

North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities (NCICU)

Accomplishments in Year One of the NCICU Educator Preparation Program Science of Reading Faculty Support Project

February 2023

Submitted by: Compass Evaluation and Research
Durham North Carolina

This project is made possible through the generosity of the Goodnight Educational Foundation

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Executive Summary: NCICU EPP Science of Reading Faculty Support Project

North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities (NCICU) is addressing the goal to enhance literacy education. NCICU's thirty-one Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) are engaged in a two-year process of review and refinement to ensure coursework is aligned with Science of Reading concepts and thus likely to increase the quality of literacy instruction in the classroom.

Since 2022, NCICU EPPs have committed to a suite of activities designed to assess, support, and enhance reading instruction. These activities have been made possible through the generous support of the Goodnight Educational Foundation (GEF) which helped to create the Science of Reading Faculty Support project co-managed by NCICU staff members Ms. Denise Adams and Dr. Patsy Pierce. Specifically, the NCICU EPPs are strengthening the alignment of their programs of study and coursework with the Science of Reading, an evidence-based approach to teaching reading. Four principal strategies are in progress:

- Use of structured self-assessments to diagnose strengths and weaknesses and develop course re-design plans;
- Sub-grants in support of enhancement strategies;
- Science of Reading institutes for faculty; and
- Participation in LETRS training.

The **structured self-assessment** asked EPP faculty to consider the coverage, comprehensiveness, and effectiveness of their program of study for ten areas of study (containing 104 competencies) in reading and literacy instruction for pre- and in-service educators. The assessment also prompted respondents to consider the extent to which other tools and supports were used to prepare educators, and which additional supports and services would be helpful over the two-year enhancement process. The resulting data were used by EPPs to fully align courses with the Science of Reading.

The enhancement plans contain a mix of strategies, many of which are supported by **sub-grants** to individual EPPs (in the amount of \$15,600 each). While each plan is specific to the EPP, common Science of Reading enhancement strategies include:

- Targeted professional development for faculty, such as trainings, peer support, and conference participation;
- Program of study and coursework re-design;
- Increased collaboration with local elementary schools and community organizations;
- Support for teacher education candidates to develop their proficiency in Science of Reading based methods;
- Developing continuous quality enhancement systems; and
- Creation of resource libraries for faculty and teacher candidates.

Faculty from each EPP also participate in NCICU-hosted **Science of Reading Summer Faculty Institutes**. The first institute occurred in June 2022 and the next will occur in June 2023. The June 2022 institute contained direct instruction in topics such as:

- Systematic and Explicit Phonics Instruction;
- Building Strategic Readers: Systematic and Explicit Reading Comprehension;
- Syllable Types;
- Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and the Science of Reading;
- LETRS Lessons Learned; and
- Ehri's Spelling Development Stages for Encoding and Decoding.

Institute participants also had the opportunity to engage with speakers such as:

- Amy Mattingly (Helps Education Fund), speaking on the topic of *"Pulling Back the Curtain: Growth and Vulnerability with the Science of Reading;"*
- Teri Queen (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction), speaking on *"Reading Research to Classroom Practice and SOR in North Carolina;"*
- Carole Boston Weatherford, award-winning children's author; and
- Ed Crowe and Holly Womack (TPI-US), speaking on program and course re-design.

Finally, at least two faculty from each EPP were offered the opportunity to complete **96 hours of LETRS training**. LETRS, which stands for Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling, is required training for in-service regular and special education (general curriculum) teachers in North Carolina's traditional elementary schools. LETRS is an intensive curriculum designed to strengthen educators in their use of Science of Reading methods to ensure effective reading and literacy instruction. Faculty participation in the training will help ensure EPP literacy curricula are aligned with the skills educators need to demonstrate in classrooms. To date, 16 faculty have completed LETRS training as a part of the GEF funded project and indicate a 34% increase in Science of Reading knowledge. These faculty members are incorporating this knowledge into their college-level teaching.

