



NORTH CAROLINA
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

Report to the North Carolina General Assembly

Comprehensive Plan for Reading
Achievement

*Session Law 2014-115 (HB 1133).sec 7A
1(b) SL 2014-115 sec. 80*

G.S 115C-83.4

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DPI Chronological Schedule, 2021-2022

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Introduction:

During the 2012 session, the General Assembly passed the Excellent Public Schools Act. A component of this legislation is the North Carolina Read to Achieve Program, which began in the 2013-2014 school year. As part of this program, the State Board of Education is directed to report biennially to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee each even-numbered year.

This report includes the following sections based on legislative requirements:

1. Implementation
2. Evaluation of Read to Achieve (statewide accountability measures)
3. Revisions to the Comprehensive Plan for Reading Achievement
4. Recommendations for legislative changes to enable implementation for current empirical research in reading development

§ 115C-83.4. Comprehensive plan for reading achievement.

(a) The State Board of Education shall develop, implement, and continuously evaluate a comprehensive plan to improve reading achievement in the public schools. The plan shall be based on reading instructional practices with strong evidence of effectiveness in current empirical research in reading development. The plan shall be developed with the active involvement of teachers, college and university educators, parents and guardians of students, and other interested parties. The plan shall, when appropriate to reflect research, include revision of the standard course of study or other curricular standards, revision of teacher licensure and renewal standards, and revision of teacher education program standards.

(b) The State Board of Education shall report biennially to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by October 15 of each even-numbered year on the implementation, evaluation, and revisions to the comprehensive plan for reading achievement and shall include recommendations for legislative changes to enable implementation of current empirical research in reading development. (2012-142, s. 7A.1(b); 2014-115, s. 80.)

Section 1: Implementation

The Read to Achieve legislation provided funding for technical assistance for PSUs to implement the components of the law. As a result, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) Office of Early learning is charged with the state-wide implementation of this law.

The division includes a Director, Project Coordinator, Read to Achieve Business and Charter Coordinator, Read to Achieve Implementation Coordinator, two regional based consultants in each state board district, and one administrative assistant. The Office of Early Learning provides support to PSUs with implementation of the new Session Law 2021-Senate Bill 387, which is an act to modify the implementation of the North Carolina Read to Achieve Program in order to attain statewide reading proficiency by the third grade.

The Office of Early Learning developed a Read to Achieve Implementation Guide that outlines each component of the law and provides ongoing support and resources to ensure a science of reading based approach to literacy. This guide includes the Comprehensive Plan for Reading Achievement and is continuously updated to ensure PSUs are provided with ongoing updates and support of the Excellent Public School Act of 2021.

The Office of Early Learning team works collaboratively with Lexia Voyager Sopris and district leaders to facilitate statewide implementation of the science of reading by providing Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) professional development for all Pre-K-5 teachers, K-5 Exceptional Children resource teachers, K-5 Multilingual teachers, as well as one instructional coach and administrator at each elementary school. This professional development provides NC educators the professional knowledge to become literacy and language experts in the science of reading to ensure students master the fundamentals of reading instruction and ultimately demonstrate grade level reading proficiency.

The Comprehensive Plan for Reading Achievement is informed by the Collaborative Guiding Framework for Early Literacy Education, developed and approved in 2019. This framework provides an outline of nine essential elements for improving student reading proficiency in the early grades:

1. Develop a statewide definition of high quality reading instruction
2. Improve focus on reading instruction in teacher preparation programs
3. Improve summer reading camp quality
4. Provide reading coach supports in low-performing schools and districts
5. Expand partnerships to support beginning teachers
6. Ensure high-quality reading curriculum and instructional materials in elementary schools
7. Explore a statewide system of training in reading for teachers, principals and reading coaches on the science of reading
8. Provide flexibility in state funding to support district action on reading
9. Ensure access to high-quality PreK and strong early learning environments and transitions to kindergarten

These elements, in alignment with legislation, are embedded within the 2022 NC Comprehensive Plan for Reading Achievement.

