

National Trends in Literacy and Social Promotion Policy

SERVE Center at University of North
Carolina at Greensboro

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Raleigh, NC

Presenters:

Dr. Treana A. Bowling

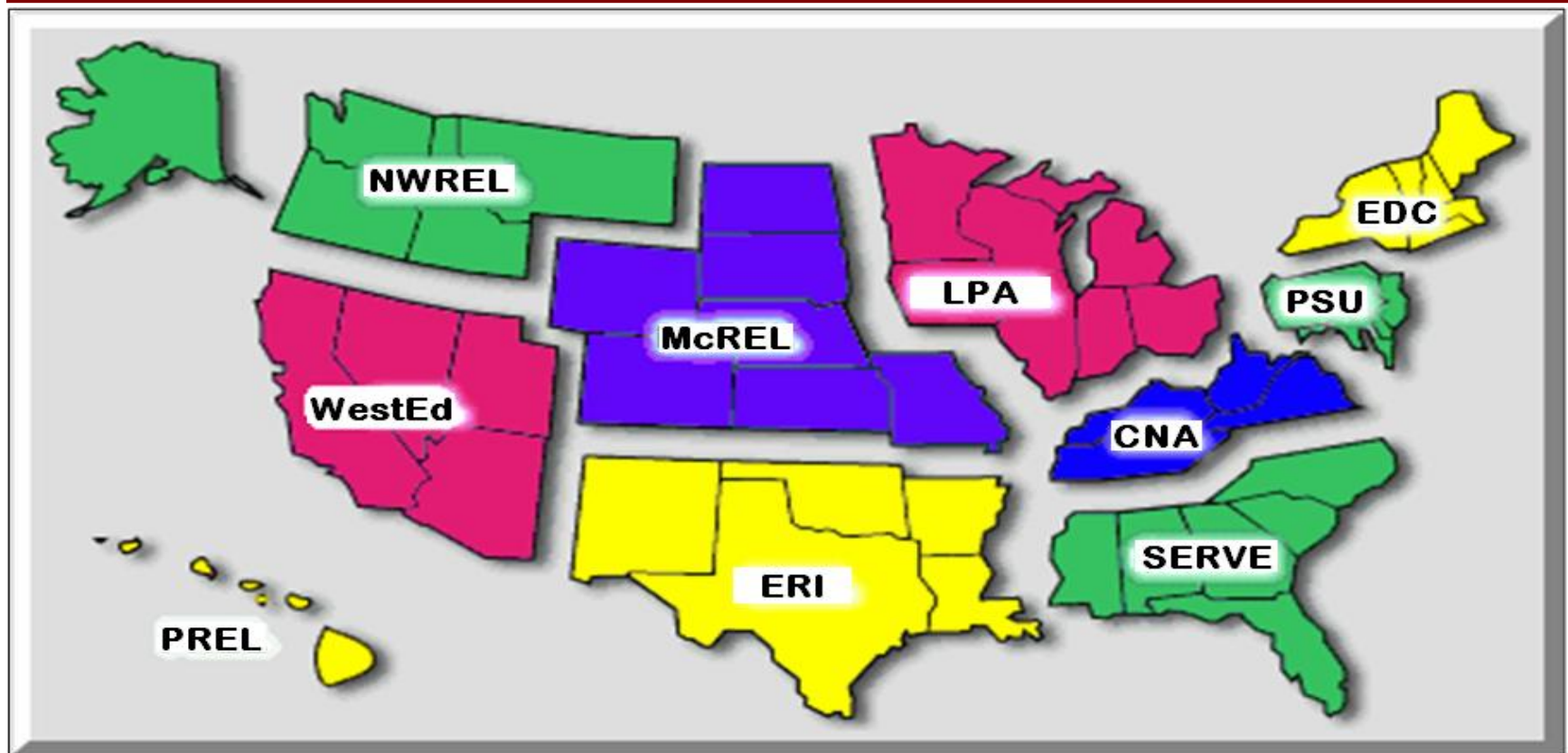
Dr. Christie L. Cavanaugh

SERVE Center Mission

Our mission is to foster empowered, information-rich educational systems by:

- Finding and translating the best current knowledge,
 - Generating new knowledge, and
 - Partnering with stakeholders to identify and apply best evidence to practice.
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The Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) System