In addition to these primary strategies, NCICU staff, and the NCICU Science of Reading Task Force, composed of NCICU EPP faculty members representing eight NCICU colleges and universities and co-chaired by Dr. Monica Campbell (Lenoir-Rhyne University) and Dr. Mary Knight-McKenna (Elon University), are on hand to provide support, encouragement, and guidance. There also are periodic convenings that provide opportunities for additional training, guidance, updates, and peer support. Finally, the EPPs recently completed a mid-term progress assessment; findings will be used to further refine and amplify support to each program. NCICU's Science of Reading Task Force is creating an online tool kit of faculty teaching resources fully aligned with the Science of Reading based on findings from implementation of project activities.

Overview

In 2021, North Carolina enacted legislation regarding the nature and quality of reading instruction in the state. Among the different provisions of the legislation, North Carolina took steps to clarify and direct state goals for reading instruction¹. Specifically, the 2021 legislation defined Science of Reading (SoR):

"Science of Reading" means evidence-based reading instruction practices that address the acquisition of language, phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics and spelling, fluency, vocabulary, oral language, and comprehension that can be differentiated to meet the needs of individual students.

The legislation further clarified expectations for the professional training of North Carolina's educators in the SoR. Of note, the legislation established expectations for the incorporation of the SoR in early literacy programs, literacy professional development, and Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs).

North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities (NCICU) is comprised of North Carolina's 36 private, nonprofit liberal arts, research, and comprehensive colleges and universities. Thirty-one NCICU colleges and universities have EPPs approved by the North Carolina State Board of Education. As can be seen in the map included above, NCICU constituents cover the state. NCICU EPPs are located in the following universities and colleges: Barton, Belmont Abby, Bennett, Brevard, Campbell, Catawba, Chowan, Duke, Elon, Gardner-Webb, Greensboro College, Guilford, High Point, Lees-McRae, Lenoir-Rhyne, Livingstone, Mars Hill, Meredith, Methodist, Montreat, Mount Olive, NC Wesleyan, Queens, Pfeiffer, Salem, Shaw, St. Andrews, St. Augustine's, Wake Forest, William Peace, Wingate. The EPPs vary in the number of faculty and students in their EPPs from very small (1-3 faculty members/10 or fewer students per semester) to large (4-10 faculty members/30 or more students per semester). There are four NCICU Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) EPPs including Bennett, Livingstone, Shaw, and St. Augustine's, and two Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) including Chowan University and NC Wesleyan University.

The legislation prompted an immediate response by NCICU and their constituent colleges and universities. Funds were sought and awarded by the Goodnight Educational Foundation (GEF) to create a faculty support project to assist NCICU EPPs in their roles to ensure the implementation of

¹ Session Law 2021-8/Senate Bill 387

S.L. 2021-8 by enhancing, redesigning, and developing effective literacy coursework, practica, and internships based in the SoR as defined in G.S. 115C-83.3(7a). Funds were awarded in December 2021 and the project began in January 2022 with the establishment of the NCICU SoR Task Force. The Task Force is made up of representatives from eight NCICU EPPs and chaired by Dr. Monica Campbell of Lenoir-Rhyne University and Dr. Mary Knight-McKenna of Elon University. The other colleges and universities represented on the Task Force are Dr. Megan Keiser (Brevard), Dr. Kathleen Castillo-Clark (Campbell), Dr. Diana Betts (Gardner-Webb), Dr. Pamela Vesely (Lees-McRae), Dr. Tarsha Reid (Livingstone), and Dr. Linda Neuzil (Montreat). Dr. Betts also represented NCICU on the 2022 Legislative Task Force. She co-chairs NCICU's self-assessment sub-committee along with Dr. Castillo-Clark. Dr. Betts is a trained evaluator for TPI-US, the external evaluator contracted by the UNC System to complete the legislative study. NCICU's SoR Task Force has been meeting monthly developing strategies for EPPs to implement S.L. 2021-8 and will continue its work through the end of the project in December 2023.

This report focuses on the suite of strategies and strategic initiatives in which the thirty-one NCICU EPPs are investing to fully align their teaching with the SoR. Specifically, this report captures the initial year of the strategies supported with funding from the GEF, facilitated by NCICU staff, and with the support and guidance from the NCICU SoR Task Force. Four main strategies that have been employed during the first year of the project (2022) are discussed: structured self-assessments, Summer Faculty Institutes to address needs determined through self-assessment, sub-grants in support of alignment initiatives, and faculty participation in LETRS training. NCICU's SoR Task Force is creating an online tool kit of faculty teaching resources fully aligned with the SoR based on findings from implementation of these strategies.