Component One: Comprehensive Plan for Reading Achievement (115C-83.4)

The Comprehensive Plan for Reading Achievement is based on reading instructional practices with strong evidence of effectiveness in current empirical research in reading development and aligned to the Excellent Public Schools Act of 2021 requirements. This plan is embedded throughout the updated Read to Achieve Implementation Guide.

The Read to Achieve Implementation Guide has been developed with internal and external stakeholders. Cross-divisional work teams have been generated to fulfill legislative requirements pursuant to each specific section of Session Law 2021-8. Internal Stakeholders include cross-divisional input. External stakeholders, including partnering agencies, higher education partners, community partners, philanthropists and district leaders, have contributed to relevant sections within the guide.

The updated guidebook includes implementation and instructional practices, as well as interactive components to support educators throughout North Carolina as they strive to enhance reading instruction and student achievement based on the science of reading. Educators may use this guide to: 1) support the implementation of each component of the Excellent Public Schools Act of 2021, 2) make decisions when selecting curriculum aligned to the science of reading, and 3) strategically discuss students' reading challenges, progress, and success in order to change outcomes.

NCDPI worked with Lexia Voyager Sopris and all NC school districts to assign three cohorts of LETRS - Science of Reading professional development for all Pre-K-5 teachers, exceptional children resource teachers, multilingual teachers, coaches, and administrators, as well as the NCDPI Early Education regional consultants. NCDPI is collaborating bi-weekly with the NC Department of Health and Human Services to ensure ongoing alignment for all NC Pre-K public and private teachers. 30 districts in Cohort 1 and 29 districts in Cohort 2 have started LETRS professional development. 57 districts in Cohort 3 will begin LETRS professional development as early as July 2022. 100% of all districts will be participating in LETRS during the 2022-23 school year.

North Carolina LETRS Final Cohort Implementation 2021-2025
12.2.21

Cohort 1 (30): Fall 2021 – Spring 2023

North Central	Northeast	Northwest	Piedmont-Triad
Vance County Schools	Bertie County Schools	Catawba County Schools	Mount Airy City Schools
Warren County Schools	Northampton County Schools	Newton Conover City Schools	Stokes County Schools
Wilson County Schools	Washington County Schools	Wilkes County Schools	Winston Salem / Forsyth County Schools
		McDowell County Schools	
Sandhills			
Southeast		Southwest	
Bladen County Schools	Onslow County Schools	Anson County Schools	Clay County Schools
Clinton Schools	New Hanover Schools	Cabarrus County Schools	Haywood County Schools
Columbus County Schools		Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	Madison County Schools
Hoke County Schools		Union County Public Schools	Polk County Schools
Scotland County Schools			
Whiteville City Schools			
Innovative School District			

Cohort 2 (29): Winter 2021 – Winter 2023

North Central	Northeast	Northwest	Piedmont-Triad
Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools	Beaufort County Schools	Alexander County Schools	Davie County Schools
Wake County Schools	Dare County Schools	Avery County Schools	Guilford County Schools
Johnston County Public Schools	Gates County Schools	Caldwell County Schools	Lexington City Schools
Orange County Schools	Hyde County Schools	Yancey County Schools	
Person County Schools	Perquimans County Schools		
Nash County Public Schools	Weldon City Schools		
	Elizabeth City-Pasquotank Public Schools		
Sandhills			
Southeast		Southwest	
	Craven County Schools	Iredell-Statesville Schools	Graham County Schools
	Pamlico County Schools	Stanly County Schools	Henderson County Schools
		Kannapolis City	Macon County Schools
			Transylvania County Schools

Cohort 3 (57): Summer 2022 – Spring 2024: Educators will begin after July 1, 2022