Goals for Today's Session

- To outline national trends and common features of current, research-based literacy practices that are successful for improving student literacy outcomes K-12
- To present specific components of reading initiatives from 2 states that have experienced growth
- To highlight key research findings from retention/social promotion studies and implications for establishing policy

Recent National Literacy Initiatives

- Trends in reading improvement
 - NCLB
 - Reading First
 - Response to Intervention (RtI) as part of reauthorization of *IDEA*
 - Multi-tiered models of instruction
 - Adolescent Literacy: Literacy across Content Areas

Lessons Learned from Recent Initiatives

- Scores have improved on early reading outcomes (e.g., improved scores on 4th grade NAEP).
- Scores beyond 4th remain flat during the same time period.
- Initiatives included attention to effective leadership, professional development, and responsive attention to data.

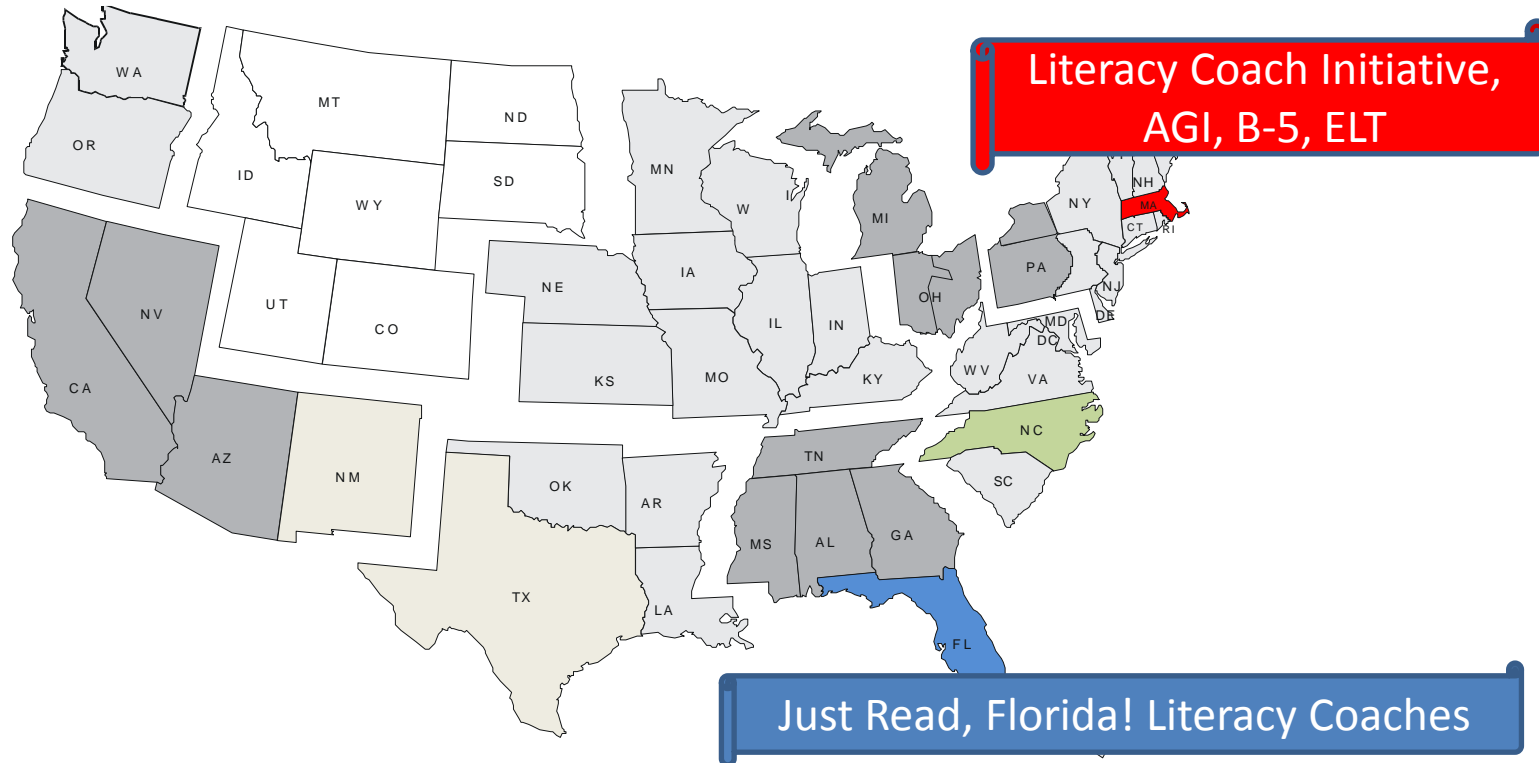
Current Focus and Hot Topics

- Adolescent and academic literacy
- Early intervention (prevailing)
- Response to Intervention (RtI) and multi-tiered instruction
- Struggling/striving readers (grade 4 and above)
- Literacy/reading coaches
- Formative and summative assessment

