents such as content-area literacy, rather than early reading skills such as phonemic awareness and phonics. Faculties at project schools got three days of initial training covering “essential elements” of the program—assessment, “strategic teaching,” and content-area literacy—and practiced planning and writing “strategic lessons for direct use in the classroom” (Alabama State Department of Education 2007a). Principals, reading coaches, central office contacts, and selected content-area teachers attended the three-day faculty training and, in addition, got one day of “an overview of essentials elements and planning” and one day of “implementing research-based intervention.” Each site was expected to have a reading coach who provided embedded professional development by modeling instruction in classrooms, providing feedback to teachers, and helping teachers with instructional planning.

The leaders of the Alabama Reading Initiative and its Project for Adolescent Literacy tried to promote continuous improvement, not only in schools, but also at the state level. A state education agency official asserted that agency staff members tried to “solve every problem that [came] along.” Other state education agency staff members said they worked collaboratively and used feedback from weekly school visits to make decisions about the support provided to the schools, the content of the training modules, and the project model as a whole.

**Building school capacity was central to the Alabama Reading Initiative and to its Project for Adolescent Literacy**

Florida

Florida’s state government had funded several adolescent literacy projects at the time of the study. In 2000 it funded a professional development program, Florida Literacy and Reading Excellence. In 2001 the state governor established the Just Read, Florida! initiative (Bush 2001), to which an interviewee ascribed two goals: “ensuring all students are able to read on or above grade level by 2012” and “making literacy the priority of every citizen.” In 2002 Florida began offering a reading endorsement to increase the number of teachers highly qualified to teach reading. Finally, in 2006 the A++ Plan for Education legislation moved the Just Read, Florida! office to the Florida Department of Education and secured funding for the initiative and its various literacy programs (Florida House of Representatives 2006).

*Using legislation to spur change and to support scaling programs up.* Florida’s legislature had enacted several laws concerning teachers, reading coaches, and schools, with a special focus on reading coaches (table 2). In one interviewee’s words: “Many of our larger projects in Just Read, Florida! [are] focused on improving the work that coaches do, because they are our main delivery system for professional development.”

In 2004 the Middle Grades Reform Act codified the Just Read, Florida! reading coach model and

placed reading coaches in nearly half of the state’s middle schools (Florida Senate 2004). The coaches were required to train teachers in reading instruction, assessment administration and interpretation, and intervention instruction.

**In 2004 the Middle Grades Reform Act codified the Just Read, Florida! reading coach model and placed reading coaches in nearly half of the state’s middle schools**

In 2005 the Florida legislature required that districts, to get funds from the Florida Education Finance Program, submit comprehensive reading plans for grades K–12 (Florida State Board of Education 2005). Each reading plan, outlining a district’s systemic strategy to improve student reading performance, was expected to mention diagnostic assessments and interventions to support struggling readers (Just Read, Florida! 2007a). The Just Read, Florida! office required that the reading plans “use scientifically based reading research . . . including that found in the National Reading Panel Report and in the No Child Left Behind . . . legislation passed by Congress in 2001” (p. 11). Additionally, reading plans were expected to include teacher professional development “grounded in scientifically based reading research and . . . in alignment with the National Staff Development Council Standards . . . and Florida’s Professional Development System Evaluation Protocol” (p. 10).

In 2006 the Florida legislature passed the A++ Plan for Education (Florida House of Representatives 2006). That law created a permanent funding stream for literacy programs and preserved the Just Read, Florida! office beyond the governor’s tenure by moving it to the Florida Department of Education (Lenzo 2006). The A++ Plan for Education required that all middle and high school students scoring in the lowest two tiers of the state assessment, the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, get progress monitoring and reading interventions. To receive funds from the Florida Education Finance Program, districts were required to provide reading coaches to their lowest performing schools. The A++ Plan for Education

TABLE 2  
**Florida state adolescent literacy policy timeline, 2000–06**

Year	Action
2000	Florida Literacy and Reading Excellence is established.
2001	The Just Read, Florida! office is created.
2002	A reading endorsement is offered.
2004	The Florida Senate passes the Middle Grades Reform Act.
2005	K–12 comprehensive reading plans for grades K–12 are required.
2006	The A++ Plan for Education legislation is passed.

Source: Authors’ compilation.

**To meet the requirement in the No Child Left Behind Act that teachers be highly qualified, Just Read, Florida! designed a reading endorsement program for teachers to gain highly qualified status without completing a master's degree or full reading certification**

also required that districts increase the numbers of reading coaches every year and that all coaches report their work to the state's Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network every other week.

The A++ Plan for Education also codified into law the Florida Center for Reading Research at Florida State University. The center was responsible for disseminating research-based information on read-

ing, for conducting “applied research to inform Florida policy and practice,” and for conducting “basic research on reading, reading growth, reading assessment, and reading instruction” (Lenzo 2006, p. 1). The Just Read, Florida! office partnered with the Florida Center for Reading Research to fund research directly. In 2007 the office funded \$4 million of studies, mostly experimental and quasiexperimental, to create an evidence base for reading interventions.

*Building teacher capacity with state-level training and a reading endorsement.* To meet the requirement in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 that teachers be highly qualified, Just Read, Florida! designed a reading endorsement program for teachers to gain highly qualified status without completing a master's degree or full reading certification. An interviewee explained:

*Previously, the only option for middle and high school teachers who needed to be highly qualified to teach reading was to get a master's degree and become certified. We were having difficulty finding enough people who were certified in reading. We created a 300-hour reading endorsement, which is basically half of a master's.*

Candidates for the endorsement completed the 300 hours of coursework across six competency areas: foundations in language and cognition, foundations of research-based practices, foundations

of assessment, foundations of differentiation, application of differentiated instruction, and a demonstration of accomplishment practicum (Florida Department of Education 2003). A K–12 reading certification was also available to teachers with 30 graduate semester hours, a master's degree or higher degree in reading, and a passing score on the state's K–12 Reading Subject Area Test (Just Read, Florida! 2007b).

Just Read, Florida! offered free training through the University of Central Florida and the North East Florida Educational Consortium on each competency required for the reading endorsement. The University of Central Florida's programs included Florida Literacy and Reading Excellence and Florida Online Reading Professional Development. Florida Literacy and Reading Excellence provided teachers with face-to-face instruction, delivered by regional coordinators, to fulfill five of the competencies. Florida Online Reading Professional Development addressed the sixth competency and could be wholly completed online. In addition, the North East Florida Educational Consortium had online courses on four of the competencies.

The University of Central Florida and the North East Florida Educational Consortium offered other training related to the reading endorsement though without meeting its requirements. The University of Central Florida in 2006 began offering Content Area Reading Professional Development, which allowed content-area teachers to become reading intervention teachers in their content-area classes—part of Florida's intervention strategy for struggling adolescent readers. The training combined Florida Online Reading Professional Development with a summer content-area reading academy and reading practicum. And the North East Florida Educational Consortium supplied free lesson plans and video clips of instruction and intervention instruction to any educator as part of its Literacy Essentials and Reading Network.

*Enlisting parents to support literacy in the home.* Just Read, Florida! reached into homes to build family literacy. The program targeted parents

and community members, first, as providers of home-based literacy support for children and, second, as beneficiaries of strong literacy skills. The Families Building Better Readers project targeted parents for voluntary workshops on home reading activities. The Florida Family Literacy Initiative combined parenting education, adult education, early childhood education, and parent-and-child-together time (Bessell et al. 2008). Summer reading activities were on the Just Read, Families! web site. Finally, Just Read, Florida! also supported Reach Out and Read, an initiative aimed at poor children. Reach Out and Read trained medical providers to advise parents about the importance of reading aloud, and it gave books to children ages 6 months to 5 years at their medical checkups.

## Kentucky

A Kentucky Department of Education interviewee stated: “Kentucky is a bit different from other states working on this issue in that we already have a lot of good ideas, plans, and parts in place, but we lack that cohesive framework to bring everything to scale.”

In 1999 Kentucky’s governor formed the Kentucky Literacy Partnership—a partnership of parents, teachers, superintendents, state officials, and higher education representatives meant to “coordinate statewide literacy efforts among the public and community entities that share an interest in improving the reading and literacy skills of children and adults throughout Kentucky” (Kentucky Literacy Partnership 2002, p. 4). The partnership published a literacy plan for Kentucky in 2002, but the plan was never realized. Still, according to interviewees the “conditions for success” drafted by the partnership (Kentucky Literacy Partnership 2002) continued to inform the Kentucky Department of Education’s literacy efforts.

Kentucky had several projects targeting adolescent literacy (table 3). Most were led by coalitions of universities and districts. None were statewide. The state mediated among the various coalitions and projects, partly funding them through legislation and grants.

At the time of the study the Kentucky Department of Education was using a National Association of State Boards of Education grant to integrate the state’s various adolescent literacy projects into a state-level adolescent literacy plan (Kentucky Department of Education 2008). In September 2007, to solicit ideas for such a plan, the department held an Adolescent Literacy Forum. Then, to articulate the need for a plan, the department collaborated with the Kentucky Board of Education and Kentucky Reading Association to found a state Adolescent Literacy Task Force (Overturf and Parker 2008; a timeline of Kentucky’s legislative and regulatory actions to promote adolescent literacy is in table 4).

### *Collaborating with higher education institutions.*

Although Kentucky had no statewide adolescent literacy program or policy, the state’s colleges and universities had partnered with the Kentucky Department of Education to develop adolescent literacy projects. The partnership began in 1998 when Kentucky’s General Assembly established the Collaborative Center for Literacy Development (Kentucky Legislative Research Commission 2007). Based at the University of Kentucky, the center used educators from eight colleges and universities to provide professional development on literacy instruction. Its role grew to include professional development offered through its Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project, Kentucky Reading Project, and other initiatives, as well as to conduct research in literacy from early childhood to adulthood. The center also evaluated Kentucky’s Striving Readers and Reading First grants. Representatives from the center met with the state’s adolescent literacy branch manager quarterly—but met monthly when key initiatives, such as the Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project, were in development. The center’s projects were partly funded by the Kentucky legislature (Kentucky Department of Education 2006).

**Kentucky’s colleges and universities partnered with the Kentucky Department of Education to develop adolescent literacy projects at the Collaborative Center for Literacy Development**

TABLE 3

**Kentucky groups and projects that promote adolescent literacy**

Name	Description
Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project	Professional development for middle and high school teachers, to train the teachers as reading coaches, offered by the Collaborative Center for Literacy Development.
Collaborative Center for Literacy Development	Coalition of colleges and universities that conducts research, evaluates some literacy projects, and manages other literacy projects (the Kentucky Reading Project, the Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project).
Collaborative for Teaching and Learning	Nonprofit that provides professional development to the Kentucky Content Literacy Consortium and its Striving Readers program.
Kentucky Content Literacy Consortium	Twenty-three rural middle and high schools that participate in Kentucky's federal Striving Readers grant.
Kentucky Literacy Partnership	Stakeholder group, formed by the governor in 1999 to create a state literacy plan (which was never realized).
Kentucky Reading Project	Professional development for teachers of grades PreK–5, offered by the Collaborative Center for Literacy Development.
Kentucky Writing Project	Content-literacy summer academies for teachers of grades 4–12.
Literacy Program Effectiveness Review for Kentucky Schools	Self-review by Kentucky schools of their literacy programming, literacy instruction, and literacy interventions.
National Association of State Boards of Education Grant	Grant that funds the Kentucky Department of Education to create a statewide adolescent literacy program.
Reading First	Professional development available to teachers of struggling readers in grades K–12.

Source: Authors' compilation.

TABLE 4

**Timeline of Kentucky's legislative and regulatory actions to promote adolescent literacy, 1998-2008**

Year	Action
1998	Kentucky's General Assembly establishes the Collaborative Center for Literacy Development.
1999	Kentucky's then-governor forms the Kentucky Literacy Partnership.
2002	The Kentucky Literacy Partnership unveils its literacy plan (Read to Succeed)—but the state's newly elected governor declines to fund the plan.
2003	Kentucky funds 11 literacy consultants through the state's special education cooperatives. The Federal Reading First program is initiated.
2005	The Kentucky Content Literacy Consortium of 23 rural middle and high schools gets a federal Striving Readers grant to provide content-area literacy training to teachers of grades 6–12 and provide reading coaches as a schoolwide intervention for struggling readers. The Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project is initiated.
2007	The Kentucky Department of Education gets a National Association of State Boards of Education grant to create a statewide adolescent literacy program. The Kentucky Senate requires that all students take the Educational Planning and Assessment System tests from ACT, including EXPLORE in grade 8, PLAN in grade 10, and ACT in grade 11. The Kentucky Department of Education holds an Adolescent Literacy Forum. The Kentucky Department of Education collaborates with the Kentucky Board of Education and Kentucky Reading Association to form an Adolescent Literacy Task Force.
2008	The Kentucky state legislature passes a joint resolution calling for a state adolescent literacy plan (pending approval at the time of the study).

Source: Authors' compilation.

Each adolescent literacy project of the Collaborative Center for Literacy Development took a different approach. For example, the center's Kentucky Reading Project trained teachers of grades PreK–5 on assessment use, literacy instruction, and family support for literacy. In contrast, the center's Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project trained teachers of grades 4–12 to become reading coaches, and they, in turn, trained their colleagues.

Faculty members at higher education institutions provided the professional development for projects of the Collaborative Center for Literacy Development. According to interviewees, the center believes that having such faculty members design and deliver training “ensures professional development is rigorous, university-level work where teachers are required to complete assessments and are assessed based on their success in meeting the goals and objectives of the professional development.” One respondent stated that the center's training follows International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English standards and that it was developed collaboratively by center staff members and the state adolescent literacy branch manager. Participants in training offered by the Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project could earn 12 graduate credit hours.