North Central	Northeast	Northwest	Piedmont-Triad
Franklin County Schools	Camden County Schools	Alleghany County Schools	Alamance-Burlington Schools
Harnett County Schools	Halifax County Schools	Ashe County Schools	Asheboro City Schools
Edgecombe County Public Schools	Hertford County Schools	Hickory City Schools	Caswell City Schools
Granville County Schools	Pitt County Schools	Mitchell County Schools	Elkin City Schools
Durham County Schools	Roanoke Rapids City Schools	Watauga County Schools	Randolph County School System
Chatham County Schools	Tyrrell County Schools	Burke County Schools	Rockingham County Schools
Lee County Schools	Martin County Schools		Surry County Schools
	Edenton-Chowan Schools		Thomasville City Schools
	Currituck County Schools		Yadkin County Schools
			Davidson County Schools
Sandhills			
Southeast		Southwest	
Cumberland County Schools	Brunswick County Schools	Lincoln County Schools	Buncombe County Schools
Montgomery County Schools	Carteret County Public Schools	Rowan-Salisbury Schools	Cherokee County Schools
Public Schools of Robeson County	Greene County Schools	Cleveland County Schools	Jackson County Public Schools
Richmond County Schools	Jones County Schools	Mooresville Graded Schools	Rutherford County Schools
Sampson County Schools	Lenoir County Public Schools	Gaston County	Swain County Schools
Moore County Schools	Pender County Schools		Asheville City Schools
	Wayne County Public Schools		
	Duplin County Schools		

The Office of Early Learning has also developed a NC LETRS Implementation Guide and a NC LETRS website with numerous research based, aligned resources linked directly to the Office of Early Learning webpage to support systemic implementation. The resources include highlights of districts in action and effective district processes learned during the first year of implementation.

Furthermore, NCDPI developed PK-12 Literacy Instruction Standards, providing clear expectations and a definite, established way of teaching literacy. These standards are essential, non-negotiable methods of teaching literacy, that sets a level of quality for instruction, to be used consistently statewide in every classroom, every day. They include only the most effective, evidence-based, science of reading-aligned methods of literacy instruction.

Additionally, each local school administrative unit submitted a district Literacy Intervention Plan in March 2022, to the Office of Early Learning, outlining core and supplemental instruction and processes. NCDPI cross collaborative teams reviewed the plans and provided specific feedback with suggestions for improvement.

The plan includes the following:

- core instruction
- data and evaluation system & assessment plan
- literacy interventions
- reading camps

The Literacy Intervention Plans are to be submitted for the 22-23 school year no later than October 1. The Literacy Intervention Plans are required to align to the science of reading, will include intervention support beyond the core instruction and tied to the release of funding moving forward. As part of their plans, local school administrative units are encouraged to partner with other local school administrative units and with community organizations to enhance literacy interventions.

NCDPI has developed an Individual Reading Plan (IRP) process with specific, required components to be implemented for any student in kindergarten through third grade demonstrating difficulty with reading development based on the results of either the first diagnostic or formative assessment of the school year or the second semester of the school year.

The IRP must include the following information specific to the identified student and adjusted continually based on multiple data sources:

- (1) The specific reading skill deficiencies identified by assessment data.
- (2) Goals and benchmarks for growth.
- (3) The means by which progress will be monitored and evaluated.
- (4) The specific additional literacy interventions the student will receive.
- (5) The Science of Reading-based instructional programming the teacher will implement.

(6) Any additional services the teacher deems appropriate to accelerate the student's reading skill and development.

A multi-tiered system of support intervention may be used to satisfy the requirements of this section if all of the components (1-6) listed above are incorporated in the intervention.

Component Two: Facilitating Early Grade Reading Proficiency (115C-83.6)

Legislation states that kindergarten, first, second, and third grade students shall be assessed with valid, reliable, formative, and diagnostic reading assessments made available to local school administrative units by the State Board of Education. Also, SAS Institute uses the results in grades K-2 to determine EVAAS value-added growth for teachers and schools across the state.

Since Legislation passed in 2012, NCDPI has supported districts in statewide implementation of mCLASS:Reading 3D as the formative, diagnostic reading assessment made available by the State Board of Education.

However, for the 2019-2020 school year, Istation Indicators of Progress Early Reading (ISIP ER) was adopted as the statewide tool; followed by the State Board approval of five formative diagnostic assessment choices for the 2020-2021 school year.