Current Focus and Hot Topics (cont'd)

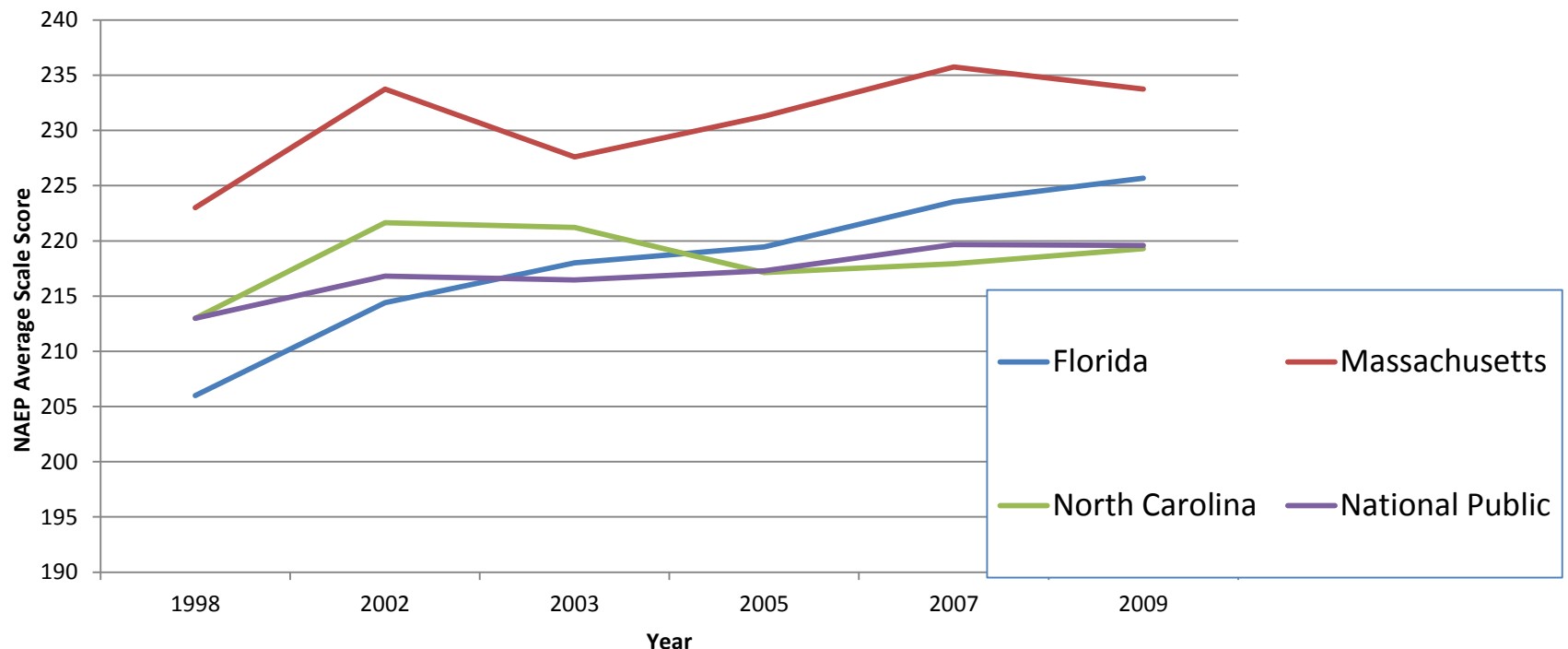
- English language learners
- Policy influences on literacy
- The 3 C's: College, Career, and Citizenship
- STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics)
- Digital literacy
- Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

Examples of Statewide Literacy Initiatives



Why Florida and Massachusetts?

North Carolina vs. Selected High Score and High Growth States: 4th Grade
NAEP Reading, 1998-2009



Just Read, Florida!

