# Strengthening California's Implementation of the Science of Reading through Teacher Preparation

Literacy is critical for success in school, work, and civic engagement. Research finds that reading failure can be reduced to fewer than 1 in 10 students when teachers provide scientifically based reading instruction.[1] In the wake of learning loss experienced in the COVID-19 pandemic, now more than ever, we must ensure aspiring teachers are prepared to teach children to read using scientifically based reading instruction.

## The stakes for students in California

In California, only **31% of 4th grade students read proficiently** based on the most recent National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP). That number falls precipitously for some of California's historically underserved students. This dismal data has nothing to do with the students and families and everything to do with **inequities in access to effective literacy instruction**.

## California's Reading Data

| Student group | # of students in California | % who read proficiently in 4th grade |
|---|---|---|
| ALL STUDENTS | 5,892,073 | 31% |
| Hispanic students | 3,332,078 | 18% |
| Black students | 302,424 | 12% |
| English language learners | 1,148,024 | 8% |
| Students with disabilities | 773,183 | 12% |
| Students eligible for National School Lunch Program | 3,648,170 | 18% |

## Teacher prep programs are key to implementing and sustaining science of reading at scale.

### *Are California's teacher prep programs ensuring aspiring teachers learn the most effective methods to teach reading?*
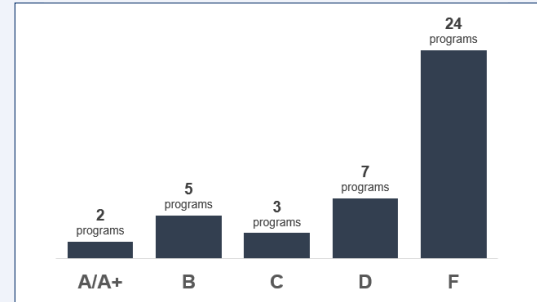
The National Council on Teacher Quality, a research and policy nonprofit, evaluated nearly 700 programs across the country, including 41 in California, on how well they prepare aspiring elementary teachers to teach reading.

This review considered attention to **the five core components of scientifically based reading instruction**—phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension—across four different instructional approaches (instructional hours, background materials, objective measures of knowledge, and opportunities to practice).

The review also deducted points when programs teach aspiring teachers content contrary to research-based practices; and considered whether programs provide instruction in how to support a range of learners (struggling readers, English language learners, and students who speak language varieties other than mainstream English).

1   See appendix for citation for this statement and data included throughout.

**In California, two of the 41 programs evaluated earn an A for preparation in reading, meaning they adequately teach all five components of reading and provide little or no instruction on content contrary to research-based practices.**



**California ranks among the worst in the nation for the average number of components of reading its programs adequately address. In California:**

- Programs are most likely to cover **comprehension** and least likely to cover **phonemic awareness.**
- **Two of 41 programs provide at least one practice opportunity** in each of these components.
- There are 17 programs (41%) in California that teach **multiple** techniques or approaches contrary to research-based practices, which can inhibit the reading progress of many students.
- Nineteen programs devote some instructional time to supporting **Struggling readers.**
- Twenty-four programs devote some instructional time to supporting **English language learners.**
- **Exemplary (A+) programs in California include the graduate program at the University of La Verne.**

## Better teacher preparation is essential to ensure all students effectively learn to read.

| State policy question | Answer for California |
|---|---|
| Does California have standards for teacher prep programs that address all five core components of scientifically based reading? | Yes, the standards address all five core components with details related to the knowledge and skills needed to teach them |
| Does California require a licensure test that addresses reading? | Yes, the state requires a reading licensure test |
| What are the required or optional licensure tests that address reading? | Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA); however, this test will be replaced by a reading performance assessment by July 1, 2025 |
| Does California require the review of reading course syllabi as part of preparation program renewal? | Yes |