For the 2021-2024 school years mCLASS: DIBELS 8 is the formative, diagnostic assessment for all LEAs and is also available to charters. The Office of Early Learning has worked with the vendor and stakeholders to analyze trends, and gather data in order to develop crucial and targeted professional development for the purpose of assisting teachers and administrators in understanding and using data from the formative, diagnostic reading assessment to inform instruction. The Office of Early Learning will continue building knowledge in the field to promote data based instructional decision-making to impact student outcomes.

It is important to emphasize that a formative, diagnostic reading assessment is a tool for teachers to use in determining the root cause of reading difficulties. It is only one of many tools teachers can use to make informed decisions about students and their instructional needs. A comprehensive assessment system should be used to gather and manage data for various decision-making opportunities. It is an essential component to impacting reading achievement because it enables educators to be informed about student progress. Gathering data and data tools will not change the achievement of a student. Careful data analysis and instruction that match the needs of the students will help children move forward to overcome deficit gaps or enrich and enhance their current skill levels. Improving knowledge of the tool increases fidelity of implementation and provides reliable data to make decisions for instruction. Without fidelity of implementation, student results are not useful in the instructional decision-making process; therefore, collecting data that is valid and reliable is critical.

The North Carolina General Assembly provided funding and legislation for the establishment of first and second grade reading camps beginning in the summer of 2016. This legislation is a proactive approach that LEAs/charters use to intervene

early in a child's educational career to support and build foundational literacy skills before the child reaches the third grade. Providing high quality instruction to build strong foundational reading skills early is critical.

Additionally, parent notification is required by legislation. The formative, diagnostic reading assessment provided to districts by the NCDPI for the 2021-2022 school year, mCLASS: DIBELS 8, offers parents activities in a Home Connect page to engage and work with their students at home. Parent involvement is key for positive student outcomes. Access to the Home Connect page is easily available at home or anywhere the student/parent can access the internet. This provides invaluable information to parents on which activities best meet the needs of their child. The teacher is also encouraged to share data during the parent/teacher conferences, reviewing the activities pertinent to each student's reading deficiencies.

Component Three: Elimination of Social Promotion (115C-83.7)

NCDPI staff has continually emphasized the level of support this law provides for struggling readers. There are multiple opportunities for students to show proficiency in third grade, including the Beginning-of-Grade (BOG) test, End-of-Grade (EOG) test, EOG retest, Read to Achieve alternative test, the completion of a portfolio, or passing the alternative local test approved by the State Board of Education.

This component also includes Good Cause Exemptions. The law states that two of the exemptions could be proficiency on an alternative assessment or completion of a student reading portfolio. NCDPI provides all districts and charters with the Beginning of Grade (BOG) test, the End-of Grade (EOG) test, and the retest of the End-of-Grade (EOG). The Read to Achieve alternative test and mCLASS: DIBELS 8 Lexile score of 725 are also provided by the state as alternatives to the EOG. Literacy staff worked with North Carolina State Technical Outreach for Public Schools (NC TOPS) to develop a North Carolina portfolio model that aligns with the NC EOG. NC TOPS has developed the NC EOG since its inception. The NC portfolio system ensures that teachers have choice in the selection of materials to use for the portfolio while offering a consistent state-wide formative system that measures student understanding and application of standards. The same multi-step processes are used for developing the portfolio and are used for the development of an EOG. NC teachers review the passage selections and develop the questions. Teachers have full access to the portfolio passages, so they can use their discretion as to when and if students should begin to develop a portfolio. Each year passages are added to the portfolio, including resources that teachers have at their disposal to use with students in the classroom. The use of the student reading portfolio system is a local decision.

Component Four: Successful Reading Development for Retained Students (115C-83.8)

This component of the legislation provides support for students not demonstrating proficiency on third grade reading standards. Funding was established to offer reading camps for third graders who were unable to show proficiency through any of the opportunities mentioned and to give students extra instructional time to develop skills. Each LEA is responsible for planning,

development, and implementation of reading camps aligned to the science of reading and included in the Literacy Intervention Plan. While the LEA is responsible for the planning of the camp, the Office of Early Learning provides districts with support in implementation. A Read to Achieve Reading Camp Implementation Guide was created to outline legislative requirements and provide resources for LEAs and is also available to charters.