Projects and Resources

- Literacy Essentials and Reading Network
- Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network and Assessment Development
- Principal, teacher, and Reading Coach PD and Annual Leadership Conference
- Summer PD for literacy leadership teams
- Reach Out and Read

Just Read, Florida!

State Level Support

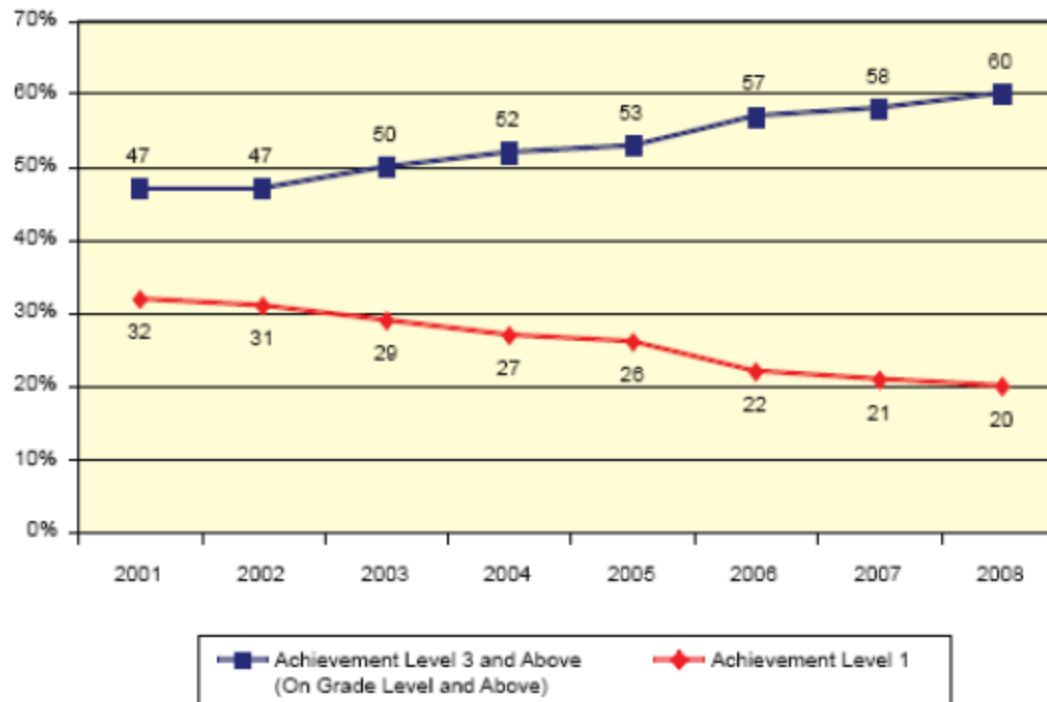
- Significant funding allocated
- Governor's initiative to have a reading coach on staff in every school
- Legislative actions

Just Read, Florida!

