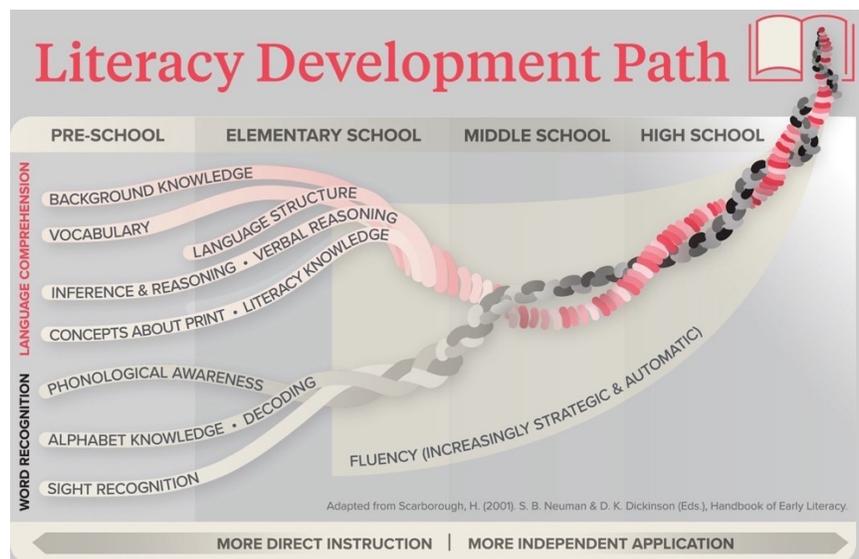


Excerpted from “Building Successful Readers Begins at Birth: Policy Recommendations for Leveraging Early Childhood Care and Education in Support of State Reading Achievement Goals.”

Aligning Early Childhood and Early Elementary School Development and Learning

The graphic below (Renaissance Learning, 2023) builds on Scarborough’s Rope, a powerful metaphor for a child’s path to reading proficiency. The separate threads contribute to the two major strands and coming together to produce skillful reading; in this version, the separate strands are shown to have components beginning long before kindergarten. Importantly, these early childhood elements both emphasize the developmental progression of these skills beginning before kindergarten entry, and points to areas of child development and the experiences that contribute to considered in our early care and education programs.



While this illustration leaves out the youngest children, we know that the experiences of infants and toddlers are also critically important. Examples of these practices are many. For instance, we know that oral language development is an essential contributor to later reading proficiency (Scarborough, 2001) and that this language development comes about through children’s interactions and experiences beginning in the first

months of life (e.g., Fernald & Weisleder, 2011; Hart & Risley, 1995, 1999). We also know that adults and children reading books together – both reading the text and using stories as “jumping off spots” for more informal interaction – helps children grow their language while they learn to hear and manipulate the sounds of words, and start to learn the letters that help make those sounds (Hindman et al., 2014; Lefebvre et al., 2011; Neuman & Kaefer, 2018; Piasta et al., 2020; Stadler & McEvoy, 2003; Ziolkowski & Goldstein, 2008).



March 6, 2024

Dear Chair Pinto, Representative Clardy, and Members of the House Children and Families Committee:

The Minnesota Business Partnership is comprised of over 100 CEOs and senior executives leading Minnesota's largest companies. Our members are united by the mission of enhancing Minnesota's economic competitiveness and ensuring Minnesota has a future-ready workforce.

We are also united by a deep commitment to improving literacy outcomes for all Minnesotans. With less than a third of students reading at grade-level, addressing Minnesota's literacy crisis is imperative.

We are writing to express our strong support for HF 4406 (Clardy). It is important to begin the work early to build a strong foundation of literacy skills. Learning to read starts in early childhood, and for Minnesota to move the needle on reading, our work to align classroom instruction with the science of how children learn to read must also start in early childhood.

Transforming how we teach reading begins with ensuring teachers have robust professional development and strong evidence-based curriculum, which were cornerstones of last year's READ Act. HF 4406 connects evidence-based reading instruction to early childhood professional development and provides early childhood educators with additional resources and tools to grow their reading instruction skills.