Multiple opportunities to show proficiency on assessments and reading camp will not produce higher achievement unless instruction is aligned with what the child needs. Daily high quality core literacy instruction with a teacher highly trained in literacy is necessary to make gains. It is important to note that although a student has a good cause exemption, he/she still has access to instructional support and services and can participate in reading camp.

Parents and community volunteers are also invited to read with students during reading camp. While this time does not count toward the required 72 hours of instruction, many children benefit from volunteers reading to or with students. Reading volunteers promote the activity of reading, they do not teach specific reading skills.

Students not demonstrating proficiency on third grade reading standards who are retained in third grade can be placed in a 3/4 Transition class or Accelerated class. These classes are taught by a teacher with demonstrated outcomes in reading. Additionally, the State Board of Education adopted a mid-year promotion policy in March of 2013. Retained reading students are provided the opportunity to demonstrate reading proficiency by November 1 by taking the Read to Achieve alternative assessment. After November 1, retained reading students can show proficiency by completing the reading portfolio, passing a local alternative assessment, or passing the 4th grade EOG. Students who are considered twice retained students are also provided the opportunity for supplemental tutoring outside of the instructional school day. This tutoring requires evidence-based reading services aligned to the science of reading.

Component Five: Notification Requirements to Parents and Guardians

(115C-83.9) Parents and guardians shall receive notice, in a timely manner, if their kindergarten, first, second, or third grade student is not demonstrating reading deficiency or not reading at grade level.

To assist LEAs/Charters with this component, NCDPI created sample templates that districts and schools can customize for their needs. The templates are forms that provide documentation required by legislation and give parents valuable information about the current needs of the student with interventions being employed to address those needs. The Notification forms are included in the Read to Achieve Implementation Guide.

Parent and guardian involvement are essential to student achievement and keeping them informed of their student's progress throughout the early grades is beneficial for reading success. The formative, diagnostic assessment system provides a parent

friendly letter, so that parents know where their child’s deficiencies are and activities to work with them at home. This letter is specific to each individual student and provides parent friendly activities to assist with reading at home. The letter is generated at each benchmark assessment period, three times a year and can be reviewed with parents and guardians during teacher-parent conferences.

A Digital Children's Reading Initiative has been developed as outlined in legislation for the purpose of increasing the percentage of school children throughout the state who are reading proficiently by the end of third grade. The initiative is aligned with the science of reading and reflects the standards taught in each grade level from kindergarten to third grade. It is designed to assist parents, guardians, and family members in cultivating confident, proficient, lifelong readers by providing free tools and resources that can be easily incorporated into everyday life.

Section Two: Evaluation & Sustainability

Per legislation, the Accountability Division established a uniform process for collecting the required information for reporting and posting on district websites. Through the process, districts are able to report numbers through an electronic system that calculates the needed information into a uniform template. Each local board of education publishes data annually on its website and reports the information in writing by September 1 of each year.

The NCDPI staff continues to work on support and moving policy to practices. We are developing an evaluation plan to capture qualitative and quantitative data in three general areas: educator knowledge, support processes and learning outcomes. Each of these areas have subcomponents that will be monitored.



Furthermore, NCDPI has developed a deployment timeline indicating what data should be evaluated throughout the implementation. (see table below) Student growth will be evident before overall proficiency/student outcomes. Growth will potentially align to the LETRS Volume implementation timeline.