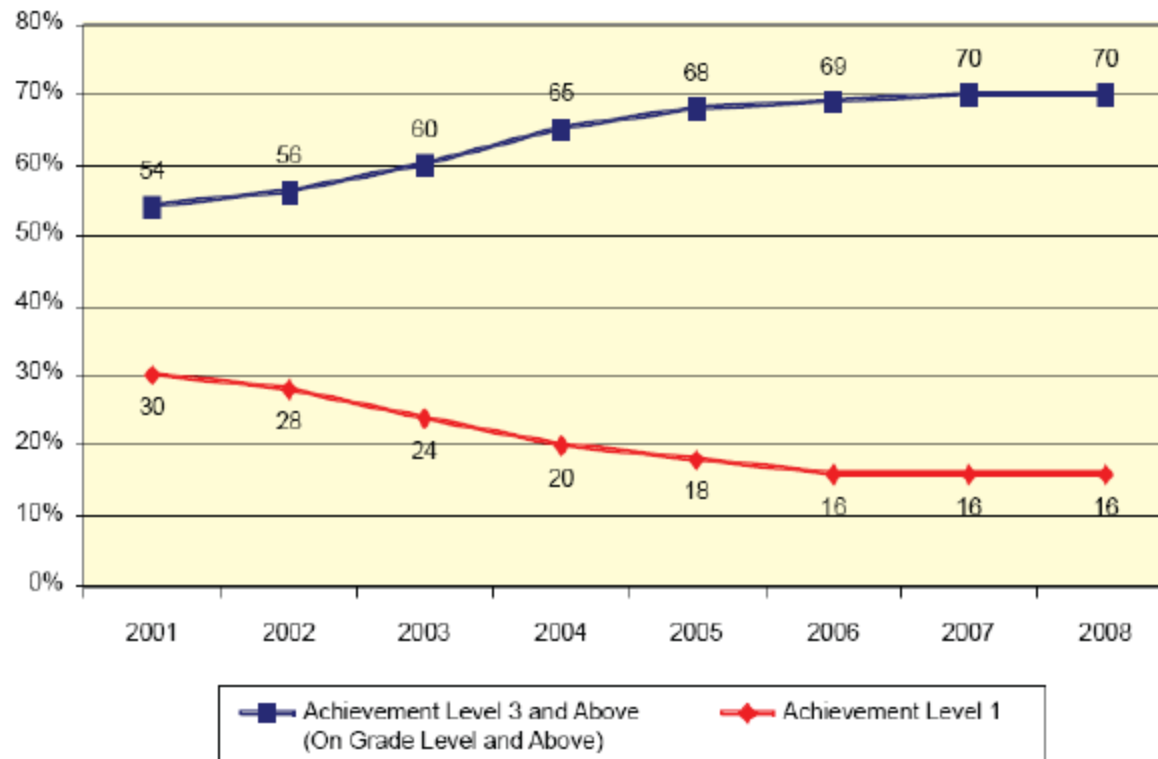
RAND Study Key Findings

- Continuity across districts-policy, support, clarity
- Common concerns about recruiting and retaining quality coaches
- Quality of coaches associated with some outcomes
- Coach-identified professional development in specific areas
- Time spent in coaching activities
- Positive impacts on teachers, principals, schools, and students

FCAT Reading by Achievement Level Grades 3-10



FCAT Reading by Achievement Level Grades 3, 4, and 5



Key Recommendations from RAND Study of Florida Coaches

- Provide guidance for selection and retention of high-quality coaches so that a pipeline is created.
- Differentiate professional development to match coaches' needs with those of teachers and address content *AND* adult learning principles.
- Support coaches in their ability to help teachers review, analyze, and respond to student data.
- Create a structure that allows coaches to support teachers more directly in classrooms and provide one-on-one support based on need.

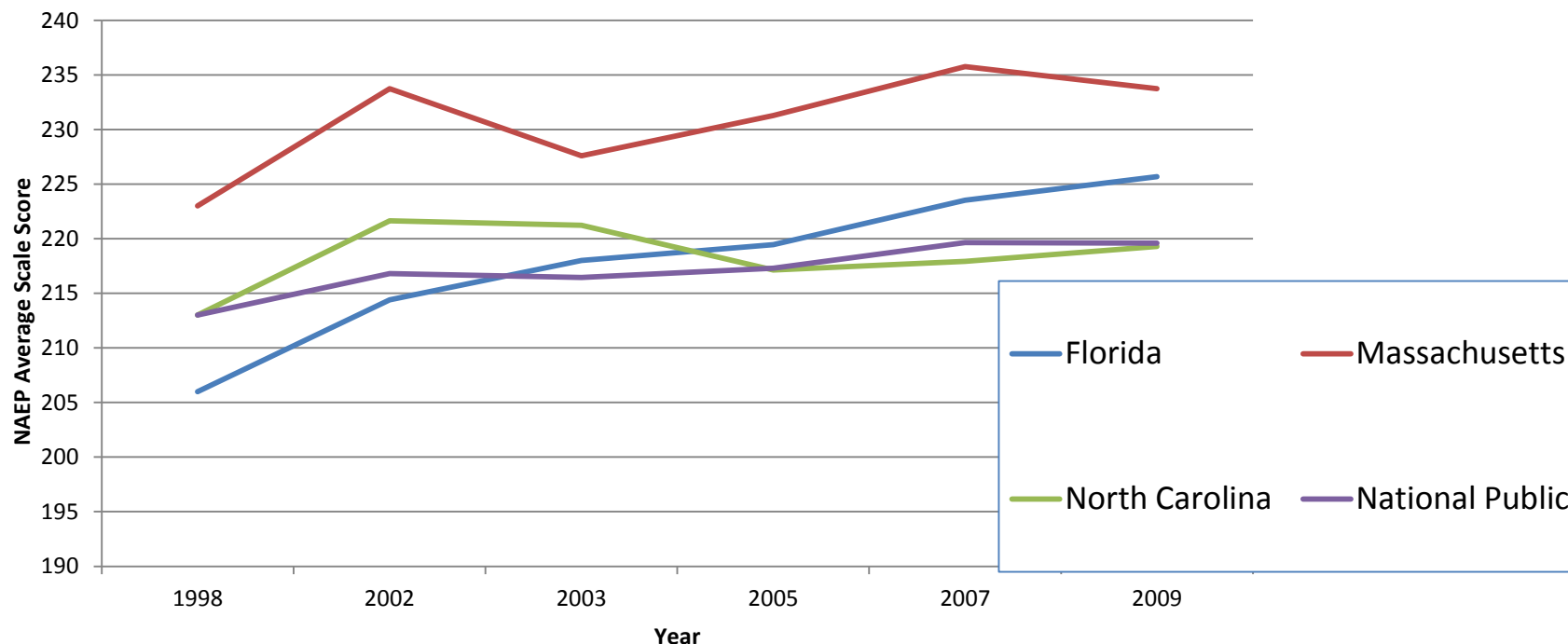
Key Recommendations from RAND Study of Florida Coaches

