

A photograph of a woman with dark hair, wearing a yellow top, and a young girl with curly hair and a white headband, both smiling and looking at a book they are holding together. The background is blurred, suggesting an indoor setting like a library or classroom.

Early Literacy in Massachusetts

A summary of related policies and opportunities for WEC



National Council
on Teacher Quality



Ron Noble

Chief of Teacher Prep

- Joined NCTQ in September
- Former Assistant Superintendent for the Methuen Public Schools
 - Overhauled K-8 literacy programming.
- Former Associate Commissioner for Instructional Support at DESE.
 - Launched the CURATE project (DESE's first statement on curriculum quality)
- Father of two sons in the Boston Public Schools

The Stakes

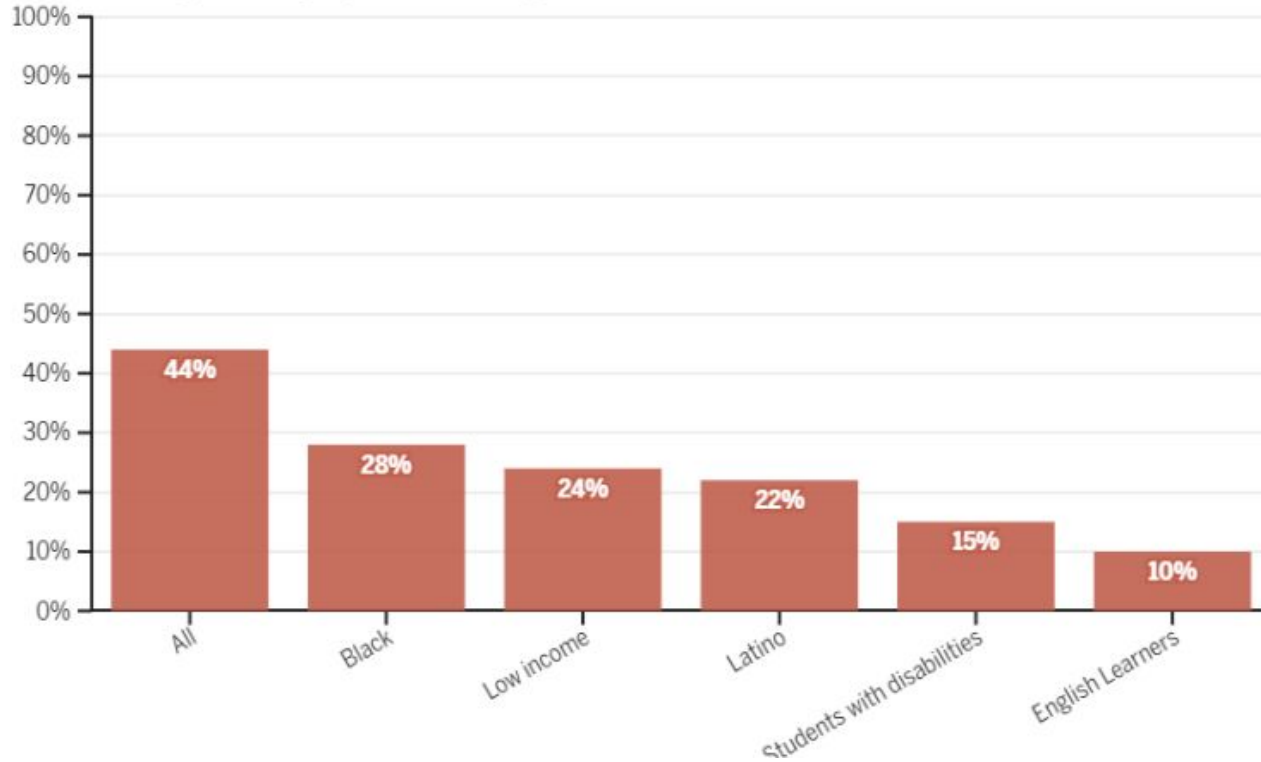
There are roughly **230,000** students sitting in MA classrooms today who are not meeting grade level standards in English language arts (2023 ELA MCAS).

Those students are disproportionately from historically marginalized groups.

We can change these results—and change lives.