*Taking advantage of state, federal, and private funds.* Kentucky partly funded adolescent literacy projects through the state's Teachers Professional Growth Fund. But most money for such projects came from public grants. Kentucky's federal Reading First grant defined the state's Reading First program as a “professional development initiative for primary teachers and teachers of special needs students Grades K–12” (Kentucky Department of Education 2007b). The program provided free online training to any teacher of struggling readers in grades PreK–12 through the Kentucky Virtual High School. It also offered training discs (CDs, DVDs) developed with Reading First funds.

Kentucky also received a federal Striving Readers grant to provide professional development in the Kentucky Content Literacy Consortium, a group

of 23 rural middle and high schools (Danville Schools 2007). For the Striving Readers grant the consortium partnered with a nonprofit, the Collaborative for Teaching and Learning.

The grant required that Striving Readers sites have grant-funded reading coaches. The coaches were expected to train and support teachers of grades 6–12 in applying literacy strategies in their classrooms (for example, by modeling lessons). In addition, the reading coaches were expected to teach reading intervention classes for struggling readers.

Kentucky used funds from a National Association of State Boards of Education grant to create a statewide literacy plan, which was pending approval at the time of the study (Kentucky Department of Education 2008).

*Making systemic changes to promote adolescent literacy.* Kentucky's support for adolescent literacy was part of a broader effort to raise education expectations and attainment statewide. The Kentucky Department of Education revised its academic standards in 2001 and 2007 to align the standards with American Diploma Project and College Readiness standards. Kentucky schools were also encouraged to create improvement plans annually, using the Literacy Program Effectiveness Review for Kentucky Schools (Kentucky Department of Education 2003). The state revised its standards to foster effective literacy instruction, assessment, and intervention at all schools and grade levels. For the National Association of State Boards of Education grant, all Kentucky schools may be required to create, put into practice, and monitor literacy plans (Kentucky Department of Education 2007b).

Starting in 2007 all Kentucky students were required to take three assessments offered by ACT through its Educational Planning and Assessment System: EXPLORE in grade 8, PLAN in grade 10,

**Kentucky's support for adolescent literacy was part of a broader effort to raise education expectations and attainment statewide**

**New Jersey's LEADS program required that schools implement a three-tiered instruction model built around core texts assigned to all students regardless of their reading level**

and ACT in grade 11. As one interviewee said: "All of those are assessments around helping students prepare for the ACT and college, to help create a college-going culture, to help schools provide intervention service based on needs found through those assessments."

Students not meeting benchmarks on the assessments were expected

to get interventions.

**New Jersey**

In 2002 New Jersey's governor established an Office of Early Literacy to focus on instruction for students in grades K–3. In summer 2005 New Jersey began piloting its adolescent literacy program, Literacy is Essential to Adolescent Development and Success (LEADS). The program targeted middle grade students in schools with large numbers of students performing below proficient on the state's English language arts assessment. (A timeline of the program's origins and development is in table 5.)

*Building a model based on research and experience.* In 2003 the New Jersey Task Force on Middle Grade Literacy Education was established. The task force was charged with starting a statewide

conversation about literacy education in grades 4–8, producing a consensus background document to guide policy, and improving literacy instruction in grades 4–8 (Strickland and Lattimer 2004). In 2004 the task force published its report (Strickland and Lattimer 2004). Directed at educators and state policymakers, the report summarized a literature review that identifies practices to support middle-grade readers who struggle to make academic progress. And the report made recommendations based on that review.

Through the task force's report, LEADS thus drew heavily on research about supporting struggling adolescent readers. But the program's creator also drew on previous experience with the establishment of New Jersey's elementary literacy initiative, which had produced strong results in many struggling schools.

Building on research and features of the elementary literacy initiative, LEADS evolved into a program for teaching reading and writing across several content areas to middle grade students regardless of their reading level. The program's goal was to give middle grade students the skills needed for doing academic work at a proficient or advanced proficient level. Including extensive professional development for middle grade teachers, the program required that schools implement a three-

TABLE 5  
**New Jersey state adolescent literacy policy timeline, 2002–07**

Year	Action
2002	New Jersey's governor declares that elementary literacy is the administration's goal for primary education, and establishes an Office of Early Literacy.
2003	Literacy coaches are placed in New Jersey elementary schools. The New Jersey Task Force on Middle Grade Literacy Education is established.
2004	The New Jersey Task Force on Middle Grade Literacy Education releases its report, <i>Improving the quality of literacy education in New Jersey's middle grades</i> (Strickland and Lattimer 2004).
2005	Literacy is Essential to Adolescent Development and Success (LEADS) is developed as New Jersey's state adolescent literacy program and piloted in three districts (summer 2005).
2006	New Jersey gets Reading to Achieve grant from the National Governors Association. LEADS is further developed to support native language instruction in literacy for English language learner students and piloted in eight school districts for its second year (2006/07).
2007	LEADS is piloted in 15 school districts for its third year (2007/08).

Source: Authors' compilation.

tiered instruction model built around core texts (both fiction and nonfiction) that were assigned to all students regardless of their reading level.

Tiers 1 and 2 of LEADS included all students. Tier 1 focused on a core fiction or nonfiction text. Teachers were meant to read most of the core text aloud, introducing vocabulary and discussing concepts—thus exposing all students to the same information. Tier 2 was meant to engage students in project-based learning. It was team-taught by two teachers, usually an English language arts teacher and either a special education teacher or a teacher of another subject (such as science or social studies), and it included the use of multi-leveled texts in flexible guided reading groups that support the core text. Project-based learning tasks were expected to include technology and to require writing as an essential part. For example, for students reading *Call of the Wild*, a tier 2 project might be to research and create a PowerPoint presentation about the challenges of a cold climate or to locate Internet resources for a research paper about wolf pack behavior. For such projects students were expected to have access to a broad range of content-appropriate reading materials written at several levels. Tier 3 was meant to target the readers who struggled most. It was expected to give intensive instruction in reading skills that were relevant to student needs and that used materials related to the core reading content.

The ongoing use of assessment information was central to LEADS. Students were identified for tier 3 through statewide assessment data and ongoing district-level assessments. In addition, to monitor progress and to assess program impact, all participating schools were required to do pre- and post-testing using the Developmental Reading Assessment for grades 4–8 (the DRA 2; New Jersey Department of Education Office of Literacy 2007a).

*Piloting the program and gradually scaling it up.* In 2007/08 LEADS was being piloted in 15 school districts. Districts that chose to be in the pilot were required to meet specific criteria for participating in professional development, collecting pre- and

post-test data, and putting into practice the three-tier instruction model (which required changing school schedules and teacher assignments as well as purchasing and making available materials).

Because of the substantial changes that schools would need to make to participate in LEADS, New Jersey did not require schools to join. Instead, staff members from interested districts were invited to observe summer program classes, and they were allowed to send teachers to observe professional development events in the program. Slowly, the number of interested districts increased. Some districts chose to put the program in practice for a single grade across multiple schools, while others chose to implement the program across all grades in a single school.

In 2007/08 New Jersey anticipated expanding LEADS for 2008/09. But, according to the program's coordinator, staff members worried about not having enough personnel to support all the districts that might want to join.

Of the five states studied, only New Jersey provided literacy instruction in a student's native language when possible. LEADS was available to students who were learning to read and write in Spanish. In 2006/07 staff members at LEADS worked on a research-based version of the program that would support adolescent English language learner students as readers and writers.

Materials and professional development opportunities for LEADS also explicitly included students with disabilities. The program encouraged a team-teaching approach that paired general and special education teachers (New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Literacy 2007b).

*Providing state support through funding and professional development.* The New Jersey Department of Education supported LEADS with professional development,

**Of the five states studied, only New Jersey provided literacy instruction in a student's native language when possible**

funding for and guidance about instruction materials, and guidance in examining student assessment data. Although participating schools got some money to buy materials, the program did not recommend a reading package. Schools agreed to administer a pre- and post-assessment and to work with a state literacy specialist. The specialist provided guidance and direction in putting the program into practice and offered school staff members ongoing professional development opportunities.

*Using teacher-to-teacher communication to influence teachers' attitudes about adolescent literacy.* The LEADS office had a DVD of interviews with participating content-area teachers who talked about their experiences. Program staff members originally developed the disc to introduce the program to newly participating teachers. But interviewees reported that it has also attracted prospective new participants. A chance to hear directly from other teachers helped new and prospective teacher participants begin to think differently about the role of literacy in their content areas while preparing them for program participation.

LEADS staff interviewees called it a great challenge to work with content-area teachers who might not see literacy as part of their teaching responsibilities. The DVD had also been a helpful tool in changing teachers' minds and building their understanding of adolescent literacy issues.

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## Rhode Island

Adolescent literacy became a priority in Rhode Island when two state high school summits, in November 2000 and March 2002, identified literacy as a focus for reform. (A timeline of Rhode Island's policy activities to promote adolescent literacy is in table 6.)

*Engaging key stakeholders to make adolescent literacy a priority.* The high school literacy regulations approved by the Rhode Island

Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education in January 2003 (Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2003b) were based on information from the two state high school reform summits and from public feedback. The two reform summits drew stakeholders from outside the state government and department of education.

Concerned about an unprepared entry-level workforce, the business community hosted the first summit in 2000 to identify what skills and knowledge high school graduates should have, to develop strategies for helping students get those skills and that knowledge, and to develop high school reform recommendations for the regents. The first summit was attended by a diverse group of stakeholders, including business representatives, higher-education representatives, and school- and district-level leaders. After the summit the Board of Regents created a high school subcommittee to further examine the systemic problems discussed during the first summit and to identify strategies to address them. Three priorities emerged: adolescent literacy, graduation requirements, and personalization. Two years later a second state high school reform summit was organized around those three priorities.

The second summit in 2002 allowed participants to report on progress made since the first summit and to discuss further actions. After the second summit, the high school subcommittee drafted regulations to address the need for high schools to focus on literacy, establish rigorous expectations for graduation, and restructure schools to increase personalization. The draft was disseminated for public input and discussed in several forums, with stakeholder input throughout, and the regulations were then published (Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2003b).

*Articulating the alignment between regulations and policies to ensure consistent messages to practitioners.* With several programs to promote adolescent literacy, Rhode Island tried to help practitioners see how the programs are aligned. Policy

**Adolescent literacy became a priority in Rhode Island when two state high school summits identified literacy as a focus for reform**

TABLE 6

**Rhode Island adolescent literacy policy timeline, 1987–2011**

Year	Action
1987	Rhode Island Literacy and Dropout Prevention Act passes.
2000	Rhode Island's first state high school reform summit is sponsored by the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education and the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
2002	Rhode Island's second state high school reform summit is sponsored by the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, the Rhode Island Office of Higher Education, and the Rhode Island School-to-Career Office.
2003	The Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education approves <i>Regulations regarding public high schools and ensuring literacy for all students entering high school</i> (Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2003b).
2004	The Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education requires personal literacy plans for grades K–12. Schools and districts must have plans and programs in place to support students at the middle school or high school level for 2004/05.
2005	The Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education issues <i>Rhode Island Pre-K–12 literacy policy</i> (2005b), unifying various regulations and policies related to literacy, and <i>Personal literacy plan guidelines</i> (2005a), giving more guidance on personal literacy plans for grades K–12. Personal literacy plans are required for 2005/06 for students in grades 6–10 who read at three or more years below grade level.
2006	Personal literacy plans are required for 2006/07 for students in grades 6–11 who read at two or more years below grade level.
2007	Personal literacy plans are required for 2007/08 for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students in grades 6–10 who read at one or more years below grade level.</li> <li>• Students in grade 11 who read at two or more years below grade level.</li> <li>• Students in grade 12 who read at three or more years below grade level.</li> </ul>
2008	Personal literacy plans are required for 2008/09 for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students in grades 6–10 who read below grade level.</li> <li>• Students in grade 11 who read at one or more years below grade level.</li> <li>• Students in grade 12 who read at two or more years below grade level.</li> </ul>
2009	Personal literacy plans will be required for 2009/10 for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students in grades 6–11 who read below grade level.</li> <li>• Students in grade 12 who read at one or more years below grade level.</li> </ul>
2011	All students in grades K–12 who read below grade level will have personal literacy plans. Schools will have the appropriate supports in place to put the personal literacy plans into practice (full implementation).

Source: Authors' compilation.

documents cross-referenced each other. State staff members rolled out new policies and initiatives by visiting each district—to present new expectations, and to clarify how the new requirements built on previous efforts.

A vision of literacy across the grades, with a summary of research to support it, was provided in

the *Rhode Island PreK–12 Literacy Policy* (Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2005b). That document was written to unify state laws, policies, and regulations related to literacy, including the Rhode Island Literacy and Dropout Prevention Act of 1987 (the foundation for the literacy policy) and later policies and regulations of the Rhode Island Department

All Rhode Island schools and districts in grades K–12 were required to submit plans identifying how they would support students reading below grade level in attaining grade-level literacy. The schools and districts were expected to have specific programs in place to meet students' needs

of Elementary and Secondary Education (2000, 2003b, 2003b, 2005a; Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and New Hampshire Department of Education 2007a, 2007b). The *Rhode Island Pre-K–12 Literacy Policy* required that schools provide supplemental reading instruction in grades K–12 for educationally disadvantaged students and personal literacy plans for students at risk of reading failure in grades K–3 (Rhode

Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2005b). According to the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the policy's "development . . . reflects confirmed scientific research about literacy development, intervention, and the prevention of reading difficulties" (Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2003a).

The adolescent literacy sections of the *Rhode Island PreK–12 Literacy Policy* were guided by earlier regulations meant to ensure that all students needing additional supports in reading were identified and appropriately supported. Those regulations focused on three key literacy elements (Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2003b):

- Using a diagnostic with state assessment data or local screening criteria to identify students who were reading below grade level.
- Using the results of the diagnostic to determine what additional reading instruction or interventions would be provided to each student.
- Monitoring students' literacy progress to determine the success of interventions and what further action was needed.

The regulations also required that each student reading below grade level in grades K–12 have

a personal literacy plan to identify instruction supports for him or her. Before these regulations, personal literacy plans were required only in grades K–5.