*"Every child has the right to read. Sending teachers into the classroom without the science behind how kids learn to read puts everyone in an unfair position. As teachers, we are in this profession to always do what is best and necessary. If we aren't properly taught by the institutions we put our trust and dollars into, we are made ineffective."*

- Virginia Quinn-Mooney, First grade teacher

## Recommendations for state leaders:

- Set specific, explicit, and comprehensive preparation standards for scientifically based reading instruction.
- Incorporate a specific evaluation of reading instruction in program renewal or reauthorization processes, and take action if programs are not aligned to the state's standards for scientifically based reading instruction.
- Require a reading licensure test aligned with scientifically based reading instruction for any PK–5 teachers to earn licensure, and publish the pass rates.
- Deploy a comprehensive strategy to implement scientifically–based reading instruction, and prioritize teacher prep.
- Use the bully pulpit to draw attention to the importance of teacher prep to sustain implementation of improved reading instruction.

*For more detail on these recommendations, visit* **www.nctq.org/review/standard/reading-foundations**.

## Questions? Contact Shannon Holston, NCTQ Chief of Policy and Programs at shannon.holston@nctq.org.

# Program grades in California

| School | Program Level | Grade | Adequate coverage of core components: Graded (Up to 12 points per component; 8 points for adequate coverage; 4 or more contrary practices results in letter grade deduction) | | | | | | Support for a range of learners: Ungraded (Up to 8 points per group) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Phonemic Aware-ness | Phonics | Fluency | Vocab-ulary | Compre-hension | Count of Contrary Practices (out of 9) | Struggling readers | ELLs | Speakers of language varieties |
| California Polytechnic State University - San Luis Obispo | G | F | No (3.86 pts) | No (4.12 pts) | No (6 pts) | No (5 pts) | No (7.67 pts) | 1 | 4 pts | 0 pts | 0 pts |
| California State Polytechnic University - Pomona | G | D | No (3.64 pts) | Yes (8 pts) | No (6.12 pts) | No (3.75 pts) | Yes (8 pts) | 1 | 0 pts | 2 pts | 0 pts |
| California State University - Bakersfield | UG | D | No (7.29 pts) | Yes (9 pts) | No (7.12 pts) | Yes (9 pts) | Yes (8.75 pts) | 4 | 2 pts | 2 pts | 4 pts |
| California State University - Bakersfield | G | F | No (6.64 pts) | Yes (9 pts) | No (7.12 pts) | No (7.12 pts) | No (7 pts) | 4 | 2 pts | 2 pts | 0 pts |
| California State University - Channel Islands | G | C | No (4.18 pts) | Yes (8.75 pts) | Yes (8.25 pts) | Yes (8.12 pts) | Yes (9 pts) | 4 | 0 pts | 4 pts | 0 pts |