The Stakes

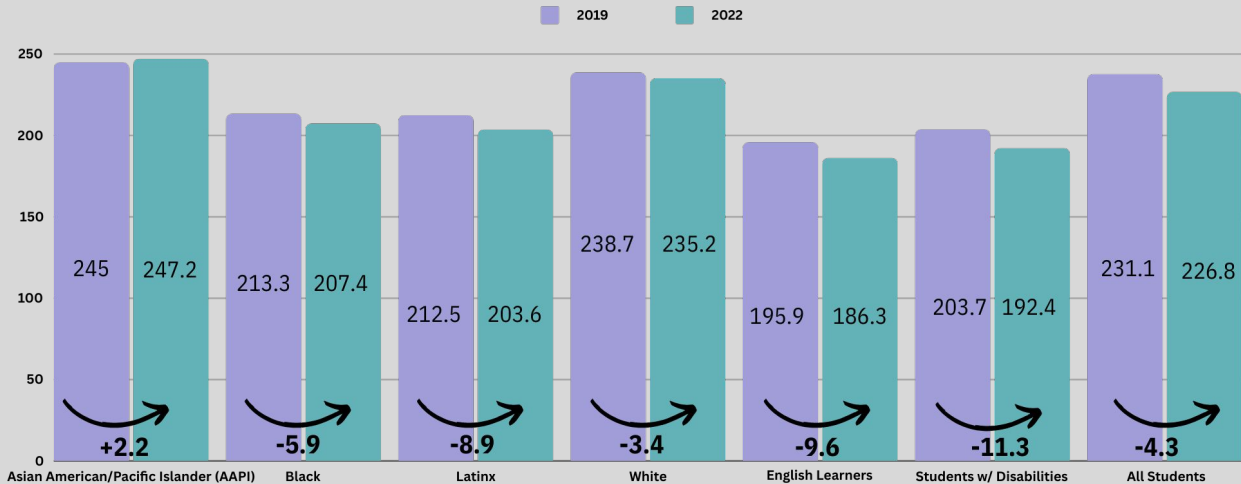
Percent meeting/exceeding expectations, third grade ELA MCAS



Less than half of third-graders were proficient in English language arts on the 2023 MCAS exam. **Outcomes were significantly worse** among **Black and Latino** students, **English learners**, students from **low-income families**, and **students with disabilities**.

The Stakes

Massachusetts' Average Scaled Scores*, 4th Grade Reading National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)



*A scaled score is a representation of the total number of correct answers (also known as raw scores) a student has provided that has been converted into a consistent and standardized scale.

While NAEP reading scores have declined overall for Massachusetts students since 2019, **pandemic-related declines have been largest among students with disabilities, English learners, and Latino students.**

The Stakes

Children from low-income families in **Florida** and **Mississippi** have outperformed their **Massachusetts** peers on the Grade 4 NAEP Reading test since 2019.

The Stakes

Children who do not learn to read in elementary school are 4x less likely to graduate from high school and have lower lifetime earnings than children who learn to read by third grade.

Sources: Hernandez, D. J. (2012). Double jeopardy: How third-grade reading skills and poverty influence high school graduation. Annie E. Casey Foundation. Retrieved March 16, 2023 from <https://assets.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-DoubleJeopardy-2012-Full.pdf>; Tamborini, C. R., Kim, C., & Sakamoto, A. (2015). Education and lifetime earnings in the United States. *Demography*, 52(4), 1383-1407.;

