



STATE OF NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

For Immediate Release

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Governor Murphy and Education Commissioner Dehmer Advance Literacy Education Initiatives: Grants and Guidance Now Available to School Districts

Trenton, NJ – Continuing the Murphy Administration’s efforts to strengthen foundational literacy skills among students, Governor Phil Murphy and New Jersey Department of Education Commissioner Kevin Dehmer today announced a series of coordinated actions to advance the implementation of legislation signed in August ensuring young learners have access to the tools and resources needed to become strong, confident readers:

- Pursuant to that legislation (P.L.2024, c.52), the New Jersey Department of Education (Department) is announcing the publication of the *New Jersey Literacy Framework: A Guide to Evidence-Based Literacy Practices & Universal Screeners*, a comprehensive online guide designed to support school districts in delivering effective literacy instruction in grades K-3.
- The Department is also announcing the release of two grant programs, aligned with the *New Jersey Literacy Framework*, to support districts in implementing the law’s requirements and other activities designed to improve literacy instruction in New Jersey schools.

“Having a strong grasp of foundational literacy skills like phonics can open doors for our children and enable them to better succeed throughout their academic careers. Our Administration is dedicated to supplying our students and educators with the tools necessary to support this essential component of a comprehensive education,” **said Governor Murphy**. “We have listened to the research and recommendations of our Working Group on Student Literacy, and we are thrilled that New Jersey’s literacy initiative is continuing to build momentum. With the release of the New Jersey Literacy Framework and two new grant programs, school districts across the state will have access to tested best practices and supports to teach our kids the fundamentals of reading. These efforts are essential to make New Jersey the best place to raise a child.”

“We’ve known for a long time that literacy is a core skill that is the gateway to all other learning,” **said Education Commissioner Kevin Dehmer**. “As part of our renewed early literacy focus in New Jersey, we’re taking a very intentional approach – one that blends proven, evidence-based instructional methods with tried-and-true approaches such as phonics and regular screening tools to keep educators and families informed of student progress. This is an initiative that will benefit all students, particularly our youngest students as they transition from learning to read to reading to learn.”

The New Jersey Literacy Framework

In alignment with evidence-based practices, the *New Jersey Literacy Framework* provides valuable guidance on the implementation of high-quality literacy screening assessments and proven data analysis strategies for successful literacy instruction and intervention. These resources are designed to support school districts in implementing screening, follow-up supports, professional development, family notification, and other literacy program requirements under P.L.2024, c.52, which go into effect in the 2025-2026 school year.

This guidance is informed by the recommendations of the Working Group on Student Literacy, which were released in March. Comprised of literacy experts, educators, and parent representatives, the Working Group reviewed research, collaborated with specialists, and examined best practices to align their recommendations with existing frameworks, such as intervention and referral services and dyslexia screening guidelines. As required by P.L.2024, c.52, the Department considered these recommendations in developing the *New Jersey Literacy Framework*.

The guidance document and other resources are available on the Department’s Learning Equity and Academic Recovery [webpage](#).

Grant Opportunities

To support districts in implementing the requirements of P.L.2024, c.52 consistent with the *New Jersey Literacy Framework*, the Department is also releasing the following two grant opportunities, totaling \$5,250,000:

- *FOCUS Grants* – Funding for Optimal Comprehensive Universal Screeners, or FOCUS grants, will support high-quality literacy-screening assessments aligned to criteria in the *New Jersey Literacy Framework*, as well as related professional development and student supports. All New Jersey LEAs serving any of the grades K-3 will be eligible for funding.
- *BRIDGE Grants* – Building Responsive Instruction through Data Guided Evaluation, or BRIDGE, will be a competitive grant supporting the use of screening data to implement evidence-based literacy instruction in K-3 classrooms.

The [grant programs](#) will run from June 1, 2025, to May 31, 2026. Funding for the programs is from the Fiscal Year 2025 State budget.



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