

WYO RIGHT TO READ

Teacher Guidance Document

Wyoming SF0059: Reading Recovery, Approved Programs, and What the New Law Actually Requires

A Question We Are Hearing From Teachers Across Wyoming

Since Wyoming Governor Mark Gordon signed Senate File 0059 (SF0059), the K-12 Language and Literacy Program, into law on March 6, 2026, WYO Right to Read has been hearing from teachers with an important and understandable question:

“My district uses Reading Recovery. Will that program be on the WDE’s approved evidence-based program list?”

This is exactly the right question to be asking. This document explains what the law says, why Reading Recovery does not meet the law’s requirements, what the “collaboration” language in the bill means (and does not mean), and what teachers should watch for next.

THE SHORT ANSWER

✘ No. Reading Recovery should not — and cannot legitimately — appear on Wyoming’s approved evidence-based program list.

The law’s own definitions make this clear. SF0059 requires all reading instruction to align with the Science of Reading, and it explicitly prohibits the exclusive use of the three-cueing (MSV) system. Reading Recovery is built on three-cueing as its core instructional model. A program cannot be both three-cueing-dependent and Science of Reading-aligned — these are mutually exclusive approaches.

WHAT SF0059 ACTUALLY REQUIRES

SF0059 establishes several requirements that directly disqualify Reading Recovery:

Requirement 1

All reading instruction must align with the Science of Reading — defined and updated by the WDE Superintendent of Public Instruction through rulemaking.

Requirement 2

The exclusive use of “three-cueing” (also called MSV — meaning, syntax, and visual cues) is explicitly PROHIBITED by the statute itself, not just by rulemaking guidance.

Requirement 3

The WDE must identify approved evidence-based screeners, instructional materials, and intervention programs in state rules. Districts must use programs from this approved list.

Effective Date

July 1, 2026. Rulemaking to define approved programs is underway now.

WHY READING RECOVERY FAILS THE SCIENCE OF READING STANDARD

Reading Recovery is not simply “outdated” — it has been actively studied and found to produce negative outcomes for the students most at risk.

The Three-Cueing Problem

- Reading Recovery instructs students to use context clues, pictures, and sentence meaning to guess at words rather than decode them phonetically.
- This is the three-cueing (MSV) system — the exact approach SF0059 prohibits.
- Decades of cognitive science research, including neuroimaging studies, shows that skilled readers process words by decoding print, not by predicting from context. Three-cueing trains students to use the wrong brain pathway.

The Federal Research Record

- The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) — the U.S. Department of Education’s gold standard for evaluating educational programs — has revised its ratings for Reading Recovery significantly downward.
- A large-scale National Study of Reading Recovery found negative effects for the students who need the most help — the exact students the program claims to serve.
- The National Reading Panel, which established the research base that underlies the Science of Reading, identified five essential components of effective reading instruction (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension). Reading Recovery does not systematically address phonics as the primary decoding strategy.
- Reading Recovery has been defunded or removed from state-approved lists in multiple states that have adopted Science of Reading legislation.

Bottom Line for Districts Still Using Reading Recovery:

A superintendent or administrator claiming that Reading Recovery “works” for their district does not change what the research shows, and it does not change what Wyoming law now requires. Beginning July 1, 2026, districts must use programs that conform to the Science of Reading. Reading Recovery does not conform.

UNDERSTANDING THE “COLLABORATION” LANGUAGE IN SF0059

Some teachers and administrators have heard that SF0059 includes language about districts collaborating with the WDE in developing approved program lists, and are wondering whether this means districts can keep using programs like Reading Recovery if they choose. This concern deserves a direct answer.

Where the “Collaboration” Language Came From

During the legislative process, some school district superintendents — including at least one from Sheridan — pushed back against the bill, arguing that their districts were successfully using programs like Reading Recovery and the three-cueing system. As a result of this opposition, a concession was made: the bill includes language acknowledging that the WDE will develop its approved lists and rules *in consultation with or in collaboration with* school districts.

What That Language Does — and Does Not — Mean

✔ What It DOES Mean	✘ What It Does NOT Mean
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Districts may provide input and comments during the WDE’s formal rulemaking process.• Superintendents can attend public comment periods and advocate for what they believe their district needs.• The WDE will gather feedback from districts as it writes administrative rules.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Districts can veto or override what the WDE puts on the approved list.• A superintendent claiming success with a debunked program exempts that program from the Science of Reading requirement.• Districts can continue using Reading Recovery after July 1, 2026 simply because they want to.

Think of it this way: Districts may have a seat at the table when the WDE is writing the rules. But once the rules are written and the approved list is established, those rules govern every district. Having participated in the process does not give a district the right to ignore the outcome.

THE REAL RISK: WATCH THE RULEMAKING PROCESS

The most important thing to understand right now is that the approved program list does not yet exist. The WDE must create it through the formal administrative rulemaking process before July 1, 2026. This is where advocacy matters most.

The Practical Danger

Reading Recovery is very unlikely to be formally added to an approved list — that would be very difficult to defend given the federal research record. The real risk is **vague rulemaking** that leaves enough wiggle room for districts to claim that their current program “incorporates elements of evidence-based instruction” without actually abandoning three-cueing as a core strategy.

What Strong Rulemaking Looks Like

- Program-level specificity: The approved list should name programs that are approved, not just describe general principles and leave it to districts to self-certify.
- A clear prohibition list: Ideally, programs that explicitly rely on three-cueing — including Reading Recovery — should be named as non-compliant, removing ambiguity.

- Alignment with national trusted sources: The WDE should reference resources like the What Works Clearinghouse ratings, IMSE, and IDA-aligned program evaluations as the basis for its approved list.
- Enforcement mechanisms: Rules should specify what happens when a district uses a non-approved program and how compliance will be monitored.

📌 WYO Right to Read will be monitoring the rulemaking process and public comment periods. We encourage teachers and parents to do the same.

When the WDE opens the administrative rulemaking process for public comment, this is your opportunity to advocate for strong, specific definitions. WYO Right to Read will notify our community when comment periods open. You can also monitor rulemaking directly at edu.wyoming.gov.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR DISTRICT IS USING READING RECOVERY

If you are a teacher in a district that currently uses Reading Recovery, here is practical guidance:

What You Can Do Now:

- **You are now better informed than many administrators.** Know the law.
- **What is the district’s transition plan for coming into compliance with SF0059 by July 1, 2026?** Ask your district’s curriculum director or literacy coordinator:
- **if you are being directed to continue using Reading Recovery after the law takes effect. A written record matters.** Document your concerns in writing
- **We are tracking compliance issues across the state and can provide support, resources, and advocacy.** Reach out to WYO Right to Read.
- **The WDE, University of Wyoming, and Cox Campus are offering structured literacy professional development aligned with the Science of Reading. These are the credentials that will serve you and your students.** Seek training.

What the Law Protects:

Teachers are often in an uncomfortable position — caught between what research tells them works and what their district has mandated. SF0059 changes the legal landscape. After July 1, 2026, a district requiring teachers to use a non-approved program is requiring non-compliance with Wyoming law. Teachers who raise concerns about this are raising legitimate legal issues, not personal opinions.

Remember: Passing the Law Was the Beginning

SF0059 is a landmark victory for Wyoming’s children. But laws only work when they are implemented faithfully. The rulemaking process, the WDE’s approved program list, district transition plans, and ongoing compliance monitoring are where the real work happens now. WYO Right to Read is committed to seeing this law implemented with the rigor Wyoming’s students deserve.