		2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	
		Project Year 1	Project Year 2	Project Year 3	Project Year 4	Project Year 5	Project Year 6	
K-5, Instructional Coaches, EC, ELL	Cohort 1	Learn Volume 1	Implement Volume 1	Shift in K-1 Instructional Practices	Outcomes in K-1	Outcomes in K-3 data		
			Learn Volume 2	Implement Volume 2	Shift in 2-3 instructional practices			
	Cohort 2	Learn Volume 1	Learn Volume 1 Implement Volume 1	Shift in K-1 Instructional Practices	Outcomes in K-1	Outcomes in K-3 data		
			Learn Volume 2	Learn Volume 2 Implement Volume 2	Shift in 2-3 Instructional Practices			
	Cohort 3		Learn Volume 1	Implement Volume 1	Shift in K-1 Instructional Practices	Outcomes in K-1		Outcomes in K-3 data
				Learn Volume 2	Implement Volume 2	Shift in 2-3 instructional practices		
Early Childhood	Cohorts 1 & 2	Learn Volumes 1 & 2	Implement Volumes 1 & 2	Shift in Pre-K Instructional Practices	Outcomes in Pre-K	Outcomes in K Readiness		
	Cohort 3		Learn Volumes 1 & 2	Implement Volumes 1 & 2	Shift in Pre-K Instructional Practices	Outcomes in Pre-K	Outcomes in K Readiness	
Administrators	Cohorts 1 & 2	Learn Volumes 1 & 2	Implement Volumes 1 & 2 Basic Processes	Shift in School Literacy Practices	Outcomes in K-1	Outcomes in K Readiness & K-3 Data		
	Cohort 3		Learn Volumes 1 & 2	Implement Volumes 1 & 2 Basic Processes	Shift in School Literacy Practices	Outcomes in K-1	Outcomes in K Readiness & K-3 Data	

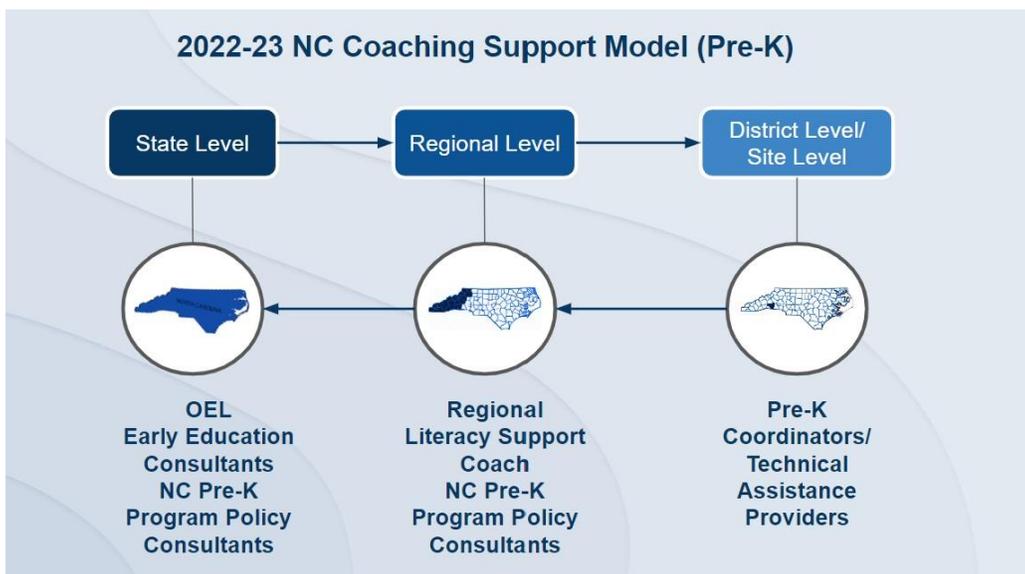
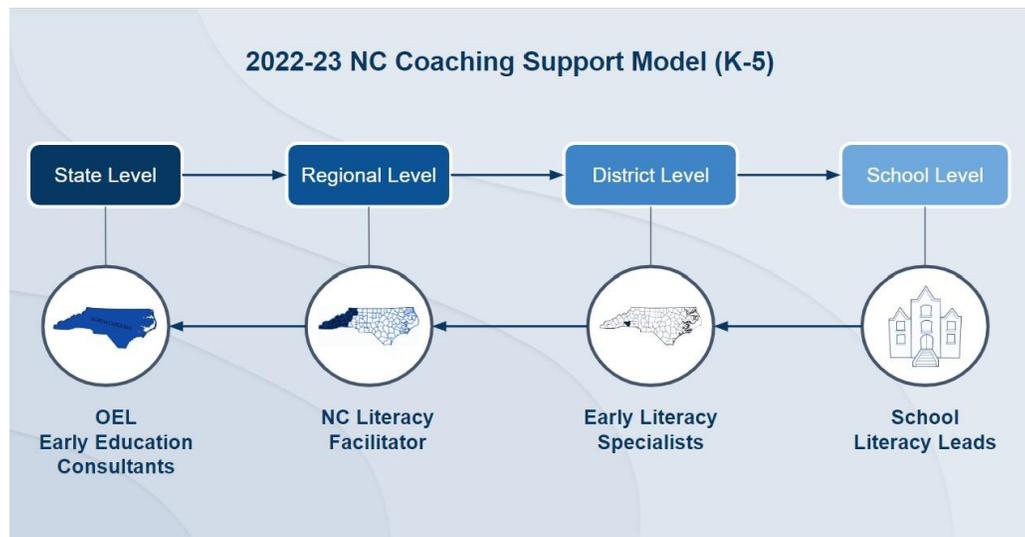
Volume 1 - Year 1	Volume 2 - Year 2
Unit 1: Brain Research/ Science Overview Unit 2: Phonemic Awareness Unit 3: Basic Phonics Unit 4: Advanced Phonics/ Word Recognition	Unit 5: Vocabulary Unit 6: Comprehension- Basic Meaning Unit 7: Comprehension - Text Driven Unit 8: Reading/Writing Connection