Schools and districts were expected to put in place a screening process to identify students not meeting English language arts standards. Those students were expected to receive a diagnostic assessment. Their reading levels were required to be reported to the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education each December. In addition, all schools and districts in grades K–12 were required to submit plans identifying how they would support students reading below grade level in attaining grade-level literacy. The schools and districts were expected to have specific programs in place to meet students' needs.

*Developing a clear, research-based vision for adolescent literacy instruction.* Rhode Island's Scaffolded Framework for Secondary Literacy described how schools and districts could put the adolescent literacy regulations and the personal literacy plan guidelines into practice (Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2003a). The framework's research base was discussed in the state literacy policy (Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2005b). The framework identified three types of support to help schools meet the needs of all students.

First, all students were expected to receive "school-wide, discipline-specific literacy instruction." Content-area teachers were held primarily responsible for supporting students' literacy growth at the middle and high school levels. The teachers were expected to help students develop literacy skills specific to their discipline by embedding comprehension-strategy instruction in the study of domain-specific content (Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2003a).

Second, students who were reading at one or two years below grade level and need additional support were required to receive "targeted literacy

instruction.” That instruction—providing additional instructional time outside the schoolwide literacy instruction—could be delivered with various strategies, including literacy “ramp up” programs, extended literacy periods, and after-school programs. Each student reading below grade level was expected to have a personal literacy plan that documented the student’s current instructional supports, the strategies and format for the planned intervention, and the desired outcomes of the intervention. Teachers providing targeted literacy instruction were expected to receive substantial professional development and instruction materials to help them meet student needs, but the teachers were not required to be certified in reading. Diagnostic assessments and progress monitoring were expected to guide targeted small-group instruction and to be recorded on students’ personal literacy plans (Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2003a).

Third, the framework addressed the needs of students requiring “intensive literacy instruction.” It required that each student reading at three or more years below grade level, or identified by local criteria as having substantial reading difficulties, have a personal literacy plan designed and carried out primarily by a certified literacy specialist (Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2005a).

*Phasing in parts of policies and working to integrate literacy improvement into state institutions.* Rhode Island was phasing in the literacy supports identified in its policy (see table 6). Personal literacy plans were required for 2005/06 for students in grades 6–10 reading at three or more years below grade level. Grade 11 was added for 2006/07. Grade 12 was added for 2007/08. Schools were expected to gradually phase in supports until all students in grades 6–12 reading below grade level had personal literacy plans.

Rhode Island’s long-term strategy relied on literacy specialists to build the capacity of secondary schools by supporting teacher development (Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary

Education 2003a). The state believed that the intensified focus on literacy in the elementary and middle grades would reduce the number of students entering high school with significant reading problems and that schools—as they built and improve their literacy infrastructure each year—would become better equipped to help students who still needed help (Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2003a).

State education department staff members reported that progress could be slow and difficult because Rhode Island’s adolescent literacy effort was embedded in a larger, systemic high school reform effort. Yet the staff members believed that such systemic reform made Rhode Island’s approach to statewide adolescent literacy improvement deeper and more far-reaching than other approaches, and they reported already seeing evidence for transformative changes in adolescent literacy instruction.

**Rhode Island’s long-term strategy relied on literacy specialists to build the capacity of secondary schools by supporting teacher development**

## FEATURES OF STATE ADOLESCENT LITERACY POLICY ACROSS FIVE STATES

To be selected for this study (see box 1 and appendix C), states must have used five types of strategy to support their state-level adolescent literacy improvement policies (summarized in box 3). While these five criteria guided selection, the states applied them in different ways, according to specific needs and goals.

### Engaging key stakeholders to make adolescent literacy a priority

States engaged key stakeholders in two ways: by using stakeholder expertise and feedback and through family literacy programs.

*Using stakeholder expertise and feedback.* To encourage broad support for state policies, Alabama, Kentucky, New Jersey, and Rhode Island engaged

## BOX 3

### Five types of strategy for supporting state-level adolescent literacy policy

The states studied used five types of strategy to support their adolescent literacy improvement policies:

- *Engaging key stakeholders to make adolescent literacy a priority.* Alabama, Kentucky, New Jersey, and Rhode Island reported efforts to inform adolescent literacy policies using stakeholder expertise and feedback. Florida used family literacy programs to develop parent and community capacity and make literacy a priority for more stakeholders.
- *Setting rigorous state literacy goals and standards, with other state policies aligned to support them.* Interviewees in all five states reported that rigorous standards for literacy had been developed or were in development. Interviewees in Alabama and Rhode Island described how their states ensured collaboration among state education agency departments. And Florida, Kentucky, and Rhode Island aligned adolescent literacy initiatives with early literacy initiatives.
- *Aligning resources to support adolescent literacy goals.* State

policies take local context into account when aligning resources to promote adolescent literacy. Each state had at least one state education agency staff member devoted to adolescent literacy, and each state required that schools provide reading interventions to struggling readers. The five states had various ways to fund adolescent literacy improvement. Funding was a special challenge for the three states lacking statewide initiatives.

- *Building educator capacity to support adolescent literacy progress at state, school, and classroom levels.* Leaders in all five states described professional development and new staff hires as key to supporting state adolescent literacy programs. State education agencies in Florida and Kentucky partnered with colleges and universities to build the agencies' capacity. All five states used a combination of direct training for teachers and training for coaches, usually with a focus on content-area literacy instruction and intervention with struggling readers. All used school-based coaches, and state-based coaches or literacy specialists were critical to professional development in all states but Florida. Yet the five states assigned different functions to

such coaches and specialists, reflecting important differences among their literacy improvement strategies. All states had systems for two-way communication between reading coaches or specialists and state-level staff.

- *Measuring progress and using data to make decisions and provide oversight.* All five states reported a commitment to using data for decisionmaking. All viewed assessment as an important element of their policies—yet none was satisfied with the assessments available. Respondents described their efforts, and the efforts of schools, to use assessments formatively and collectively to push for better student literacy outcomes. They reported the use of screening, diagnostic, and assessment data to measure progress, inform placement, and support instruction, although they have differing guidelines for doing so. And they described their engagement in various oversight activities: communicating with reading coaches, collecting data on the numbers of students receiving interventions, collecting data from assessments, and monitoring school compliance with certain demands. Still, the interviewees described a need for greater oversight capacity.

stakeholders directly in policy development. The stakeholders and the methods used to engage them varied by state:

- The Alabama Reading Panel included teachers, college and university staff,

business people, and members of grassroots organizations.

- Kentucky's governor formed the Kentucky Literacy Partnership, a group that included parents, teachers, superintendents, state officials,

and higher education representatives. In 2002 the group produced a state literacy plan.

- New Jersey's Middle Grades Task Force brought higher education partners together to review research.
- Rhode Island held two high school literacy summits, with representatives from schools, districts, higher education, and businesses.

In 1996 the Alabama State Department of Education convened a 25-member Alabama Reading Panel to review research, examine the state's current policies and practices for reading instruction, and draft the Alabama Reading Initiative, a K–12 literacy program. Panel participants included “representatives from classrooms, colleges and universities, business and industry, and grassroots support groups” (O’Neal, Spor, and Snyder 2001, p. 2). Alabama used funds from businesses and nonprofit organizations to pilot the Alabama Reading Initiative.

Florida's state literacy program, Just Read, Florida! was established by the governor's executive order (Bush 2001) and thus did not rely on stakeholder participation for its creation. However, Florida did involve stakeholders through family literacy programs (see below).

Kentucky involved stakeholders early in the planning of its state policy through the Kentucky Literary Partnership, which the state's governor established in 1999. (After a change of governors, the new administration did not continue the partnership's work.)

New Jersey engaged institutions of higher education and other stakeholders through its Middle Grades Task Force, established in 2003. The task force met regularly for a year and reviewed current research on how to support struggling adolescent readers. It ensured that educators from the state and local universities could contribute to its recommendations. The task force's report (Strickland and Lattimer 2004) laid the foundation for the model underlying New Jersey's adolescent

literacy program, Literacy is Essential to Adolescent Development and Success (LEADS), developed in 2005.

Rhode Island's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education held two summits targeting adolescent literacy in the state's high school reform effort. Both summits were attended by business and higher education representatives as well as by school- and district-level leaders. The state then drafted regulations to address the need for high schools to focus on literacy and disseminated the regulations for public input (Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2003a).

*Engaging families to promote literacy.* Although Florida did not engage stakeholders in policy development, it involved stakeholders by working with families to support literacy. According to one interviewee, the mission of Just Read, Florida! included “making literacy a priority for every citizen.” To that end, the office supported projects to build parents' literacy, such as the Florida Family Literacy Initiative. The aim of the office's Families Building Better Readers project was to help parents support literacy skills at home. Additionally, medical providers advised parents on the importance of reading aloud and gave books to children at checkups from ages 6 months to 5 years through the Florida Reach Out and Read initiative.

**Interviewees in all five states reported that rigorous literacy standards were developed or in development**

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Setting rigorous state literacy goals and standards, with other state policies aligned to support them

Interviewees in all five states reported that rigorous literacy standards were developed or in development. Two issues affecting policy alignment were emphasized across states: collaboration and cooperation across state education agency departments and alignment with early literacy initiatives.

*Collaboration and cooperation within state education agencies.* Interviewees in all five states found

**Interviewees in all five states also stated that collaboration among state education agency departments was often required to address factors critical to a comprehensive adolescent literacy approach**

collaboration among state education agency departments important. But only interviewees in two states, Alabama and Rhode Island, described specific strategies their states were using to ensure such coordination to help align standards, assessments, and curricula and to make adolescent literacy a systemwide goal.

Research on developing policy systems calls for aligning policy features across departments (Clune 1993; Cohen and Hill 2001; Heck et al. 2003). Interviewees in all five states emphasized the importance of communication and collaboration within the state education agency. Interviewees in all five states also stated that collaboration among state education agency departments was often required to address factors critical to a comprehensive adolescent literacy approach. Examples of such factors included rigor and alignment in state standards, assessments, and curricula. Also mentioned were issues related to teacher certification, preparation, and support.

The Alabama State Department of Education held frequent roundtables to foster internal collaboration and coherence. Initially the roundtables were held to help schools that failed to make adequate yearly progress (the minimum improvement that schools must make each year toward achieving state academic standards). Over time, the roundtables evolved to help identify commonalities across various programs—enabling the programs to work together toward higher student outcomes, their common goal. Interviewees in Alabama reported that, through the roundtables, adolescent literacy representatives and career and technical education representatives saw that they serve a similar population of struggling readers and had begun exploring ways to bring literacy to career and technical classes.

Rhode Island interviewees described three main strategies for fostering collaboration within the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and

Secondary Education. First, they viewed their adolescent literacy work as part of a comprehensive high school reform effort. All high schools in the state were expected to engage in a three-pronged improvement process—rethinking their graduation expectations, restructuring schools to improve personalization, and focusing on literacy improvement. Thus the literacy work was intended to help drive a systemic process of whole-school improvement.

Second, offices within the department met regularly—to ensure consistency and coherence in their messages to schools and to discuss the implications of policy in one area for work in another area. The Office of Middle and High School Reform, Office of Instruction, and Office of Assessment worked together closely to coordinate their efforts. One interviewee explained:

*It's been a very nice relationship between our offices. You see that if [you] don't know what the other is doing, you're going to get an incredible misalignment, and that's at best. At worst, you would be giving mixed messages to the field. . . . We worked really hard to have a consistent voice.*

Third, interviewees described how Rhode Island aligned policy documents clearly and deliberately to send a consistent message about the state's expectations for putting adolescent literacy requirements into practice.

**Alignment with early literacy initiatives.** Recent research finds that literacy instruction must be provided across all grades (for example, Torgesen et al. 2007). Interviewees in all five states described how their states were building on literacy efforts targeting the elementary grades, extending those efforts to develop a literacy continuum that supported students progressing through the grades. All five states' education systems made literacy an instruction topic at all levels. Florida, Kentucky, and Rhode Island approached literacy as a part of instruction at all grade levels through alignment with early literacy initiatives.

Interviewees in all five states described how their states had taken advantage of the Reading First model and funding stream (see appendix B) to promote adolescent literacy. Interviewees in Florida and Kentucky called Reading First a key anchor for each state’s literacy continuum. The Just Read, Florida! office built on the experiences of reading coaches in Reading First and began spreading that coaching model in 2004 (Florida Senate 2004). Kentucky extended the Reading First coaching model to middle and high schools, defining its Reading First program as a “professional development initiative for primary teachers and teachers of special needs students in Grades K–12” (Kentucky Department of Education 2007b). Through the program Kentucky’s 11 literacy specialists trained lead teachers in grades 4–12, who then went on to train their colleagues. (Such lead teachers included coaches from the state’s Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project, which trained middle and high school teachers as literacy coaches.) Also, Kentucky offered training in research-based reading instruction, federally funded through Reading First, to all teachers of struggling readers.

Rhode Island’s literacy efforts started with an intensive focus on the early grades. In 2000 the state established the K–3 Rhode Island Reading Policy, which was based on the Rhode Island Literacy and Dropout Prevention Act of 1987—the state’s first attempt to define effective reading instruction and assessment. In 2005, to extend the K–3 policy and unify the state’s literacy reform efforts, Rhode Island framed the *PreK–12 Rhode Island Literacy Policy*. The PreK–12 policy document gave a comprehensive vision of literacy across the grades and spelled out the alignment of various related initiatives (Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2005b).

New Jersey began its elementary literacy program in the mid-1990s to improve academic performance in struggling urban schools. Later, as Reading First funds became available, New Jersey blended some aspects of its elementary literacy program with Reading First goals. Through the

literacy program’s use of data to inform instruction, state literacy staff saw that many students’ reading performance declined substantially after they left the elementary grades. That discovery prompted the development in 2006 of Literacy is Essential to Adolescent Development and Success (LEADS), a middle school program that borrowed and substantially modified many instruction features first developed for elementary students. For example, the state adapted the three-tiered model often used in Reading First schools to meet adolescents’ needs.