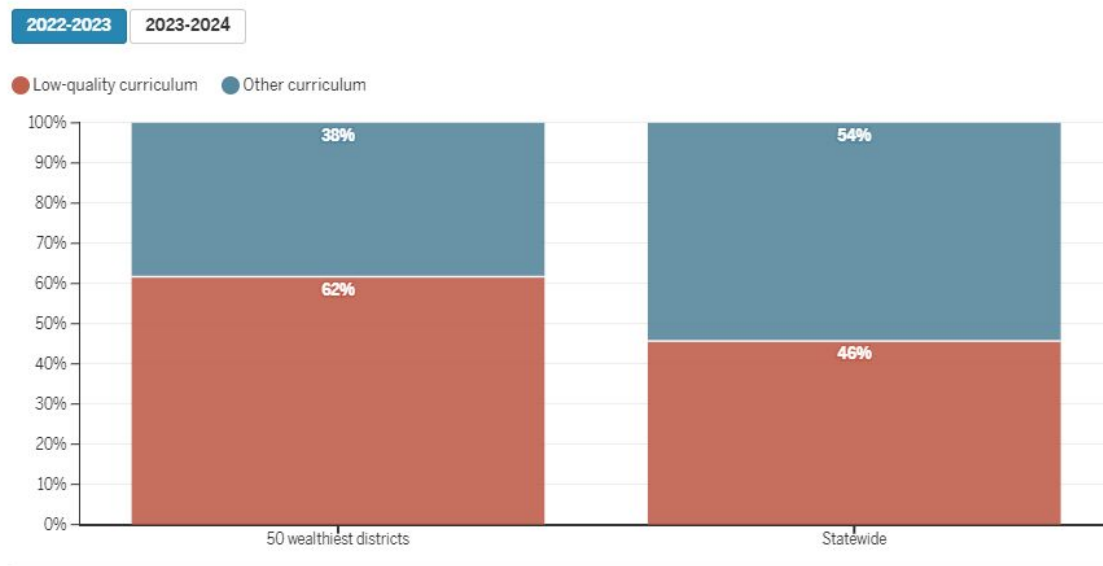


National Council
on Teacher Quality

The Stakes

Low-quality reading curriculums are popular in rich communities

The majority of the state's 50 wealthiest communities used reading curriculums last year that the state defines as low quality. Seven changed curriculums this year, as did eleven other districts statewide.

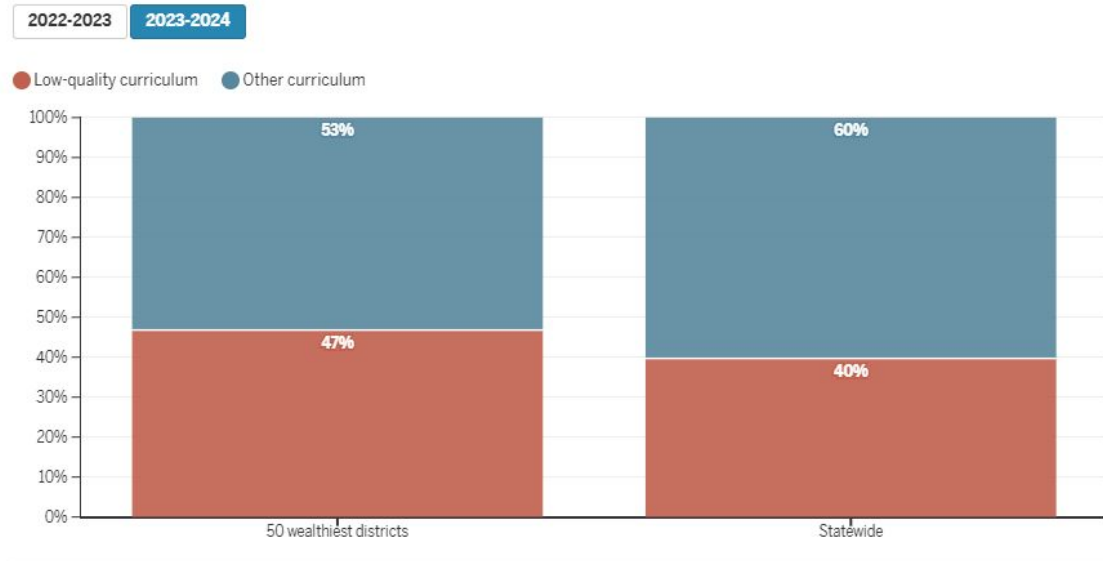


SOURCE: [Boston Globe survey](#)
CHRISTOPHER HUFFAKER/GLOBE STAFF

The Stakes

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**How are MA prep programs
preparing teachers to teach
reading?**

NCTQ engaged in a two-year revision process with the field on how to evaluate teacher prep programs in reading.



Expert Advisory Panel
(Content)



Technical Advisory Group
(Methodology)



Public comment period
(Feedback from stakeholders)

**Revised 2023
Reading Foundation
standard**



NCTQ looks for evidence that aspiring teachers learn about each of the five core components through four different instructional approaches.