- Provide guidance for selection and retention of high-quality coaches so that a pipeline is created.
- Differentiate support strategies to match coaches' needs with those of teachers and address content, 4A/4B adult learning principles.
- Support coaches in their ability to help teachers review, analyze, and respond to student data.
- Create a structure that allows coaches to support teachers more directly in classrooms and provide one-on-one support based on need.

**Quality reading
coaches are
necessary for success.**

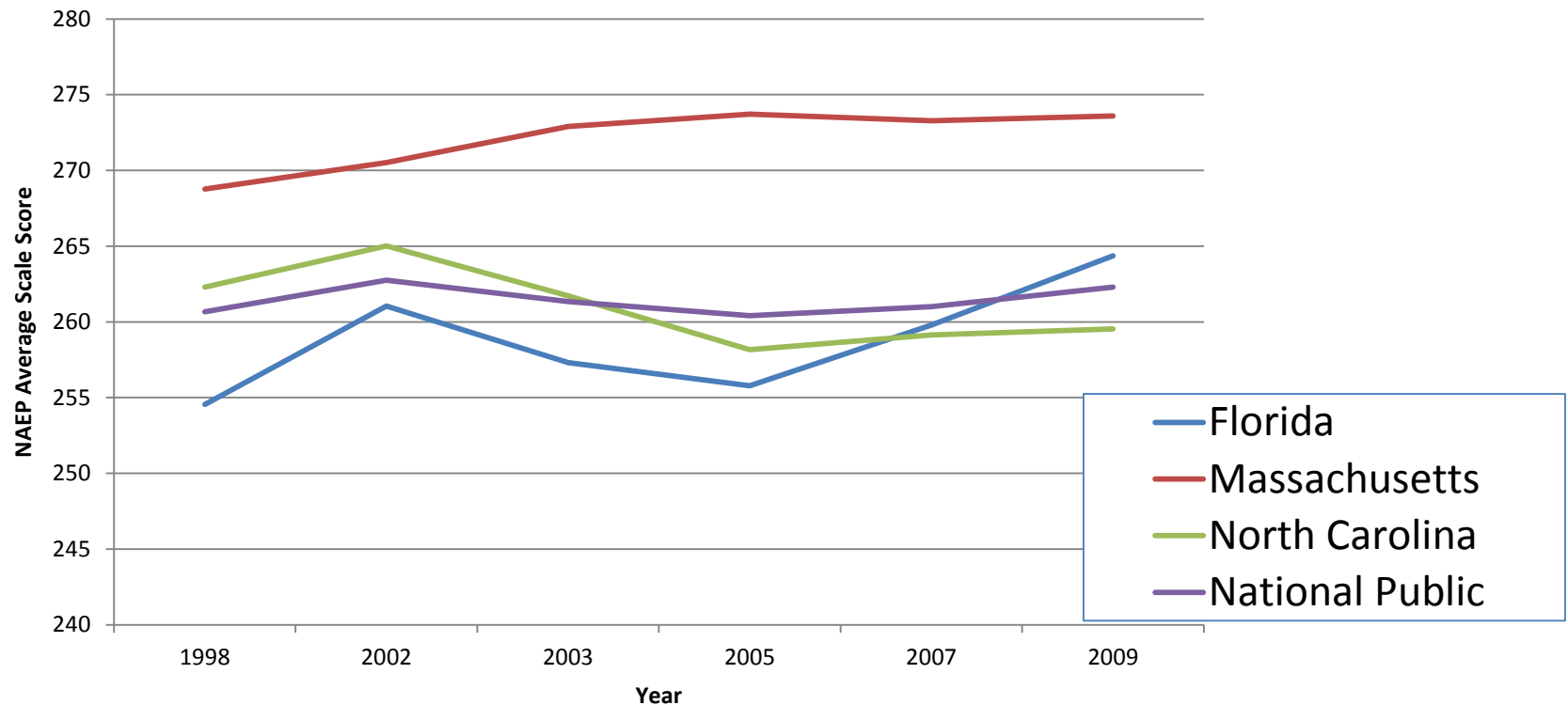
1998-2009: 4th Grade NAEP

North Carolina vs. Selected High Score and High Growth States



1998-2009: 8th Grade NAEP

North Carolina vs. Selected High Score and High Growth States

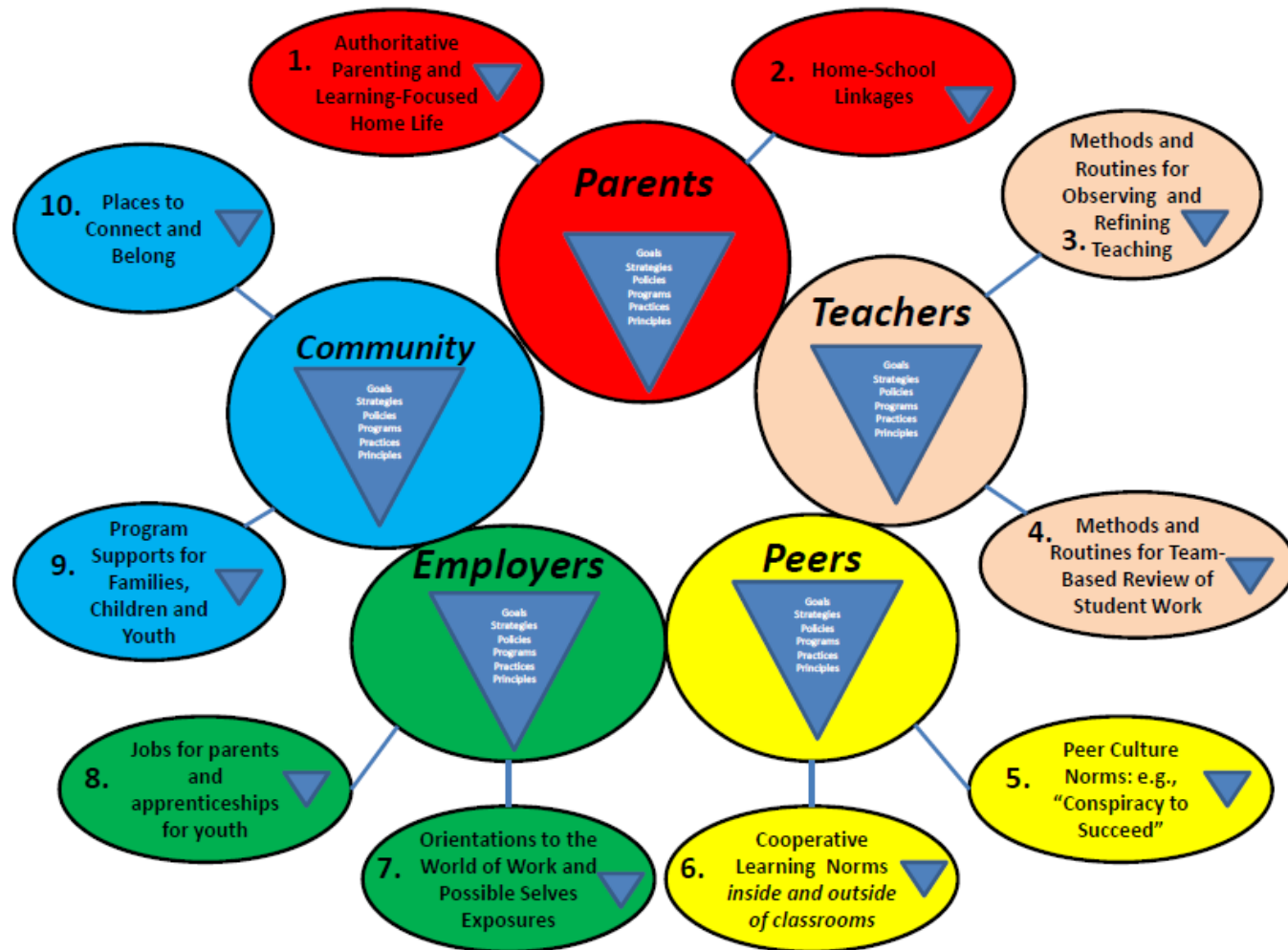


Massachusetts

- Components of an approach from the Achievement Gap Institute, Harvard
 - Based on belief (data-supported) that closing gaps is possible
 - Comprehensive, multi-faceted intervention approach that targets schools, homes, communities, peers, and employers
 - Clear process for identifying and responding to needs



Ferguson, R. (2011)



Ferguson, R. (2011)

Massachusetts

- Recent Bill pending approval
 - Comprehensive early literacy program (birth to grade 3) to achieve *“reading proficiency and higher levels of learning for all students by the end of 3rd grade.”*
 - Professional development and instructional leadership
 - Support and oversight for early care programs, pre-kindergartens, and K-3
 - Committee comprised of stakeholders from all program areas

Common Features Between the Two States Reading Initiatives