The Alabama Reading Initiative, piloted in 1998, was meant to support grades K–12. In 2002 the initiative was modified to focus on grades K–3 until all the state’s elementary schools were included, but selected middle and high schools could still participate. At the time of the study such participation remained voluntary for middle and high schools. However, a new Alabama Reading Initiative–Project for Adolescent Literacy was piloted in 2006 for middle and high schools alone.

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### Aligning resources to support adolescent literacy goals

State policymakers took local contexts into account when aligning resources—time, people, money—to support adolescent literacy initiatives. Such careful alignment finds support in recent research: “Leaders who strategically allocate resources such as time, space, personnel, professional development, funding, technology, and materials are more likely to meet the goals of the school’s literacy action plan” (Irvin, Meltzer, and Dukes 2007, p. 200).

Each of the five states assigned at least one state education agency staff member to adolescent literacy. Each also required that schools provide reading interventions to struggling readers. The five states had various ways of funding adolescent

**State policymakers took local contexts into account when aligning resources—time, people, money—to support adolescent literacy initiatives**

literacy improvement; funding was a special challenge for the three states lacking statewide initiatives.

*Allocating time and identifying skilled instructors to provide reading interventions.* Intervention was key to each state's plan for adolescent literacy improvement. Struggling adolescent readers need reading instruction beyond that typically provided in middle and high school classrooms (Alvermann and Moore 1991; Kamil 2003; Sturtevant 2003), and knowing which students need what kind of additional instruction is not simple (Balfanz, McPartland, and Shaw 2002). For the students most behind in literacy skills, all five states required additional instruction from teachers with special training. But states had various ways to identify students for extra support, to assign responsibility for providing interventions, and to decide what form the interventions would take.

Florida, Kentucky, New Jersey, and Rhode Island targeted students who did not meet grade-level standards on a state standardized reading test for literacy interventions. Florida and Rhode Island identified two levels for intervention: below standards (level 2) and far below standards (level 1). Florida middle and high school students were required to provide reading interventions for all students who scored at level 1, and only teachers identified as highly qualified to teach reading or working toward a reading endorsement or certification were able to provide that intervention. If students scored at level 2 they received content-area interventions from specially trained teachers (Lenzo 2006). In Rhode Island, schools were required to provide intensive literacy instruction taught by certified literacy

specialists to all students reading three or more years below grade level. For students reading at one or two years below grade level, schools were required to provide extra instruction time, which could take various forms, including extended literacy blocks and after-school programs.

Although states differed in their access to capital, all blended state funds with other funding streams to finance adolescent literacy programs

Kentucky made school reading coaches (such as those trained through the state's Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project) and content-area teachers share responsibility for providing intensive literacy instruction to struggling readers, although there was no required format or model for such instruction. In addition, schools had to identify how they would give interventions to struggling readers as part of their improvement plans for the annual Literacy Program Effectiveness Review for Kentucky Schools (Kentucky Department of Education 2003). Furthermore, schools participating in the Striving Readers grant had a reading coach who was expected to work 50 percent of his or her time with students reading at two or more years below grade level (Danville Schools 2007).

New Jersey created a model that integrated three tiers of reading instruction for students depending on their need. Students needing the most support received small-group reading instruction that was integrated into the content area of the core reading text for the class and was also targeted to student need. Students needing moderate support participated in classroom activities, such as research or making presentations, using alternate texts that extended the core reading text for the class. All interventions were based on student needs identified through a standardized test, ongoing classroom assessments such as running records, and anecdotal records collected during guided reading.

The Alabama Reading Initiative—Project for Adolescent Literacy expected school faculties to develop and put in practice an intervention plan for struggling readers (Alabama State Department of Education 2007a). Schools were required to provide intervention programs for both fluency and comprehension.

*Funding and allocating funds.* All five states used several funding sources. Interviewees in all states identified funding as a key planning area, stressing the need to allocate funds specifically to adolescent literacy. In Rhode Island one interviewee stated, "I know we talk about funding and say there's never enough money for this. It's more

the message of reallocation of funds, setting your priorities straight, and setting regulations.”

Although states differed in their access to capital, all blended state funds with other funding streams. Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, and New Jersey directly funded professional development for reading coaches but required local funds to pay reading coach salaries (except for federally funded coaches in Kentucky’s Striving Readers project). Both Rhode Island and Kentucky used Reading First funds for broader literacy efforts. Funds from the National Association of State Boards of Education paid for Kentucky to draft a new state literacy plan.

New Jersey and Rhode Island promoted shifting local resources to adolescent literacy. New Jersey state educators used assessment data (including collection and analysis) to support such a shift: analyses of data by state staff members whose work supported districts and schools helped to identify struggling student groups and track their progress through the state’s adolescent literacy program. Rhode Island dedicated resources to support reading coaches—a key move to engage district- and school-level educators in issues related to reading instruction for older students. Rhode Island state educators gave reading coaches credit for an increase in support to adolescent literacy initiatives.

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#### Building educator capacity to support adolescent literacy programs at state, school, and classroom levels

Interviewees in the five states reported that when their states began attending to adolescent literacy they generally lacked infrastructure, expertise, funds, and other resources (such as appropriate reading and instruction materials, reading programs, interventions, and assessments) to improve middle and high school literacy. Capacity was needed at the state, school, and classroom levels. In response, states used professional development and new staff hires to enable state education agencies to support adolescent literacy programs. All five states used school-based literacy coaches

to build school capacity, though states defined the role of such coaches differently.

#### *Professional development and new staff hires.*

Research on addressing the needs of struggling adolescent readers repeatedly stresses the importance of professional development (Balfanz, McPartland, and Shaw 2002; Irvin, Meltzer, and Dukes 2007; Shanahan 2004). All five states used a combination of direct training for teachers and training for literacy coaches. In most, that combination focused on content-area literacy instruction and intervention with struggling readers. State-based coaches or literacy specialists were critical to professional development in all states but Florida.

When Florida and Kentucky began trying to improve adolescent literacy, they partnered with colleges and universities to build their capacity. Florida Literacy and Reading Excellence, a professional development program, provided state-funded training for Florida teachers working toward their reading endorsement. So did the North East Florida Educational Consortium, whose Literacy Essentials and Reading Network offered free online tutorials to all educators. And the Just Read, Florida! office provided summer training for teachers and coaches. Districts were expected to provide the lowest-performing schools with coaches to implement the Just Read, Florida! coaching model.

Kentucky’s Collaborative Center for Literacy Development had several projects to train teachers and coaches (Kentucky Department of Education 2007b). The Kentucky Reading Project provided teachers with professional development for using assessments. For grade 4–12 educators the Kentucky Writing Project held weeklong summer academies on content-area literacy. And Kentucky’s Adolescent Literacy Project trained

**Interviewees in the five states reported that when their states began attending to adolescent literacy they generally lacked infrastructure, expertise, funds, and other resources to improve middle and high school literacy**

**Interviewees and policy documents described professional development as key to states' adolescent literacy efforts**

teachers to work with teachers at their schools as reading coaches. Another external group, the Kentucky Content Literacy Consortium, managed the Striving Readers grant, which funded training for teachers in a set of rural middle and high schools (Danville

Schools 2007). Finally, Kentucky's 11 state literacy specialists supported the state's literacy projects by providing on-demand adolescent literacy training to districts and schools.

In contrast to Florida and Kentucky, the three other states studied—Alabama, New Jersey, and Rhode Island—began by developing their internal capacity by hiring staff with adolescent literacy expertise or training current staff in this area. Alabama's six state-based regional adolescent reading coaches were responsible for most of the training in the state, running a summer institute for school staff and providing weekly support to school-based coaches. Alabama was unique in having a state-based principal coach.

Rhode Island had state-based literacy specialists give technical assistance to districts and schools and train literacy coaches. They also presented new policy documents to the teams responsible for putting the new policies into practice—teams assembled by districts and composed of school and district staff. Team members received materials and toolkits for disseminating what they had learned at the school level.

New Jersey's 10 state-based literacy specialists provided professional development and technical assistance for each district participating in the state adolescent literacy program, LEADS. The literacy specialists held a summer institute to launch the program and provided follow-up support throughout the year.

*School-based coaches.* All five states used school-based coaches. Some coaches worked only with teachers at the school, others with both teachers and struggling students.

All the interviewees called professional development for teachers essential. But one New Jersey interviewee explained the difficulty of settling on specifics:

*What is the training? What is the content that you want to move forward? How do you boil that down, in a series of training sessions that directly impact teachers and curriculum developers? How do you train to change, [provide] constant follow-up, and focus on impact on students in classrooms? How then does the school district institutionalize that?*

Such questions reflect the challenges that interviewees described as inherent to designing support for adolescent literacy policy. Reading coaches and literacy specialists, who are chiefly responsible for professional development in classrooms, in schools, in districts, or in whole regions, grapple with such questions every day. Furthermore, many coaches do more than just work with teachers—they provide interventions to struggling students, identify and purchase materials, collect assessment data, and support data analysis.

Interviewees and policy documents described professional development as key to states' adolescent literacy efforts. Florida's reading coaches trained teachers on interventions, assessments, and instruction and helped collect data for the state. Alabama's coaches were responsible for most teacher professional development and communicated often with the state's regional coaches. Similarly, New Jersey's coaches had regular contact with state-level program staff members. The coaches supported professional development for teachers, supported data collection, helped to select materials, and analyzed data to identify students for interventions.

Kentucky's Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project trained teachers as reading coaches only for teachers at their schools, but the state's Striving Readers schools had coaches who split their time between supporting teachers and giving interventions to struggling readers (Danville Schools 2007). Rhode

Island’s reading coaches and literacy specialists provided interventions to struggling students and also helped teachers develop research-based literacy practices. According to the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, this dual focus was “intended to cultivate a school-wide focus on literacy instruction” and to “expand the capacity of our secondary schools . . . to provide direct in-class instructional support to students and teachers” (2003a, pp. 10–11).

Interviewees in all five states saw communication between coaches and the state as supporting a unified approach to state adolescent literacy policy. Each of the five states had a system for communicating between reading coaches or specialists and state-level staff—helping information flow from the states to the schools and districts and back to the states.

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#### Measuring progress and using data to make decisions and provide oversight

Researchers emphasize the importance of using both student performance data and standardized assessment data to inform decisions (Biancarosa and Snow 2006; Irvin, Meltzer, and Dukes 2007). The five states studied were all committed to using data, and assessment was an important part of their adolescent literacy policies.

*Collecting screening, diagnostic, and assessment data.* All five states required the collection of screening, diagnostic, and assessment data to inform placement, to support instruction, and to measure progress. Interviewees in each state reported the use of various assessments, including screeners, diagnostic tests, progress monitoring tools, and outcome tests—yet they expressed dissatisfaction with the adolescent literacy assessments available. Interviewees in each state also described their efforts and the efforts of schools to use assessments formatively and collectively. They reported conducting oversight in various ways, but noted that greater oversight capacity was needed.

Each state had different guidelines for data collection. Alabama schools used the statewide

test and Stanford Achievement Tests to gauge outcomes and student needs. Florida, Kentucky, and New Jersey used their state tests to identify students for reading interventions. New Jersey also required that the Developmental Reading Assessment II for Grades 4–8 be given to students as they begin and end their participation in the literacy program. State-level educators examined the assessment data closely and discussed them with school-level administrators. In Rhode Island assessments were selected locally, but the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education provided a list of assessments for districts to consult.

Florida and Rhode Island gave additional guidance on monitoring the progress of students receiving reading interventions. Florida’s Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network let the state collect, manage, and report assessment information from screening, progress monitoring, and outcome assessments (Florida House of Representatives 2006). Both the state and schools monitored the data, but each had a different focus. State educators expected schools to examine their own data: “We take a look at [the data]. We’re hopeful that the schools actually are using it even more than we are.” Yet state education agency officials also reviewed the data to check for compliance:

*It provides us with a number of students that are involved in reading intervention. So, we can make sure that our students are in fact enrolled in those classes—in the classes they’re supposed to be in. And, we can look at the time [reading coaches are] spending and where they’re spending it to see if those coaches are being used effectively.*

Rhode Island teachers used data from ongoing progress monitoring to inform instruction (Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2005b).

**The five states studied were all committed to using data to inform decisions, and assessment was an important part of their adolescent literacy policies**

*Using data to guide instruction and monitor progress.* Although all five states used data to determine instruction and monitor progress, interviewees were dissatisfied with the adolescent literacy assessments available. An Alabama interviewee called it a “real struggle to find some good progress monitoring instruments in the middle grades,” adding: “We have not been totally satisfied.” Interviewees in other states echoed such concerns, reporting that they were seeking assessments that can be more useful to teachers’ instructional planning. Florida, collaborating with some of its partners, had taken steps to develop its own K–12 assessment system, including diagnostic and progress monitoring tools. The state was piloting some of the assessments in three districts. A Florida interviewee described the state’s Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network:

*Our goal was basically to eliminate the need for any publisher or vendor. . . . The key here is that there is so much over-assessment that we’re trying to eliminate that and only provide tools that have utility. We want tools that have overlap, that . . . will give teachers useful information.*

All five states had oversight and monitoring for their adolescent literacy efforts. But interviewees in all five states reported needing more capacity for such tasks. The states lacked the staff they would need to monitor data from participating schools—and other program features—as well as they would like to. Interviewees in each state listed four ways in which the state monitored how policies were put in practice: states communicated with reading coaches, collected information on the numbers of students getting interventions, collected assessment data, and monitored schools’ compliance with certain expectations (such as participating in professional development, adhering to a particular schedule, or using a set minimum of instruction time for topics related to literacy).