Core Components

**Phonemic
Awareness**

Phonics

Fluency

Vocabulary

Comprehension

MEASURED BY

Instructional Approaches

**Instructional
Hours**

**Objective Measures
of Knowledge**

**Practice/
Application**

**Background
Materials**

In addition, NCTQ analyzes the extent to which programs prepare candidates to teach a range of students with diverse needs in learning to read.

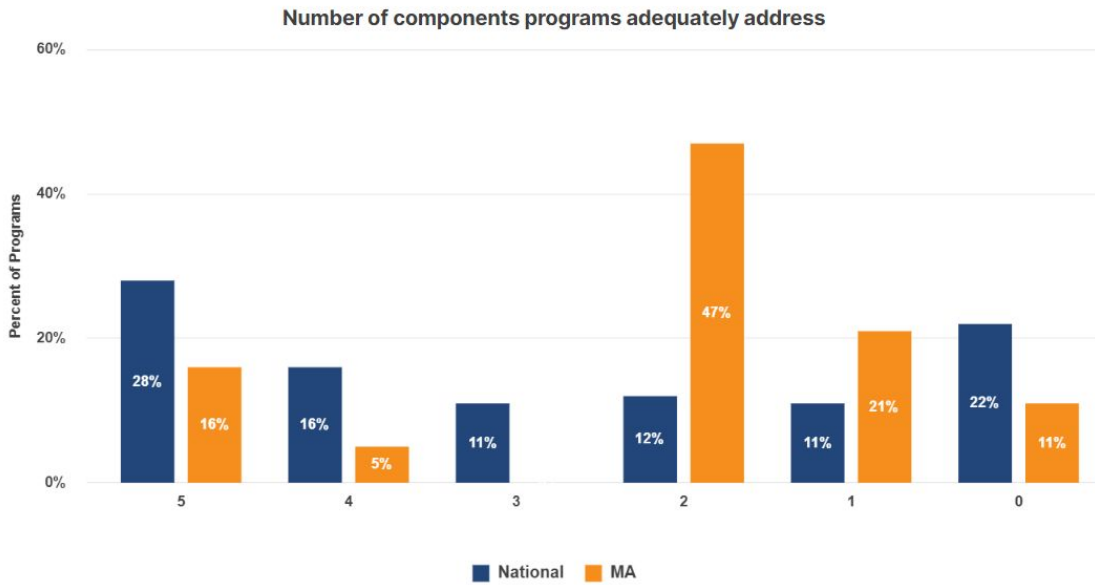
English language
learners

Struggling readers
(including students
with dyslexia)



Speakers of English
language varieties

Only 28% of programs adequately address all five core components of reading instruction.



Just over a quarter of programs adequately address all five core components of reading instruction.

Programs should cover each component through **instruction**, **objective measures of knowledge**, **background materials**, and **practice**.