NCDPI has developed a coaching framework for the 2022-23 school year to support aligned implementation and sustainability for all NC school districts. The Office of Early Learning has two regional consultants per district currently working to become Early Childhood and K-5 LETRS trainers to support ongoing professional development, while also providing support for early literacy in a ubiquitous approach.

Recognizing that the most effective coaching model consists of hands-on, real-time coaching and support, NC will be adding 115 Early Literacy Specialists (one per district) to serve as a bridge between the state and each district in the 2022-23 school year. The Early Literacy Specialists will be hired by NCDPI and work in each district full time. They will be required to attend ongoing training provided by the Office of Early Learning with the intent to also become LETRS trainers. Data will be

collected to determine the effectiveness of the initial coaching framework and potential expansion based on data, as part of a continuous improvement process.

NCDPI Office of Early Learning will also be adding eight Literacy Facilitator positions (one per region) to serve as full time LETRS trainers for the state. NC Literacy Facilitators will work in collaboration with the Office of Early Learning and will spend the majority of their time leading LETRS PD to support district and preschool turnover, transitions, and ultimately help NC increase training capacity without investing as much in a vendor.



Section Three: Revisions to the Comprehensive Plan for Reading Achievement

The Office of Early Learning gathered stakeholder input from internal and external stakeholders. Based on stakeholder input and feedback, the Comprehensive Plan for Reading Achievement is now a part of the Read to Achieve Implementation Guide,

this addition was approved in August 2021. This Implementation guide includes aligned, research-based resources and processes to support NC educators and families. It was approved by the State Board of Education in July, 2022.

Section Four: Recommendations for Legislative Changes

The following section outlines recommendations for revisions in implementation of the legislation to ensure stronger statewide early literacy support .

Professional Development

- **Recommendation 1:** Continue to allocate funding to support ongoing LETRS training for K- 5 teachers, EC teachers, ML teachers, literacy coaches, and school leaders.
- **Recommendation 2:** Continue to allocate funds for human resources to serve as specialists and coaches based on data trends and priorities.
- **Recommendation 3:** Review the overlap of assessments required in Kindergarten (Kindergarten Entry Assessment and the RtA Formative Reading Diagnostic Assessment). Consider delaying the RtA Formative Reading Diagnostic Assessment for kindergarten until second semester since the beginning of year data is not included in the EVAAS growth.