**All five states had oversight and monitoring for their adolescent literacy efforts. But interviewees in all five states reported needing more capacity for such tasks**

Interviewees in all states stressed the importance of helping schools and districts make better use of their data. Many school-level literacy coaches and state-level literacy specialists were expected to support data use. Although the coaches and specialists could help schools use their data for decisionmaking, they lacked the time and resources to give as much support as the schools needed.

Several interviewees underlined the basic challenge of putting adolescent literacy policy in practice and the enormous shifts required of teachers and schools. In the words of an Alabama interviewee: “We greatly, greatly, greatly underestimated the set-up time that we would need for getting interventions going in some places where they had to learn everything.”

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## **TWO CHALLENGES: CONTENT-AREA LITERACY INSTRUCTION AND SCALING PROGRAMS UP**

Interviewees emphasized two challenges that fell outside the five policy areas investigated. The first was providing content-area instruction to support both literacy skills and content-area competencies. The second was scaling up adolescent literacy policies.

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### **All five states incorporated content-area literacy into their adolescent literacy programs**

Research on content-area literacy has underlined the challenge of giving struggling adolescent readers instruction that improves their reading skills while giving them access—regardless of their reading level—to grade-level content (Heller and Greenleaf 2007; Torgesen et al. 2007). Alabama expected all teachers to use strategic techniques that support the teaching of content-area materials with literacy strategies. In Florida literacy interventions for moderately struggling readers could occur in separate intervention classes or within content-area classes, but students most at risk for reading difficulties were required to take free-standing reading intervention classes. Kentucky

used its Striving Readers grant to support content-area literacy with a schoolwide intervention for grades 6–12 through the Kentucky Content Literacy Consortium.

New Jersey required that all reading instruction use texts related to specific content areas. The state’s Adolescent Literacy instruction program was meant to target students’ individual needs while exposing all students to the content, vocabulary, and contexts of grade-level texts (New Jersey Department of Education 2007). Similarly, Rhode Island’s Scaffolded Framework for Secondary Literacy included, for all students, “school-wide, discipline-specific literacy instruction” that addressed their literacy needs with reading strategies specific to each content area (Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2003a).

Content-area teachers got professional development in content-area literacy in all states—in Alabama through the Alabama Reading Initiative–Project for Adolescent Literacy, in Florida through Content Area Reading Professional Development, and in Kentucky from school-based reading coaches or through the Kentucky Writing Project, which held content-area professional development academies for teachers of grades 4–12. New Jersey provided professional development in content-area literacy during summer trainings, and Rhode Island included it in the professional development provided by state-level staff and school literacy specialists.

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### States had various strategies for scaling up adolescent literacy initiatives

Alabama, Kentucky, and New Jersey had policies to support adolescent literacy through small-scale programs or pilots. State educators in those states were concerned by the challenge of scaling up such programs. They pointed to staffing needs, professional development needs, and the need for resources (including funding and a range of reading materials that would meet the needs of students at many different reading levels)

to support increasing numbers of participating schools. Such concerns differed markedly from those expressed by interviewees in the two states—Florida and Rhode Island—that had put their adolescent literacy policies into practice statewide.

**Interviewees emphasized two challenges outside the policy areas examined in this study: providing content-area instruction to support both literacy skills and content-area competencies and scaling up adolescent literacy policies**

Alabama and New Jersey had piloted their adolescent literacy programs in a limited number of participating schools, and were planning to expand the number of schools over time. In both states the pilot schools volunteered to participate. State educators in both states said that this approach allowed state leaders to test new ideas on a small scale and learn from early experiences—making the pilot schools models for the schools that would join later. The educators also said that the approach allowed states to gradually build capacity to meet the needs of more and more participating schools. Kentucky hoped to expand its various programs targeting adolescent literacy and connect them into a coherent approach.

Rather than gradually add new schools, Rhode Island was gradually adding policy requirements for all schools. For example, the state expected all schools to provide literacy supports for a larger range of students each year. Rhode Island educators explained the process as a way to prevent overwhelming school staff with new requirements at any one time. Florida was also increasing its requirements over time, seeing this as a way to reach the large number of students in schools across the entire state rather than focus exclusively on a small number of schools and students.

Interviewees identified two other challenges to scaling up adolescent literacy programs: educators had too many other demands on their time, and good models were lacking. In the words of a

Rhode Island interviewee: “It’s not difficult to get principals and teachers invested in literacy. [But] they have a lot on their plates right now. And at the high school level, there aren’t any good models, and it’s new to us now.”

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## CONCLUSION AND QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Statewide policies to improve adolescent literacy in Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, New Jersey, and Rhode Island were developed and put into practice by various people: state-level policymakers, state-level educators, state-level politicians, and local educators. The educators and policymakers in each state tailored their approach to needs in their state.

This report does not compare the merits of the five states’ different approaches. Instead, it describes policies crafted by different states—policies that reflect a range of challenges faced by state-level educators working to support struggling adolescent readers (see table 7).

Policies in all five states required programs to meet program expectations by having certain features. Yet those features varied by state. Alabama’s and New Jersey’s state policies were more connected to local schools and districts, supporting a small number of programs closely linked to the state. State policies in Florida, Kentucky, and Rhode Island provided for less direct contact between the states and schools—yet they expected programs to adhere closely to certain program requirements.

State policymakers need more information on meeting the needs of adolescent readers. According

to interviewees, the following questions especially deserve further research:

- How can reading coaches or literacy specialists best support adolescent readers?
- What are the best ways to integrate reading instruction into content-area instruction?
- What are the most useful formative, summative, and diagnostic assessments for adolescent readers?
- What assessments best meet secondary teachers’ and secondary students’ needs?
- What are the impacts on student outcomes of various programs—whether based on models discussed in this report or based on other models?
- What are the best ways of preparing and supporting teachers to meet the needs of struggling adolescent readers?
- What are the best ways to meet the needs of English language learner students and students with disabilities at the middle and high school levels?
- What are the best ways to manage funding streams?
- What are the most effective strategies for scaling up programs?
- What are the best ways to conduct oversight and monitor compliance for such large-scale programs?

TABLE 7

**Summary of state adolescent literacy policies in Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, New Jersey, and Rhode Island**

Literacy project details	Alabama	Florida	Kentucky	New Jersey	Rhode Island
Program origins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alabama Reading Panel (1996)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Florida Literacy and Reading Excellence (2000)</li> <li>Just Read, Florida! (2001)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kentucky Literacy Partnership (1999)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Office of Early Literacy (2002)</li> <li>Middle Grades Task Force (2003)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rhode Island Literacy and Dropout Prevention Act of 1987</li> <li>High school reform summits (2000, 2002)</li> </ul>
Key program partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alabama Reading Panel initially funded by the A+ Education Foundation and businesses</li> <li>Panel of advisors to create the Alabama Reading Initiative—Project for Adolescent Literacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>University of Central Florida</li> <li>North East Florida Educational Consortium</li> <li>Florida Center on Reading Research</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborative Center for Literacy Development</li> <li>Kentucky Content Literacy Consortium</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Middle Grades Task Force included:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents</li> <li>Teachers</li> <li>Higher education representatives</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business community helped organize high school reform summits</li> </ul>
Policy and legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Best practices in adolescent literacy 2007: Grades 4–12</i> (Alabama State Department of Education 2007b)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Middle Grades Reform Act (Florida Senate 2004)</li> <li><i>District K–12 comprehensive reading plans</i> (Florida State Board of Education 2005)</li> <li>A++ Plan for Education (Florida House of Representatives 2006)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher’s Professional Growth Fund (Kentucky Department of Education 2006)</li> <li><i>Improving adolescent literacy in Kentucky: A joint position statement</i> (Kentucky Department of Education, Kentucky Reading Association, and Kentucky Board of Education 2008)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Developing literacy in middle and secondary learners: evidence-based policy recommendations for New Jersey’s schools</i> (New Jersey Reading Association 2003)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Regulations regarding public high schools and ensuring literacy for all students entering high school</i> (Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2003b)</li> <li><i>Rhode Island PreK–12 Literacy Policy</i> (Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2005b)</li> <li><i>Personal literacy plan guidelines</i> (Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2005a)</li> </ul>

(CONTINUED)

TABLE 7 (CONTINUED)

**Summary of state adolescent literacy policies in Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, New Jersey, and Rhode Island**

Literacy project details	Alabama	Florida	Kentucky	New Jersey	Rhode Island
Instruction features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Strategic teaching” integrates:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three-tiered intervention</li> <li>• Content-area literacy</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Content-area literacy</li> <li>• Ongoing formative assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instruction integrates:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three-tiered intervention</li> <li>• Content-area literacy</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Striving Readers program integrates:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three-tiered intervention</li> <li>• Content-area literacy</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project includes:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content-area literacy</li> <li>• Teacher-led interventions</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instruction integrates:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three-tiered intervention</li> <li>• Content-area literacy</li> <li>• Project-based learning</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scaffolded Framework for Secondary Literacy includes:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three-tiered intervention</li> <li>• Schoolwide, discipline-specific literacy instruction</li> <li>• Targeted literacy instruction</li> <li>• Intensive literacy instruction</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alabama Reading Initiative funding is:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private (for the first year)</li> <li>• Public and private (for the second year)</li> <li>• Predominantly public (after the second year)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Alabama Reading Initiative—Project for Adolescent Literacy funded by:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local education agencies (for first cohort of schools)</li> <li>• State (starting in 2008)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research is funded by the state legislature through:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Just Read, Florida!</li> <li>• Florida Center for Reading Research at Florida State University</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Training is funded by state legislature through:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Just Read, Florida!</li> <li>• University of Central Florida</li> <li>• North East Florida Educational Consortium</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State funds support:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Literacy consultants</li> <li>• Professional development</li> <li>• Collaborative Center for Literacy Development</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Federal funds support:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading First grants</li> <li>• Striving Readers grants</li> <li>• Additional funds are provided by the National Association of State Boards of Education</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District funds primarily support New Jersey Literacy is Essential to Adolescent Development and Success (LEADS)</li> <li>• State funds support:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional development</li> <li>• Assessment data analysis</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools and districts fund program operations (including associated costs)</li> <li>• Federal funds support some professional development through Reading First grants</li> <li>• State funds:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support some professional development for schools</li> <li>• Can be used for adolescent literacy</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

(CONTINUED)

TABLE 7 (CONTINUED)

**Summary of state adolescent literacy policies in Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, New Jersey, and Rhode Island**

Literacy project details	Alabama	Florida	Kentucky	New Jersey	Rhode Island
Professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least 85 percent of all staff are required to attend a summer institute</li> <li>All school staff are required to get embedded training from a school coach</li> <li>Regional reading coaches provide:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing professional development for school reading coaches</li> <li>Weekly technical assistance at Alabama Reading Initiative—Project for Adolescent Literacy schools</li> </ul> </li> <li>Principal coach works with Alabama Reading Initiative—Project for Adolescent Literacy administrators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State funds:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professional development for teachers to meet reading endorsement requirements</li> <li>Summer training for teachers and coaches (through Just Read, Florida!)</li> </ul> </li> <li>Lowest performing schools have coaches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborative Center for Literacy Development trains teachers:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On assessments (through Kentucky Reading Project)</li> <li>As reading coaches (through Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project)</li> </ul> </li> <li>Federal Striving Readers grant:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funds 50/50 coach/interventionist</li> <li>Trains teachers and coaches (through Striving Readers and Content Literacy Project)</li> </ul> </li> <li>Kentucky Content Literacy Consortium provides training to 23 rural middle and high schools</li> <li>Reading First trains K–12 teachers on working with struggling readers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many districts have optional, district-funded reading coaches</li> <li>State literacy specialists:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide training and technical assistance to districts in LEADS</li> <li>Run summer institutes</li> </ul> </li> <li>State provides regional training for K–8 coaches (through Reading First)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State staff visit districts to roll out new policies</li> <li>State has irregularly offered some professional development on coaching</li> <li>Literacy specialists are part-time reading coaches</li> <li>High school regulations require teachers to get 15 hours of professional development annually in a priority area</li> </ul>

(CONTINUED)

TABLE 7 (CONTINUED)

### Summary of state adolescent literacy policies in Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, New Jersey, and Rhode Island

Literacy project details	Alabama	Florida	Kentucky	New Jersey	Rhode Island
Data and assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools are required to intervene with students scoring below grade level on the Stanford Achievement Test</li> <li>Teachers build class profiles from Stanford and state data to determine:</li> <li>Students' instruction levels</li> <li>Students' need for a diagnostic assessment</li> <li>Teachers use informal fluency checks to determine instruction materials for each student</li> <li>Teachers use daily informal assessments to plan instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students scoring in the lowest two tiers on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test are required to:</li> <li>Get interventions</li> <li>Have progress monitored at least three times each year</li> <li>Teachers use Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network online data access and assessment for grades 6–12</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>States provided schools with data from the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System, which includes:</li> <li>Tests</li> <li>Writing portfolio</li> <li>Nonacademic indicators</li> <li>Students take:</li> <li>ACT's EXPLORE assessment in grade 8</li> <li>ACT's PLAN assessment in grade 10</li> <li>The ACT test in grade 11</li> <li>Schools are encouraged to use data on student needs and progress from several sources to inform their annual comprehensive plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interventions are given to students in grades 6–8 who score in the lowest quartile on the state standardized assessment</li> <li>State uses DRA2 pre- and post-assessment (summer or school year):</li> <li>As a diagnostic</li> <li>As an outcome measure</li> <li>State analyzes data collected by districts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools are required to use a state-approved diagnostic test for:</li> <li>Screening</li> <li>Diagnostic assessment</li> <li>Progress monitoring</li> <li>Progress is monitored at:</li> <li>District level</li> <li>School level</li> <li>Classroom level</li> <li>Students reading below grade level are reported to the state annually</li> <li>Progress monitoring is key to personal literacy plans</li> </ul>
Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alabama Reading Initiative: School faculties develop and implement an intervention plan for struggling readers. Reading coaches are part-time interventionists.</li> <li>Alabama Reading Initiative—Project for Adolescent Literacy: Intervention programs are required to address decoding, fluency, and comprehension. Interventions must be provided by intervention teachers to students reading below grade level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students scoring at level 1 (the lowest tier) on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test must take a reading intervention class.</li> <li>Students scoring at level 2 may receive intervention through a content-area reading intervention in their content-area class or in a reading intervention class.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools must identify how they will provide interventions to struggling readers.</li> <li>Striving Readers: School reading coaches spend 50 percent of their time with students reading two or more years below grade level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All students performing below a specified cutoff point on the state standardized assessment get reading interventions.</li> <li>Intervention is built into the three-tiered instruction model. Teachers provide targeted small-group or individual instruction on a daily basis using materials that draw on the core content area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All students reading below grade level must have a Personal Literacy Plan.</li> <li>Students reading one or two years below grade level receive extra instructional time (“targeted literacy instruction”) from a trained teacher.</li> <li>Students reading three or more years below grade level receive intensive literacy instruction from a certified literacy specialist.</li> </ul>