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| School | Program Level | Grade | Adequate coverage of core components: Graded (Up to 12 points per component; 8 points for adequate coverage; 4 or more contrary practices results in letter grade deduction) | | | | | | Support for a range of learners: Ungraded (Up to 8 points per group) | | |
|--------|---------------|-------|---------------------|---------|---------|------------|---------------|--------------------------------------------|------------------|------|------------------------------------|
| | | | Phonemic Aware-ness | Phonics | Fluency | Vocab-ulary | Compre-hension | Count of Contrary Practices (out of 9) | Struggling readers | ELLs | Speakers of language varieties |
| California State University - Chico | UG | B | No (7.82 pts) | Yes (8.81 pts) | Yes (8 pts) | Yes (9 pts) | Yes (8.5 pts) | 3 | 2 pts | 4 pts | 0 pts |
| California State University - Chico | G | B | No (7.82 pts) | Yes (8.81 pts) | Yes (8 pts) | Yes (9 pts) | Yes (8.5 pts) | 3 | 2 pts | 4 pts | 0 pts |
| California State University - Dominguez Hills | G | F | No (2.82 pts) | No (5.19 pts) | No (4.12 pts) | No (6.25 pts) | No (7.75 pts) | 4 | 5.5 pts | 3.5 pts | 0 pts |
| California State University - East Bay | G | B | No (5.77 pts) | Yes (9 pts) | Yes (8.25 pts) | Yes (8.25 pts) | Yes (8 pts) | 0 | 6 pts | 0 pts | 0 pts |
| California State University - Fresno | G | F | No (0 pts) | No (3.81 pts) | No (2.12 pts) | No (1.5 pts) | No (2.75 pts) | 1 | 0 pts | 0 pts | 0 pts |
| California State University - Fullerton | G | F | No (6.96 pts) | Yes (10 pts) | No (6.69 pts) | No (1.5 pts) | No (6.38 pts) | 2 | 4 pts | 4 pts | 0 pts |
| California State University - Long Beach | G | D | No (6.96 pts) | Yes (9 pts) | No (6.56 pts) | No (7.12 pts) | Yes (8.25 pts) | 1 | 4 pts | 6 pts | 0 pts |
| California State University - Los Angeles | G | D | No (6.32 pts) | Yes (8.25 pts) | No (3 pts) | No (7.5 pts) | Yes (9 pts) | 1 | 0 pts | 4 pts | 1.5 pts |
| California State University - Monterey Bay | G | F | No (3.96 pts) | No (5.91 pts) | No (4.12 pts) | No (6 pts) | No (4.5 pts) | 1 | 4 pts | 2 pts | 0 pts |
| California State University - Northridge | UG | F | No (3.64 pts) | No (3.56 pts) | No (3.56 pts) | No (7.12 pts) | Yes (8.25 pts) | 7 | 2.75 pts | 6 pts | 1.5 pts |
| California State University - Northridge | G | F | No (3.64 pts) | No (3.56 pts) | No (3.56 pts) | No (7.06 pts) | Yes (8.5 pts) | 7 | 2.75 pts | 6 pts | 1.25 pts |
| California State University - Sacramento | G | C | No (4.64 pts) | No (7.31 pts) | Yes (9.5 pts) | Yes (9.5 pts) | Yes (9.25 pts) | 0 | 2 pts | 2 pts | 0 pts |
| California State University - San Bernardino | G | F | No (1.5 pts) | No (3 pts) | Yes (8.25 pts) | No (3 pts) | No (7 pts) | 0 | 2 pts | 6 pts | 2 pts |
| California State University - San Marcos | G | F | No (5.14 pts) | No (7 pts) | No (4.12 pts) | No (7.12 pts) | No (4.25 pts) | 1 | 0 pts | 0 pts | 0 pts |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Phonemic Awareness | Phonics | Fluency | Vocabulary | Comprehension | Count of Contrary Practices (out of 9) | Struggling readers | ELLs | Speakers of language varieties |
| California State University - Stanislaus | G | C | Yes (9.64 pts) | Yes (11.25 pts) | No (6 pts) | Yes (10.25 pts) | Yes (12 pts) | 4 | 0 pts | 6 pts | 0 pts |