Other promising features of HF 4406 are the pilot program to connect early education with Minnesota's multi-tiered system of support (MnMTSS) and embedding science of reading to the Parent Aware system. Importantly, the bill also incorporates review of parent engagement strategies – parent engagement will be fundamental to developing early readers.

As Minnesota continues its the journey to transform literacy outcomes, this is a crucial time to create a holistic system that starts early to ensure all students become great readers. HF 4406 makes important steps in that direction, and we encourage you to support the bill. Thank you for your work to ensure all Minnesota children have a great start.

Sincerely,

Amy Walstien

Senior Policy Director, Education and Workforce Development Policy

Minnesota Business Partnership



Support for HF4406
Minnesota House Children and Families Finance and Policy Committee
March 4, 2024

Dear Chair Pinto and Committee Members,

I write today on behalf of the Minnesota Child Care Association, a statewide non-profit representing licensed child care centers. Our mission is to promote the success of licensed child care centers as an integral part of Minnesota's early education system. We serve as a voice for professional, high-quality child care that is affordable, accessible, and able to meet the diverse needs of Minnesota families. We are pleased to support HF4406.

With Minnesota officially moving to become a "science of reading" state we know that in order to succeed this work must begin as early as possible. The foundations of literacy begin in infancy and must be intentionally supported and taught in developmentally-appropriate ways. If Minnesota is to fulfill the promise of teaching reading in a different way, we must ensure that early educators are fully included in this system, and not only those working in public schools. Child care providers need to be included from the beginning, not as an afterthought, both to have access to information and resources and to offer their expertise in the developmentally-appropriate delivery of content to very young children.

This bill takes initial and comprehensive steps to ensure that early childhood is not left out of this necessary movement. We are particularly interested in embedding science of reading principles into Parent Aware, planning for resources to upgrade curricula and training if necessary, and ensuring that state-approved early childhood professional development offerings do not work across purposes. Together these offer opportunity on a vast scale, as by 2026 all licensed child care providers will interact with Parent Aware in a change approved last session.

I urge you to support HF4406 to ensure that our state does not miss a critical opportunity to ensure full participation of its early educators in the effort to improve Minnesota's literacy achievement. We want to be part of the movement.

Thank you,

Clare Sanford
Government Relations Chair
MN Child Care Association



March 7, 2024

Re: HF4406, READ Act expanded to include early childhood education, professional development provided, curriculum revised, and money appropriated

Dear Chair Pinto and Members of the Children and Families Finance and Policy,

Reading proficiency is critical for success in college, career, and life. Research has found that students who were not proficient in reading by the end of third grade were four times more likely to drop out of high school than proficient readers.¹ However, we know that meeting this milestone doesn't start in 3rd grade, or even in kindergarten. Students begin building the foundations for literacy much earlier, with language development beginning at birth and rapid development occurring through the toddler and preschool years.

To build on the Read Act passed in 2023, and to increase its impact and ensure all kids start from an equitable baseline as early as possible, we strongly support HF4406. The provisions outlined in the bill provide support and structure around evidence-based literacy practices for providers in the critical field of early childhood. This bill links early literacy goals to existing systems through Parent Aware and MTSS, improving and expanding them to support literacy goals. We are excited that this bill also supports the link between school and home by investing in parent engagement strategies—where we know much early development takes place. Finally, we urge the legislature to invest in the program effectiveness assessment to deepen our understanding of what works best in early childhood literacy and where we should focus future efforts.

Our youngest Minnesotans—particularly those who have been traditionally underserved—do not have time to wait, and deserve the strongest start possible. We appreciate the committee hearing this bill, and urge action to give the youngest Minnesotans the best literacy foundations possible.

Sincerely,

Matt Shaver
Policy Director

¹ Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2010). "Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters." http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-Early_Warning_Full_Report-2010.pdf