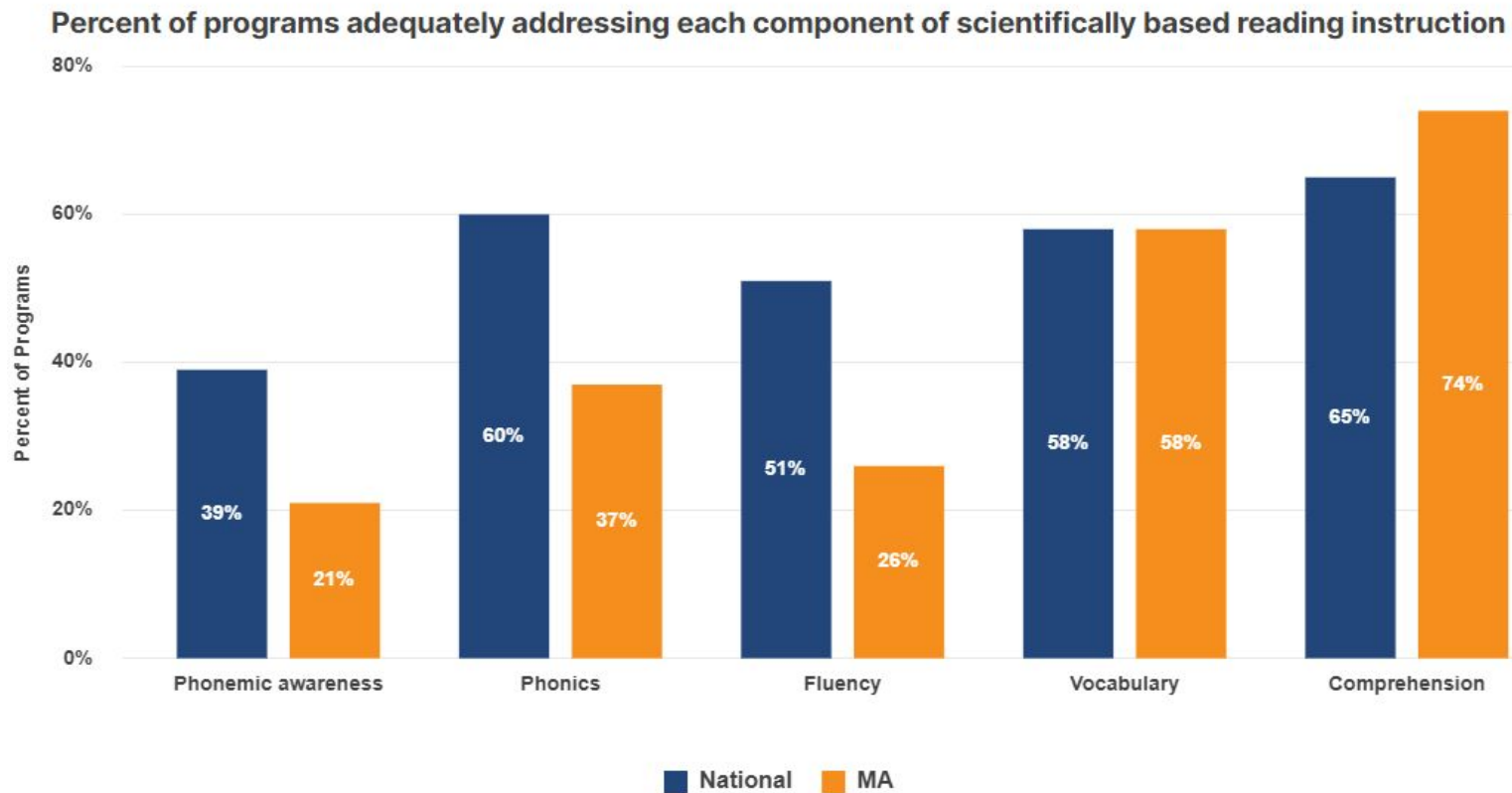
68% of MA programs are still teaching multiple practices contrary to the research.

Examples of contrary practices include:

- Three-cueing systems
- Embedded/implicit phonics
- Leveled text
- Balanced literacy

Teaching these practices impedes the learning of many students, legitimizes ineffective methods, and risks confusing aspiring teachers

Fluency and phonemic awareness receive the least attention across programs.





State policy levers to strengthen implementation of the science of reading



National Council
on Teacher Quality

Five policy actions state leaders can take to ensure a well-prepared teacher workforce that can implement and sustain the science of reading:

1. Set specific, detailed reading standards for teacher prep programs.
2. Review teacher prep programs to ensure they teach the science of reading.
3. Adopt a strong elementary reading licensure test.
4. Require districts to select high-quality reading curriculum.
5. Provide professional learning and ongoing support to sustain implementation of the science of reading.

Reasons for optimism in Massachusetts

How is Massachusetts performing on the five state policy actions?

Massachusetts ranks **above** the national average.

1	Sets specific, detailed reading standards for teacher prep programs	Strong
2	Reviews teacher prep programs to ensure they teach the science of reading	Moderate
3	Adopts a strong reading licensure test	Strong
4	Requires districts to select high-quality reading curriculum	Moderate
5	Provides professional learning for teachers and ongoing support to sustain the implementation of the science of reading	Moderate