| Chapman University | G | F | No (5.89 pts) | No (7.62 pts) | No (5.12 pts) | No (5.75 pts) | No (6.5 pts) | 6 | 4.5 pts | 6 pts | 0 pts |
| Humboldt State University | G | F | No (6.43 pts) | No (6.38 pts) | No (6.38 pts) | No (6.25 pts) | No (3 pts) | 0 | 2 pts | 2 pts | 2 pts |
| Pepperdine University | UG | F | No (0 pts) | No (0 pts) | No (6 pts) | No (5 pts) | No (5.67 pts) | 0 | 0 pts | 0 pts | 0 pts |
| Point Loma Nazarene University | G | B | Yes (9.07 pts) | Yes (9.88 pts) | Yes (8 pts) | No (7.25 pts) | Yes (9.25 pts) | 1 | 4 pts | 4 pts | 0 pts |
| San Diego State University | G | F | No (0 pts) | No (0 pts) | No (0 pts) | No (3.75 pts) | No (6 pts) | 0 | 0 pts | 4 pts | 0 pts |
| San Francisco State University | G | F | No (4.32 pts) | No (5.19 pts) | No (4 pts) | No (7.12 pts) | No (7.5 pts) | 5 | 2 pts | 3 pts | 0 pts |
| San Jose State University | G | F | No (0.32 pts) | No (0.56 pts) | No (1.12 pts) | No (0.38 pts) | No (2.25 pts) | 2 | 0 pts | 3 pts | 0 pts |
| Santa Clara University | G | A | Yes (10.07 pts) | Yes (10.5 pts) | Yes (10.5 pts) | Yes (9.12 pts) | Yes (10.5 pts) | 1 | 4 pts | 4 pts | 2.75 pts |
| Sonoma State University | G | F | No (0 pts) | No (0.56 pts) | No (2.25 pts) | No (1.5 pts) | No (4 pts) | 4 | 2 pts | 3.5 pts | 0 pts |
| Stanford University | G | F | No (5.64 pts) | No (5.56 pts) | No (7.25 pts) | No (7.5 pts) | No (6 pts) | 0 | 4 pts | 6 pts | 0 pts |
| University of California - Davis | G | F | No (3.64 pts) | No (5.12 pts) | No (5.69 pts) | No (4.5 pts) | No (3.75 pts) | 0 | 1 pt | 0 pts | 0 pts |
| University of California - Irvine | G | B | Yes (9.93 pts) | Yes (12 pts) | No (7.69 pts) | Yes (8.5 pts) | Yes (8.5 pts) | 0 | 4 pts | 4 pts | 0 pts |
| University of California - Los Angeles | G | D | No (6.61 pts) | No (7.81 pts) | Yes (8 pts) | No (7.62 pts) | Yes (9.75 pts) | 0 | 2.75 pts | 2 pts | 0 pts |
| University of California - Riverside | G | D | No (6.64 pts) | No (7.69 pts) | No (7.12 pts) | Yes (9 pts) | Yes (9 pts) | 0 | 3.75 pts | 6 pts | 0 pts |
| University of California - San Diego | G | D | No (4.96 pts) | Yes (8.53 pts) | No (3.56 pts) | No (3 pts) | Yes (9 pts) | 2 | 0 pts | 3 pts | 0 pts |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Phonemic Aware-ness | Phonics | Fluency | Vocab-ulary | Compre-hension | Count of Contrary Practices (out of 9) | Struggling readers | ELLs | Speakers of language varieties |
| University of California - Santa Barbara | G | F | No (1.29 pts) | No (7.39 pts) | No (0 pts) | Yes (9 pts) | No (6 pts) | 0 | 3.75 pts | 6.5 pts | 1 pt |
| University of California - Santa Cruz | G | F | No (2.36 pts) | No (3.25 pts) | No (1.5 pts) | No (2 pts) | No (2.33 pts) | 3 | 1 pt | 1 pt | 0 pts |
| University of La Verne | G | A+ | Yes (10.61 pts) | Yes (12 pts) | Yes (12 pts) | Yes (12 pts) | Yes (9.46 pts) | 0 | 4 pts | 2 pts | 0 pts |
| University of Redlands | UG | F | No (0 pts) | No (1.56 pts) | No (2.12 pts) | No (1.75 pts) | No (1.25 pts) | 0 | 3 pts | 2.5 pts | 0 pts |
| University of Redlands | G | F | No (0 pts) | No (1.56 pts) | No (2.12 pts) | No (1.75 pts) | No (1.25 pts) | 0 | 3 pts | 2.5 pts | 0 pts |
| University of Southern California | G | F | No (6.64 pts) | No (7.12 pts) | No (3 pts) | No (7.88 pts) | No (7.5 pts) | 2 | 2 pts | 2 pts | 0 pts |

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