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FUSD beginning to implement 'Every Child is a Reader' initiative, will monitor results quarterly

By [Jessica Harrington](#)

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FRESNO, Calif. (KFSN) -- Fresno Unified is working to ensure all students learn to read by the end of first grade.

The third largest district in the state is entering Phase III of its "Every Child is a Reader" initiative.

Fresno Unified is making sure funds are available to make it happen.

"We have dedicated \$100 million to our literacy plans over the course of five years," Chief Academic Officer Natasha Baker said.

Baker says the district rolled out Phase I and II during the last school year.

That included research, workshops and literacy action plans.

It also gave each of the regional areas in the district a chance to decide which literacy provider to use to teach students.

"Every plan is exactly the same. They all focus on the foundational skills. The major difference includes the service provider," Baker said.

Now, FUSD is moving into Phase III, which includes implementation, progress monitoring and course correction when needed.

Each quarter, they will monitor how well students are doing.

"We look at how many kids know their letters. How many kids can really understand what they're reading," Baker said.

Any students who don't meet the benchmarks will work with an intervention specialist to get them back on track.

The district is also working with the Council of the Great City Schools to build a more comprehensive and cohesive multi-tier support system.

"We want a process that identifies when a child does not learn the material, what do we do next," Baker said.

Baker says Fresno Unified is 49.8 points below the state standard for reading.

She attributes those numbers to lower wealth, chronic absenteeism, and school disciplinary measures.

However, she says work is being done to prevent absences and provide resources for students in low-income areas.

"Are we where we want to be? Absolutely not, but we are catching up and we are looking at our data every single quarter so that we can course correct in time to help our kids get where they need to be," Baker said.

Baker says principals at each of the schools will have access to quarterly progress reports.

Parents can ask to see that data if they want to know how things are going at their child's school.