- Leadership
- Focus on school-home partnerships
- Prevention
- Legislative support
- Early intervention
- Literacy coaches
- Professional development
- Collaboration

Grade Retention and Social Promotion

What does the research say about grade retention and social promotion?

- What are the numbers?
- Who's impacted (at risk)?

Social Promotion Research Findings

- *Retention* does not have research support as an effective practice (Holmes, 1989; Jimerson, 2001; Peterson & Hughes, 2010).
- *Social promotion* does not have research support as an effective practice (Murray et al., 2010; Peterson & Hughes, 2010).
- *Prevention and intervention* are research-based practices and are appropriate alternatives to support students who struggle.

Social Promotion Research Findings

- NASP encourages “*school districts to consider a wide array of well-researched, evidence-based, effective, and **responsible** strategies in lieu of retention or social promotion* (NASP, 2003).”
- Although some states developed policies and have required services to support students at risk for retention and prevent the use of retention as an isolated intervention (e.g., Florida, Texas), systematic monitoring of policies or implementation of “accelerated” instruction are non-existent (Powell, 2008).
- Lack of policy to ensure monitoring is a threat to the spirit of RtI and compromises the support and funding for programs to accelerate learning.

Social Promotion (cont.)

- Retained students received less intervention in the second year than they did in the initial year and did not benefit academically (Abbott et al. 2010).
- Recommendation based on research findings—efforts placed on prevention and intervention are necessary to decrease the number of students at risk for “non-promotion.”

Evidence-based Alternatives to Grade Retention and Social Promotion

- Parent involvement: frequent contacts with teachers, supervision of homework, continual communication about school activities
- Early preschool programs to enhance language and social skills
- Systematic assessment strategies: progress monitoring and formative evaluation, ongoing modifications of instructional efforts

Evidence-based Alternatives to Grade Retention and Social Promotion (cont.)

- Comprehensive, high quality, appropriate reading programs
- School-based mental health programs
- Reduce classroom behavior problems
- Extended year, extended day, summer school programs
- Tutoring and mentoring programs
- Comprehensive school-wide programs

What do we still need to know or do?

Quality X Time = Growth

What are the implications for *all* students, particularly 3rd grade students?

What are the implications for the students who struggle and their school communities?

Something for NC to think about?

- **Comprehensive plan** with clear goals and guidelines
- **Commitment** to policies and funding to support program components that lead to student success (e.g., coaching, monitoring, appropriate levels of support)
- **Ongoing focus** on research-based strategies and approaches (e.g., professional development, intervention, increased time for students who struggle)

Time for Questions

Thank you!

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