(CONTINUED)

TABLE 7 (CONTINUED)

**Summary of state adolescent literacy policies in Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, New Jersey, and Rhode Island**

Literacy project details	Alabama	Florida	Kentucky	New Jersey	Rhode Island
Reading coaches and literacy specialists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For the Alabama Reading Initiative, reading coaches:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use at least 50 percent of their time to coach teachers</li> <li>Use the rest of their time to plan meetings, work with struggling students, and provide content professional development</li> </ul> </li> <li>For the Alabama Reading Initiative—Project for Adolescent Literacy, reading coaches work with teachers and administrators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Districts are required to increase the number of schools with reading coaches each year, with coaches placed in low-performing schools first.</li> <li>Districts must allocate resources to provide coaches to the lowest performing students</li> <li>Coaches must implement the Just Read, Florida! coaching model</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For Striving Readers, reading coaches work with students reading two or more grade levels behind</li> <li>For the Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project, reading coaches provide professional development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State literacy specialists:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide training to participating districts</li> <li>Work with school reading coaches (in schools that have them)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Literacy specialists:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use some of their time for teacher support</li> <li>Use the rest of their time for working with struggling students</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Growth strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Alabama Reading Initiative:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Had competitive applications until 2004</li> <li>Was joined in 2004 by all the state's K–3 schools</li> </ul> </li> <li>The Alabama Reading Initiative—Project for Adolescent Literacy:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Was piloted in 14 schools in 2006</li> <li>Is planned to be scaled up slowly</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An extensive professional development program offers:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Endorsements (both online and in person)</li> <li>Certifications (both online and in person)</li> </ul> </li> <li>The number of reading coaches is required to increase annually</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A grant from the National Association of State Boards of Education supports organizing the state's various projects into a coherent system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interested districts are:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invited to observe trainings</li> <li>Encouraged to participate the next year (if they are interested and willing to agree to program conditions)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Literacy supports have been added since 2004/05</li> <li>By 2011 all K–12 students reading below grade level will have personal literacy plans in place</li> </ul>

Source: Authors' compilation based on state case studies described in the text.

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## APPENDIX A

### REVIEW OF RESEARCH ON ADOLESCENT LITERACY AND RELATED POLICY

This appendix summarizes:

- Why educators are concerned about adolescent literacy instruction.
- Research on adolescent literacy instruction methods.
- How research on adolescent literacy instruction methods has been translated into practice.
- How research on adolescent literacy instruction methods has informed policies to target adolescent literacy.

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#### Why educators are concerned about adolescent literacy instruction: shifting the focus on literacy to adolescents

Reading instruction traditionally has been relegated to the early elementary grades. Following Chall's (1996) framework of reading development, educators have often separated learning to read from reading to learn, with learning to read ending in grade 3. But recent research challenges that notion. "Learning to read' hardly comes to an abrupt halt at the end of third grade. . . . If [students] do not acquire the new skills specific to reading after the initial period of learning to read, they will not leave high school as proficient readers" (Torgesen et al. 2007, p. 6). And reading skills are learned over time. "The need to guide adolescents to advanced stages of literacy is not the result of any teaching or learning failure in the preschool or primary years; it is a necessary part of normal reading development" (Moore et al. 1999, p. 4).

Experts now view literacy policy as needing to focus on all grades rather than ending at grade 3. Students in grades 4–12 need literacy support that meets their unique challenges while also enabling them to meet the academic demands of middle and high school. Research suggests that adolescent

literacy development is fundamentally different from early literacy development and requires a different set of instructional strategies to support it. According to Ippolito, Steele, and Samson, "A central challenge of adolescent literacy instruction lies in recognizing that effective literacy skills differ among disciplines and in helping students develop the range of skills that facilitate success in many contexts" (2008, p. 2).

Until recently, little information was available about literacy instruction beyond grade 3, so policymakers had few resources to guide their efforts to improve adolescent literacy (Allington 2000). But now experts can point to "a substantial body of research on instructional methods for adolescent struggling readers" (Scammacca et al. 2007, p. 5) and to a substantial body of knowledge about the challenges faced by this population. According to one recent study, "Enough is already known about adolescent reading—both the nature of the problems of struggling readers and the types of interventions and approaches to address these needs—in order to act immediately on a broad scale" (Biancarosa and Snow 2006, p. 10).

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#### Research on adolescent literacy instruction methods

Students who struggle to read at grade level face daunting odds at any age. But as students move beyond the elementary grades they become less and less likely to catch up with their peers who are proficient readers (Shaywitz et al. 1999; Torgesen and Burgess 1998; Torgesen, Rashotte, and Alexander 2001). And their limited reading abilities impede achievement in other subjects. First, they are presented with increasingly complex literacy tasks, as they move from the simple fiction and nonfiction texts read in early elementary grades to the more challenging readings of upper-level elementary classrooms. Then, as they make the transition to middle and high school, they must synthesize information from various materials—such as textbooks, fiction, maps, tables, charts, and electronic media—often with little explicit support or instruction in how to engage with them.

Circumstantial obstacles to improving the literacy of struggling adolescent readers can include secondary school educators' varying beliefs, their lack of access to professional development in serving struggling readers, and their poor understanding of the changes needed to support struggling readers, as well as the unwillingness of content-area teachers to make such changes (O'Brien, Stewart, and Moje 1995). However, evidence suggests that struggling adolescent readers can make progress with the right supports, such as:

- Targeted and explicit instruction to all students.
- Individualized instruction to struggling readers.
- Professional development specifically for teachers of struggling adolescent readers.
- Attention to texts and materials used in middle and high school classrooms.
- A focus on engaging students in content.
- A focus on content-area literacy instruction (Alvermann 2001; Alvermann and Moore 1991; Irvin, Meltzer, and Dukes 2007; Kamil 2003; Torgesen et al. 2007).

A review of research identifies a broad range of instructional strategies that are associated with improved outcomes for adolescents who read below their grade level. The strategies include explicit vocabulary instruction (Baumann et al. 2002; Nelson and Stage 2007), explicit comprehension instruction (Peeverly and Wood 2001), opportunities for extended discussion of text (Applebee et al. 2003), improving student motivation (Guthrie and Wigfield 2000; Schumaker et al. 2002), and intensive and targeted interventions for struggling readers (Peeverly and Wood 2001; Therrien, Wickstrom, and Jones 2006). The research gives evidence that particular instructional strategies improve reading. But that evidence is not definitive. Other factors may be associated

with the outcomes. (The review of research included studies conducted in schools and clinical settings. It used methods such as experimental and quasi-experimental design, a single-subject design—in which the sample size is one or more individuals considered as one group—and a large scale correlational study.)

Research also suggests that other instruction features may benefit struggling adolescent readers. Such features include the integration of methods that help students activate prior knowledge (Readance, Bean, and Baldwin 1995; Wilder and Williams 2001), the use of multimedia and digital texts (Alvermann 2001), a focus on oral reading fluency (Rasinski et al. 2005; Rasinski and Hoffman 2003; Stahl and Heubach 2005), and the use of graphic organizers (DiCecco and Gleason 2002).

Evidence also suggests that adolescent academic outcomes can improve when several educators across all areas of study share responsibility for individual students' academic growth (Deshler et al. 2001). Several studies recommend an approach to adolescent literacy that engages teachers of all content areas (Carrig and Honey 2004; RAND Reading Study Group 2002; Santa 2004; Schoenback et al. 1999).

Research about supporting struggling adolescent readers indicates that, for schools, three features are crucial:

- Educators should be adequately prepared to provide appropriate and explicit instruction to students across the content areas.
- Schools should provide appropriate texts and instructional materials that support a wide range of reading levels in several content areas.
- Schools should provide targeted and explicit interventions for readers who are struggling the most (Alvermann 2001; Irvin, Meltzer, and Dukes 2007; Kamil 2003, 2008).

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### How research on adolescent literacy instruction methods has been translated into practice

Research on adolescent literacy instruction has been summarized recently in four widely disseminated reports (Biancarosa and Snow 2006; Boardman et al. 2008; Kamil et al. 2008; Torgesen et al. 2007) that aim to translate adolescent literacy research into useful information for practitioners and policymakers. These reports offer schools, districts, and states information about research on three aspects of adolescent literacy improvement:

- Intervention for struggling adolescent readers.
- Research-based instructional strategies for adolescents.
- The structural features of schools and programmatic elements that support them.

Although the four reports do not speak directly to the role of state policy, they have implications for developing state policy and for putting state policy into practice. They all identify three features as essential to effective adolescent literacy instruction:

- Explicit instruction in comprehension strategies.
- Instruction that systematically teaches students procedures.
- Instruction in using routines—such as asking questions, summarizing, and making inferences—that will help students read.

In addition, the four reports emphasize the importance of explicit vocabulary instruction to help students build content knowledge and read content-area texts. They discuss the need to increase students' motivation and engagement by building their confidence as readers and by connecting reading to their interests and life experiences. Finally, the reports discuss the need for

students to engage in more high-quality discussions about texts.

Other reports identify additional features as important to an effective adolescent literacy program—such as ongoing formative and summative assessment of students and programs, high-quality professional development, and strong leadership for adolescent literacy improvement (Biancarosa and Snow 2006)—and offer further evidence-based guidance to policymakers (Short and Fitzsimmons 2007; Heller and Greenleaf 2007). Each of these reports targets a specific issue related to adolescent literacy improvement. Yet each calls for a comprehensive, schoolwide focus on adolescent literacy. Professional development, collaboration across content areas, and effective use of assessments are identified as key policy and program features.

Another series of reports and resources aims to provide state- and district-level leaders with information on how to support struggling adolescent readers. The series includes a meta-analysis on the relative effectiveness of interventions for struggling adolescent readers and a practice brief synthesizing the implications of that research for decisionmakers in the field (Boardman et al. 2008; Scammacca et al. 2007). Finally, one report focuses on reading interventions for students who read at far below their grade level and who need specialized instruction to catch up with their grade-level peers (Torgesen et al. 2007). These reports discuss the benefits of intervention for older students with reading difficulties, and they identify two types of intervention to be used based on student needs: the first focuses on word-reading accuracy and fluency, the second on vocabulary and reading comprehension strategies.

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### How research on adolescent literacy instruction methods has informed policies to target adolescent literacy

Research suggests that the scope and complexity of the adolescent literacy problem require a large-scale, systemic approach from states (Shanahan

2004). Yet limited information exists about how state policy should mandate such an approach (National Association of State Boards of Education 2006). Mandating standards and assessments is, in itself, no guarantee of success (Sloan McCombs et al. 2005). Although researchers have studied the roles of states and state agencies in promoting instructional changes (Fuhrman 1993; Hamann and Lane 2004; Lusi 1997), such research does not specifically address adolescent literacy. According to a recent report, “Few states have begun to think systematically about how state policies and practices should support a new approach to the education of adolescents. Rather, improvements have more commonly been made at the margins” (National Association of State Boards of Education 2006, p. 5).

Improving adolescent literacy is a large undertaking with significant challenges. Research on developing policy systems discusses the need to align policy features to reinforce each other and provide consistent messages to schools and districts (Clune 1993; Cohen and Hill 2001; Heck et al. 2003). Large-scale, systemic improvement requires attention to several policy areas that, though interdependent, may be overseen by different departments. Research cautions against having a “project mentality,” in which measures taken to address problems in single areas and with isolated programs yield fragmented, incoherent policy (Smith and O’Day 1991). In addition, a study that engaged state educators and policymakers in four states to think systematically about how to apply adolescent literacy research to policy found that policy approaches were often hindered by a scarcity of funds and other resources (instruction materials, appropriate assessments, professional development sources, reading materials at various reading levels, and so on) as well as by political obstacles (Snow et al. 2008).

Although there is no empirical research on the efficacy of state-level policy approaches for large-scale adolescent literacy improvement, three recent guidance documents put forth similar recommendations for state and district policies

to support adolescent literacy. The first, based on the National Governors Association’s experience working with states engaged in adolescent literacy improvement efforts, identifies five strategies for governors to use when addressing adolescent literacy challenges. The strategies are:

- Build support for a state focus on adolescent literacy.
- Raise literacy expectations across grades and curricula.
- Encourage and support school and district literacy plans.
- Build educators’ capacity to provide adolescent literacy instruction.
- Measure progress in adolescent literacy at the school, district, and state levels.

Steps are outlined for putting each strategy into practice (National Governors Association 2005).

The second guidance document is based on the work of a study group on middle and high school literacy convened by the National Association of State Boards of Education. Reviewing research, and examining the implications for state policymakers, the report identifies six steps for states developing a literacy plan and putting the plan into practice:

1. Set state literacy goals and standards, ensuring alignment with curricula and assessments and raising literacy expectations across curricula for all students in all grades.
2. Ensure that teachers have the preparation and professional development necessary to provide effective, content-based literacy instruction.
3. Strategically use data to identify student needs, design cohesive policies, and evaluate the quality of implementation and its impact.