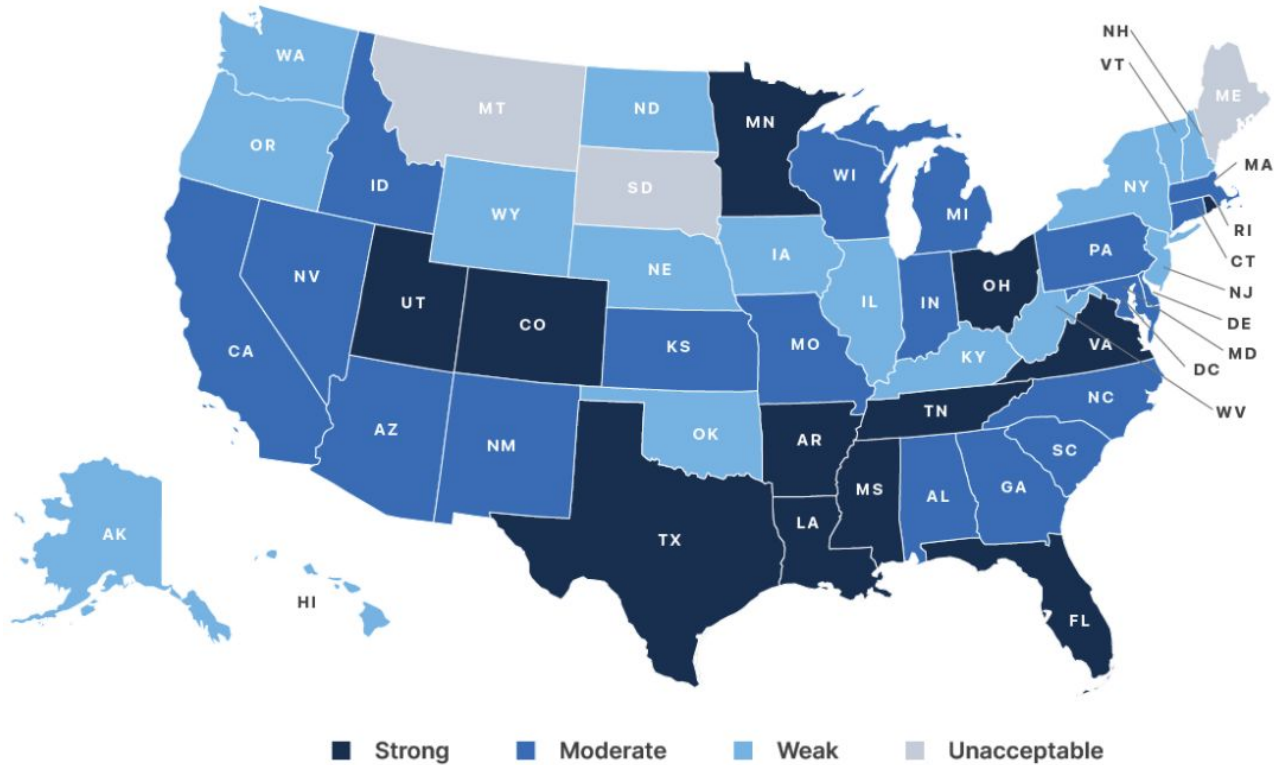
MA profile



Action Guide



Reasons for optimism in Massachusetts



MA Proposed Legislation: H.4423

- **Pre-service:** Requires DESE to review prep programs for alignment to evidence-based literacy instruction
- **In-service:** Professional development for teachers and administrators on the science of reading. Curriculum aligned to evidence-based literacy instruction
- **Students:** Universal screening and monitoring plans

Governor's Proposed Budget: MA Literacy Launch

- Secretary of Education Dr. Patrick Tutwiler, and with the coordination of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Department of Early Education and Care, is developing a new initiative called Literacy Launch: Reading Success from Age 3 through Grade 3.
- The initiative will accelerate the timeline for school districts and early education programs to adopt high-quality literacy materials and provide technical support, coaching, and professional development to educators. It will also update approval criteria and accelerate review timelines for teacher education programs to require evidence-based early literacy training.
- The Healey-Driscoll administration is proposing a five-year initiative, starting with a proposed \$30 million in funding in the FY25 budget.

Link to EOE landing page:

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/literacy-launch-reading-success-from-age-3-through-grade-3>

Recommendations

- Contact your state representative to support the proposed bill and Governor's budget proposal.
- Educate colleagues and parents about CURATE and DESE's track record of recommending strong curriculum.
- Urge the state to share comprehensive information about the curricula used in K-12 schools.
- Advocate for your school district to adopt high-quality curriculum aligned to evidence-based reading instruction

**NCTQ's Literacy
Discussion Guide for
Families**



Thank you!

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