4. Require the development of district and school literacy plans that infuse research-based support strategies in all content areas.
5. Provide districts and schools with funding, supports, and resources.
6. Provide state guidance and oversight to ensure strong implementation of comprehensive, quality literacy programs (National Association of State Boards of Education 2006).

The third report, by the National School Boards Association, describes eight strategies based on adolescent literacy research (and aligned with the list of key factors in Biancarosa and Snow 2006) for districts to support adolescent literacy:

- Identify students' literacy needs.
- Make adolescent literacy a district priority.
- Extend time for literacy.
- Provide professional development to help teachers deliver literacy instruction across curricula.
- Find and support literacy leaders.
- Align district resources to support scientifically proven literacy programs for high and low achievers.

- Evaluate programs and assess performance continually.
- Develop community support for literacy in grades PreK–12 (National School Boards Association 2006).

These three guidance documents provide similar advice to policymakers, with similar recommendations for policy development and implementation. All three emphasize building educators' capacity through high-quality professional development, cultivating literacy leaders, and supporting the development of school and district literacy plans. And all three emphasize the need to measure progress and use data to make decisions and provide oversight. Two of the three reports recommend engaging a range of stakeholders to make adolescent literacy a priority. And two suggest setting rigorous state literacy goals and standards, with resources aligned to support these goals.

The recommendations discussed above draw from a scant pool of research on adolescent literacy policy. More information is needed about whether the recommendations will produce policy that improves adolescent literacy. Yet the documents cited here represent the best available information about developing and putting into practice adolescent literacy policy. Therefore, they underlie the conceptual framework for this project (see table C1 in appendix C).

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**APPENDIX B  
GLOSSARY**

**Adolescents.** Defined for this report as students in grades 4–12.

**Content-area literacy.** Literacy skills needed for content-area study (for example, the literacy required to understand social studies content). Such skills include the ability to read and understand historical, expository, and biographical or autobiographical texts. They also include the ability to read and understand images, such as prints, drawings, period photographs, tables, timelines, and graphs representing numeric information (such as on population movements or gross national product).

**Direct instruction.** Emphasizing carefully planned lessons, small learning increments, and clearly defined and prescribed teaching tasks, direct instruction aims to prevent the misinterpretation of content and goals.

**Explicit instruction.** Based on behavior analysis and on research about school effectiveness, explicit instruction includes the clear and systematic presentation of instruction approaches and strategies to students.

**Interventionist.** An educator—possibly a specially trained interventionist or a general education teacher—who gives intensive instruction to one or more academically struggling students.

**Literacy.** The ability to read and write, to comprehend and interpret written text, and to communicate meaning through text.

**Literacy intervention.** Intensive instruction by a teacher or specialist, targeting struggling readers.

**Reading coach.** An educator with training—and often a degree or certificate—in reading instruction who works with other educators to improve reading instruction.

**Reading First.** A federal reading instruction grant for grade K–3 students mandating specific scheduling, staffing, assessment, and instruction practices in participating schools. Each state applied for Reading First grant funds and created unique Reading First programs following the general federal guidelines.

**Strategic teaching.** Targets the needs of a particular student group in a particular setting through analyzing factors such as learner types, curriculum goals, and teacher goals and strengths.

**Targeted instruction.** Instruction tailored to the needs of one student or a small group of students.

**Three-tiered intervention model.** Students at each reading level are grouped into one of three tiers. Tier 1 comprises all students, with the expectation of high-quality instruction for all. Tier 2 comprises students identified as needing extra reading support, with instruction that builds on tier 1 instruction. Tier 3 comprises students who read substantially below grade level, giving them intensive instruction in the areas of their greatest need. Tier 2 and tier 3 instruction are provided in addition to tier 1 instruction. With tier 1 typically taking 90 minutes; tier 2, 30 minutes; and tier 3, 30 minutes, the students most at risk for reading failure get 150 minutes of reading instruction each day.

## APPENDIX C

### METHODOLOGY OF STATE SELECTION, DATA COLLECTION, AND ANALYSIS

To meet the need in Northeast and Islands Region states for information on various state approaches to adolescent literacy policy, this project studied five states from various U.S. regions and with various policy approaches. Two research questions guided the study:

1. What policies and practices have states adopted to promote effective adolescent literacy practices at the school and district level?
2. What did state education agency officials learn about developing and putting into practice state policies to support adolescent literacy?

#### Sample selection

To guide the study selection of states, researchers reviewed adolescent literacy policy research. The EBSCO research database was searched for documents published in 2000–07, using the keywords *adolescent literacy* and *policy*. In addition, the researchers searched the Internet and an internal web site of resources on adolescent literacy developed by the New York and New England Comprehensive Centers (federally funded, regionally based technical assistance centers).

Through a review of previous research (see appendix A) the researchers identified several features that were consistently identified as elements of state policy efforts to improve adolescent literacy. These features were synthesized into five criteria. (The contributions of five key publications to the five criteria are shown in table C1.)

*Criterion 1: the state has engaged key stakeholders to make adolescent literacy a priority.* The researchers sought states that had established clear leadership for their initiative—for example, by appointing an adolescent literacy coordinator, establishing a state office for adolescent literacy, or convening an adolescent literacy advisory panel. They sought

states that had focused on adolescent literacy by sharing information about students' literacy performance with parents, teachers, local community members, and school and district administrators. Finally, they sought states that had fostered community involvement in literacy through activities such as literacy events and volunteer programs.

*Criterion 2: the state has set rigorous state literacy goals and standards, with other state policies aligned to support them.* The researchers sought states that had evaluated their literacy standards and amended them in response to the growing literacy expectations of our culture and marketplace. They sought states with rigorous new literacy standards clearly articulated for all grades and content areas, with curricula that reflected these standards and with assessments that gauged whether the standards were met. Finally, the researchers favored states that had aligned policies in other areas, such as teacher quality, to support adolescent literacy.

*Criterion 3: the state has aligned resources to support adolescent literacy goals.* The researchers sought states with adolescent literacy programs that addressed and funded crucial resources such as time, personnel, and materials. They sought states that had mandated time for literacy and for intervention instruction during the school day for all grade levels. Finally, they gave preference to states that had funded ongoing, effective professional development activities related to literacy and that had allocated funds to buy research-based materials, including books and intervention programs, for grades 4–12.

*Criterion 4: the state has built educator capacity to support adolescent literacy programs at state, school, and classroom levels.* The researchers sought states that had framed state-level literacy plans and that had also required districts and schools to draft literacy plans. They sought states with literacy plans that called for schoolwide literacy instruction within content areas, interventions for students who need additional reading help, and long-term professional development in literacy instruction across content areas for teachers, reading

TABLE C1

**How guidance in five key publications informed each of the five criteria for state selection**

	Criteria for state selection				
	1. The state has engaged key stakeholders to make adolescent literacy a priority.	2. The state has set rigorous state literacy goals and standards, with other state policies aligned to support them.	3. The state has aligned resources to support adolescent literacy goals.	4. The state has built educator capacity.	5. The state has measured progress and used data to make decisions and provide oversight.
<i>Reading to achieve: a governor's guide to adolescent literacy</i> (National Governors Association 2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build support for a state focus on adolescent literacy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise literacy expectations across grades and curricula.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build educator capacity to provide adolescent literacy instruction.</li> <li>Encourage and support school and district literacy plans.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Measure progress in adolescent literacy at the school, district, and state levels.</li> </ul>	
<i>The next chapter: a school board guide to improving adolescent literacy</i> (National School Boards Association 2006)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make adolescent literacy a district priority.</li> <li>Include the community.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Align resources to support what works.</li> <li>Make time for literacy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support strong professional development.</li> <li>Look for and support literacy leaders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify students' literacy needs.</li> <li>Keep track of what is happening.</li> </ul>
<i>Reading at risk: the state response to the crisis in adolescent literacy</i> (National Association of State Boards of Education 2006)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set state literacy goals and standards and align with assessments and curricula.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide districts and schools with funding, supports, and resources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that teachers have the preparation and professional development they need.</li> <li>Require districts and schools to develop research-based plans.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use data strategically.</li> <li>Provide state guidance and oversight to ensure strong implementation of comprehensive quality literacy programs.</li> </ul>

(CONTINUED)

TABLE C1 (CONTINUED)

**How guidance in five key publications informed each of the five criteria for state selection**

	Criteria for state selection				
<p>1. The state has engaged key stakeholders to make adolescent literacy a priority.</p> <p>2. The state has set rigorous state literacy goals and standards, with other state policies aligned to support them.</p> <p>3. The state has aligned resources to support adolescent literacy goals.</p> <p>4. The state has built educator capacity.</p> <p>5. The state has measured progress and used data to make decisions and provide oversight.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make professional development ongoing, make it systematic, and make it include teachers, coaches, resource-room staff, librarians, and administrators.</li> <li>• Incorporate professional development into regular school schedule and provide information about current research.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use ongoing formative and summative assessments.</li> <li>• Frequently administer formative assessments that are specifically designed to inform instruction.</li> <li>• Design summative assessments to track individual student progress throughout a school year as well as over the student's academic lifetime.</li> <li>• Target teachers, principals, superintendents, and state-level education policy and program staff.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build a system to assess student progress toward literacy goals and to let schools measure literacy progress to improve instruction.</li> </ul>		
<p><i>Reading next: A vision for action and research in middle and high school literacy</i> (Biancarosa and Snow 2006)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set adolescent literacy goals and make a plan to meet them.</li> <li>• Examine and address curriculum issues within a statewide literacy plan.</li> <li>• Create or adjust state policies to support adolescent literacy goals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give districts and schools resources to implement and sustain plans to meet state literacy goals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide mechanisms for schools to build staff capacity to implement high-quality literacy instruction.</li> </ul>		
<p><i>Academic literacy for adolescents: a guidance document from the Center on Instruction</i> (Torgesen et al. 2007)</p>					

Source: Authors' compilation.

coaches, and administrators. Finally, they sought states that had updated requirements for teacher preparation, amended their licensing standards to support the state literacy plan, and included strategies in their literacy plans to retain teachers and to attract and develop strong literacy leaders in schools and districts.

*Criterion 5: the state has measured progress and used data to make decisions and provide oversight.*

The researchers sought states with specific policies for using assessment data; an infrastructure for receiving, analyzing, and disseminating those data; and a policy to use both formative and summative data—as well as data across various groups (such as ethnicity groups and students with disabilities) and from various levels (state, district, and school)—to ensure that all students benefited from their literacy programs. The researchers sought states that required schools and districts to collect and interpret data quickly, to respond to data quickly and directly with instruction that targets student needs, and to create action plans for addressing troubling data.

In July 2007 a draft of the five criteria was distributed by email to seven project advisors from the research, foundation, and policy and advocacy communities (see appendix D). After the advisors gave their feedback, minor modifications were made to the criteria. The advisors were then asked to identify states that met the criteria. Because the study aimed to illustrate various adolescent literacy policy approaches, the advisors were also encouraged to take the distinctiveness of states' approaches into account.

The researchers compiled a table that listed all recommendations and showed how far each recommended state had developed its policy. The advisors nominated 12 states, of which 2 were nominated by all seven advisors and 2 were nominated by five of seven advisors. To further narrow the field of states for possible selection, researchers conducted phone interviews with the advisors, discussing policy development and practice in each state still on the list. States were removed from consideration for various reasons (such as not having put policy into

practice, substantial and recent leadership changes, and the youth of adolescent literacy policies or programs). After the phone interviews, five states were selected. A sixth, alternative state was also identified, in case a state declined to participate.

An initial contact person in each state was identified through web searches and through guidance from advisors. The researchers then identified and emailed a key contact person for each state to help collect policy documents and schedule site visits and interviews. For each state the researchers sent a letter that described the project and invited the state to participate through interviews and sharing policy and related documents. All five invited states agreed to participate.

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#### Document collection and the identification of interviewees

The researchers searched the Internet for adolescent literacy policy documents from each case study state and reviewed web sites on states' adolescent literacy programs wherever such sites existed. After reviewing the documents and web sites, researchers emailed each state contact person to request additional policy documents and web sites, if such sources were available, and to ask questions about the structure and staffing of state adolescent literacy programs. That information allowed researchers to decide how many interviewees to target in each state—identifying state education agency staff as key players in the state's adolescent literacy policy efforts—and to identify the topics about which each interviewee would know something. Document and web site reviews also generated state-specific questions for interviews. While visiting each state education agency, researchers collected policy documents and other supporting materials not found on the Internet.

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#### Interview protocol development

Initial contact with the state contact people confirmed that each state's adolescent literacy program or programs had unique structures, features, and staff configurations. To observe the strict rules that

govern data collection for Issues & Answers projects, the researchers tailored interview protocols to each interviewee's areas of expertise. The researchers developed a central pool of interview questions addressing the framework criteria, implementation, and contextual information, and they added lists of state-specific questions based on the document and web site review. (See appendix E for the central pool and the lists of state-specific questions.) The researchers then created interviewee protocols for each interviewee—pulling from the central pool only those questions that each interviewee was likely to be able to answer with firsthand knowledge. Finally, the researchers tried to triangulate data by asking each question to two interviewees in each state. Because the roles and responsibilities of interviewees varied considerably by state, no two interview protocols were identical. Thus, no interview instrument was used more than once.

#### Site visits and interview data collection

The researchers made one-day site visits to each state. Originally, each site visit was to last three days, but the length of visits was reduced when the researchers found fewer state department staff involved in adolescent literacy policy than they had anticipated. Each state was able to schedule all its interviews for a single day.

At each site the director of the state's adolescent literacy program or programs was interviewed. Several staff members then gave group or individual interviews, with the researchers targeting the staff members' individual program responsibilities. For example, in states where using data appeared central to programs, the researchers met with data and accountability department staff members; in states where adolescent literacy was viewed as part of a literacy continuum, the researchers met with professional literacy developers who work with teachers of all grades (K–12). Decisions about whom to interview were made before arrival at each site, through policy document reviews and information from each state's key contact person. Four semi-structured interviews were conducted in each state. In Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, and New Jersey all interviews were with individuals. In Rhode Island two individual interviews and two group interviews with staff members in the same roles were held. (Interviewees in each state appear in table C2.)

#### Data analysis

Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Interview notes from researchers supplemented the transcribed documents. The researchers found no major disagreements among interviewees in any state about their state's policies. All interviewees

TABLE C2

#### Interviewees, by state

Alabama	Florida	Kentucky	New Jersey	Rhode Island
Assistant State Superintendent of Education for Reading	Executive Director of Just Read, Florida!	Adolescent Literacy and Language Arts Branch Manager	Assistant Commissioner for the Division of Education Programs	Director of the Office of Instruction
Alabama Reading Initiative Secondary Literacy Coordinator	Deputy Director of Just Read, Florida!	Director of the Collaborative Center for Literacy Development	Director of Language Arts Literacy Education	Director of Assessment
Alabama Reading Initiative Administrator	Elementary Reading Specialist	Director of Assessment Implementation	Literacy is Essential to Adolescent Development and Success (LEADS) Coordinator	Fellow in the Office of Middle and High School Reform (two interviewees)
Director of Career and Technical Education	Middle School Reading Specialist	Lead Contact of the State Literacy Consultants	Literacy Specialist	Literacy Specialist (three interviewees)

Source: Authors' compilation.

consented to be recorded and to be identified in the report.

All interview files and other web-based and printed documents relevant to state adolescent literacy policy were uploaded into a qualitative data analysis software program (Atlas.ti), which all researchers were trained to use.

Three steps were used to ensure reliability across raters:

- Initial codes were established and defined based on the framework's five criteria and on implementation factors that researchers noted during interviews.
- Atlas.ti allowed all team members to compare codes even when using different documents. Although each researcher was assigned a state or states to code, the researchers convened weekly to refine definitions for codes, explain new codes that each researcher had added during the previous week, and merge codes that were redundant.
- All documents were coded by two team members. This secondary coding occurred after all documents and interviews had been coded once and the complete set of codes had been developed. The secondary coder was responsible for adding codes that emerged after the first coder had read the documents and for noting any disagreement between coders. Such disagreements, which occurred rarely, were resolved through discussion among the researchers.

(A list of codes used for the study is in box C1.)

Because the number of study states was fairly small, the coding enabled researchers to become very familiar with all interview and supporting policy documents. It helped them identify features that set each state apart. And it allowed them to confirm those findings with analyses run in Atlas.ti (such as Codes Primary Document Tables, which tallied

the number of quotations per code in each state and overall). Using established case study methodology, the researchers built descriptions of each case, interpreted coded information using categorical aggregation, and looked for patterns within and across cases (Creswell 2007; Stake 1995; Yin 2003).

The researchers provided each state's case study and the overall findings to the state's contact person for review. Each contact person read the case study and findings and submitted minor revisions to the researchers. All revisions were included in the final report.

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### Study limitations

The result of an exploratory study, this report describes the experiences of five states that have promoted adolescent literacy through state policy, documenting their various approaches to supporting state literacy efforts. The report aims to inform educators and policymakers about the states' various approaches. The researchers drew information from policy documents and interviews with state-level educators. They did not gather data from schools or school districts that put state adolescent literacy policies into practice. Since the report does not examine the impact of any policy on student outcomes, it cannot support inferences about the efficacy of any approach.

The number of interviews in each state was small. Interview protocols were customized for each interviewee, to limit the number of times each question was asked. As a result, the case study descriptions are based on a small number of interviews—four in each state.

Because developing adolescent literacy policies is a fairly new responsibility for many state-level educators, such policies are in a state of flux. The data gathered here represent the states' efforts at the time of the study. They will no longer reflect current programming as programs and policies evolve. This document is merely a snapshot of a changing education policy area. It aims to contribute to knowledge in an area still under exploration.

BOX C1

**Codes used for data analysis with Atlas.ti**

Assessment	External collaboration	For coaches
Data diagnostic	Funding	For districts and superintendents
Data exchange	Generating research	For other
Formative	Governor	For principals and schools
Informal	Grade level	For teachers
Other	1–12	Structure, format, frequency
Outcome data	Elementary	Policy
Progress monitoring	Middle	Expectations
Standards	High School	Purpose
Support for data use	Pre Kindergarten	Unofficial expectations
Bottom up	Higher Education	Program components
Business	Other	Project-based learning
Climate	Role in professional development	Technology
Funding	Role in policy	Writing
Policymaking	Role in research	Program evaluation
Capacity	Changes	Program vision
Organization	Historical content	Reading First
Other	Impact	Reading specialist
Schools	Internal coherence	Regulation
Skills and knowledge	Internal collaboration	Scaling up
Staffing	Internal incoherence	School administration
Climate	Internal support	Standards
Coaching	Intervention	State board of education
Credentials	Interventionist	Striving Readers grant
Credentials/quality	Law	Sustainability
Community outreach	Leadership	Systemic
Compliance and oversight	Legislature	Target population
Contact with schools or district	Lost control	Teacher preparation
Content-area literacy instruction	National Association of State Boards	Certification
Curriculum	of Education grant	Content and structure
Definition of literacy	Nonsustainability	Endorsements
Disagreement	Obstacles	Higher education role
Expectations	Professional development	Teacher skills and knowledge
For classrooms	By district	Title I
For districts	By other	Tools to support implementation
For schools	By school coach	Top down
	By state	Using research
	By university	Vendors of textbooks and materials
	Content	Writing

## APPENDIX D ADVISORS TO THE REPORT

The study had seven adolescent literacy experts from the research, policy, advocacy, and funding communities as its advisors. Advisors reviewed the five selection criteria and were asked to identify states that met the criteria. The advisors were:

- Dr. Joseph Torgesen, Robert M. Gagne Professor of Psychology and Education at Florida State University and Director of the Florida Center for Reading Research, where he has authored more than 160 articles, book chapters, books, and tests related to reading and learning disabilities.
- Andres Henriques, Program Officer at the Carnegie Corporation of New York, where he has spearheaded the adolescent literacy initiative that has produced Reading Next and Writing Next among other documents supporting adolescent literacy efforts across the country.
- Dr. Donna Alvermann, Distinguished Research Professor of Language and Literacy Education at the University of Georgia, former co-director of the National Reading Research Center, and current editor of *Reading Research Quarterly*.
- Dr. Rafael Heller, Senior Policy Associate at the Alliance for Excellent Education, with more than 15 years of experience as a policy analyst, researcher, editor, teacher educator, and writing instructor.
- Elizabeth Schneider, Vice President of State Advocacy and Outreach at the Alliance for Excellent Education. Prior to joining the Alliance, Schneider served as Executive Director of the Southern Governors Association for 10 years.
- Jeremy Ayers, Policy and Advocacy Associate for the Alliance for Excellent Education, where he analyzes data for Alliance initiatives, particularly those focused on teacher quality, adolescent literacy, and English language learner students.
- Ilene Berman, Program Director in the Education Division at the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, which provides policy advice, research, and technical assistance to governors and their advisors.

## APPENDIX E

### QUESTIONS USED FOR INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Reproduced below are the questions used for interview protocol development, followed by lists of state-specific questions.

#### Central pool of interview questions used for interview protocol development

- A. History of the program
  1. Describe your state's adolescent literacy program or programs.
  2. What is your role in the program?
  3. What was the state's impetus for an adolescent literacy program? When did it begin?
  4. Who started the program? Why was that person or group involved?
  5. Who else participated (businesses, universities, concerned parents, teachers, etc.)? What task forces or working groups were formed? What were their goals? What did they produce (state literacy plan, reports, recommendations, policy, etc.)?
  6. Does the state have a literacy plan that includes adolescent literacy? Who wrote it and when? Has it been revised? If so, when and why?
  7. How far along is the state in implementing its literacy plan? What steps remain?
  8. Has state legislation addressing adolescent literacy been passed? If so, when? What is the legislation's name?
  9. How is the initiative funded? Has the funding source changed? Does the state have a sustainability plan?
- B. Structure of the program
  1. Who is in charge of the state's adolescent literacy initiative? What is their role in the program?
  2. Who else works to support the initiative at the state level? What are their roles?
  3. Has the program incorporated other stakeholders, such as universities, parents, and businesses, into its structure?
  4. What would you change about the program's structure?
- C. Adolescent literacy policies
  1. Are all schools required to participate in the adolescent literacy initiative? If not, which schools are eligible to participate and how are they chosen? Is there a scale-up plan in place?
  2. What grade levels are included in the adolescent literacy initiative?
  3. What are participating districts required to do? Are they required to have certain staff members, such as regional reading coaches?
  4. What are participating schools required to do? Are they required to have certain staff members, such as reading coaches? Do they have schedule requirements, such as intervention times for struggling readers?
  5. How does the state communicate with teachers, principals, reading coaches, and district personnel?
- D. Standards, curricula, and instruction
  1. Has the state revised its literacy goals, standards, and/or curricula?
  2. Has the state changed its teacher credentials, reading endorsements, and/or teacher education standards? Do content-area teachers have any pre-service literacy requirements?
  3. Does the state have a mandatory curriculum, or do districts have local curricula? If districts have unique curricula, how does the state ensure they align with the state adolescent literacy plan?
  4. Does the state mandate intervention programs, comprehensive reading programs, content-area reading, or anything else to help students?
  5. Does your program explicitly address the needs of English language learner students? Students with disabilities?
  6. Does technology play a role in your effort? If so, how?
- E. Professional development on adolescent literacy
  1. How did the state determine the training needs of its staff, districts, and schools?
  2. What adolescent literacy-related training has the state provided for:
    - i. State staff
    - ii. Regional staff
    - iii. District staff

- iv. Principals
  - v. Reading coaches
  - vi. Teachers
  - vii. Any other stakeholders or educators, such as librarians
3. Are districts or schools required to provide training? If so, on what topics? Who conducts such training (e.g., universities, consultants, etc.)?
  4. What else is the state doing to build capacity at the state, district, and school levels?

#### F. Assessment, data use, and evaluation

1. How does the state assess literacy achievement? Which assessments are used for state-level analyses? How often are tests administered? What grade levels are tested? Why did the state choose a particular assessment or craft its own test?
2. How does the state analyze its literacy data? Does the state release the results?
3. What else does the state do with its literacy data?
4. Are districts and/or schools required to analyze their data from the state literacy assessment? If so, what are they expected to do with their results?
5. Do teachers, schools, or districts use other summative literacy assessments? If so, how? Does the state also review those data?
6. Do teachers, schools, or districts use formative literacy assessments or progress monitoring? If so, how? Does the state also review those data?

#### G. Overall impressions

1. Has the state's adolescent literacy initiative affected literacy in the state? How has it affected students, teachers, and schools?
2. Have the state's expectations for reading coaches, principals, teachers, and students changed?
3. What have been the program's successes?
4. What have been the program's challenges?
5. How would you improve the program?
6. Do you believe the program is sustainable? What would enhance its sustainability?

7. Is the state changing anything about the program this year? If so, why?
8. What advice do you have for other states starting an adolescent literacy initiative? What lessons have you learned?
9. What do you see in the program's future?
10. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about the initiative?

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#### Alabama-specific questions

1. How is the A+ Education Foundation related to the state's literacy program? Is it still involved? If so, how?
2. In the first year of the Alabama Reading Initiative the initiative was funded by private sector partners. When and why did the legislature and governor take interest in funding the program?
3. Are businesses still involved in funding the initiative?
4. The Alabama Reading Initiative has been described as essentially two different programs: an early literacy one with set requirements and an adolescent literacy one that is more flexible and controlled largely by individual school sites. To what extent is this accurate?
5. Were the In-service Centers created for the Alabama Reading Initiative? Who funds and directs them?
6. How did you choose higher education partners for participating schools? What are their roles?

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#### Florida-specific questions

1. What prompted the legislature to fund the reading initiative in 2006? What was the process of securing permanent funding?
2. Florida changed to a noncompetitive grant process in 2004. What have been the successes and challenges of this change?
3. The Just Read, Florida! office was moved from the Governor's Office to the Department of Education in 2006. What was the impetus for this transition, and has the change affected the program?

4. Under the A++ Plan for Education, all districts are required to participate in the reading initiative. How did the state prepare to scale up for this change? Has the growth process been a success? Why or why not?
5. What are you doing to support English language learner students given your proximity to Cuba and large immigrant population?
6. Is Florida's National Governors Association Reading to Achieve grant incorporated into the program? If so, how?

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#### Kentucky-specific questions

1. Kentucky's adolescent literacy project has been described as a university-led program. How accurate is that assessment?
2. How did your adolescent literacy project evolve from the creation of the Center for Mathematics?
3. How has your definition of a literacy coach changed as the program has matured? Your expectations for coaches and their roles?
4. Coaches are evaluated by their principals. Does the state have a role in ensuring the quality of coaches?
5. Currently, literacy coaches are funded by their schools or districts. What are the benefits and challenges of this system? Does the Kentucky Department of Education intend to fund literacy coaches in the future?

6. How would you describe the relationships universities have with the state education department? With districts? To what extent do the literacy needs of schools/districts inform teacher education programs?

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#### New Jersey-specific questions

1. "Elements" of the LEADS (Literacy is Essential to Adolescent Development and Success) model are required to be used in Abbott schools. Which elements are mandated and why?
2. Is New Jersey's NGA Reading to Achieve grant incorporated into the LEADS program? If so, how?
3. What is the state's plan for scaling up the LEADS program?

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#### Rhode Island-specific questions

1. To what extent was the original Rhode Island High School Summit instigated by local businesses? Colleges and universities? Why were they involved?
2. Originally, districts were required to change their graduation requirements starting with the class of 2008. Has this changed with Rhode Island's new statewide curriculum?
3. Is the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation still funding part of the high school reform effort? Have you found such involvement beneficial?

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