Progress

Baseline Structured Self-Assessment

In spring 2022, NCICU's SoR Task Force members developed and implemented a structured self-assessment that accomplished several tasks. First, the self-assessment guided EPPs through a rigorous examination of their literacy education programming. The participating EPPs chose which of their literacy education programs to assess, understanding that the assessment would help guide the enhancement and refinement process. It includes 104 competencies, organized into 10 major areas of study including: Science of Reading, Oral Language, Phonological and Phonemic Awareness, Concepts of Print, Phonics and Word Recognition, Spelling, Oral Reading Fluency, Vocabulary, Comprehension and Interventions. The Phonics and Word Recognition section includes four subscales: Letter Knowledge, Syllable Types, High Frequency Words/Sight Words/Irregular Words, and Morphology. The NCICU self-assessment, along with the UNC Framework was used to create the

NC Literacy Review Framework used in the recent legislative study of EPP coursework completed by external evaluator, TPI-US.

As noted above, the Baseline Structured Self- Assessment contains several sections. **The assessment was designed to provide concrete, granular information about coursework.** Each respondent was asked to indicate the specific courses in which different SoR concepts were addressed. This approach helped raise awareness across NCICU EPPs of concrete SoR constructs as well as generate a baseline against which to assess progress over the two-year initiative.

The assessment also asked participants to indicate the nature and scope of information and supports that would best assist their refinement process, to be provided at the 2022 Summer Faculty Institute, and to guide their proposal to receive a sub-grant.

What We Learned

Thirty-one NCICU EPPs returned assessments (100% response rate) for 35 programs of study (Table 1). Of the 35 programs, 34 were undergraduate programs and one was a Master of Arts in Teaching Elementary Education. **Most programs that were assessed were in Elementary Education. Of these, the majority were face-to-face programs.**

Table 1. Undergraduate Programs and Modalities

Program for Self-Study	Modality			Total
	Face-to-Face	Hybrid	Other	
Elementary Education	20	2	5	27 (79.4%)
General Curriculum Special Education	2	-	2	4 (11.8%)
Licensure Only Elementary Education	2	1	-	3 (8.8%)
<i>Total Undergraduate Programs</i>	24	3	7	34

With the focus on these self-selected programs, the assessment next asked participants to consider three aspects of their programming, for the ten areas of study contained within the literacy instruction framework. These areas were:

- Whether an area of study was **covered** in one or more courses in the program of study,
- The extent to which (i.e., **comprehensiveness**) the area of study was covered, and
- The **effectiveness** with which the area of study was covered.

Coverage

First, the concept of Coverage was developed to assess the extent to which the Task Force’s ten critical areas of study were included in courses within the chosen program of study. Specifically, the assessment asked respondents to indicate whether each area of study (and, in Phonics and Word Recognition, four sub-scales), was covered in one or more courses in that program. Results from the baseline assessment indicated the **highest coverage** existed for:

- Phonological and Phonemic Awareness (85.7% of respondents), and
- Vocabulary (85.7%)

All respondents reported at least limited coverage of Phonological and Phonemic Awareness, Concepts of Print, and Phonics and Word Recognition. However, at least one respondent reported no coverage for each of the Phonics and Word Recognition sub-scales. See Table 2 for the number of respondents reporting amount of coverage in each of the ten areas of study.

Table 2. Area of Study Coverage

Area of Study	Covered in One or More Courses		
	Yes	To a limited extent	No
1. Overview of the Science of Reading	74.3% (26)	22.9% (8)	2.9% (1)
2. Oral Language	77.1% (27)	17.1% (6)	5.7% (2)
3. Phonological and Phonemic Awareness	85.7% (30)	14.3% (5)	0.0% (0)
4. Concepts of Print	82.9% (29)	17.1% (6)	0.0% (0)
5. Phonics and Word Recognition	82.9% (29)	17.1% (6)	0.0% (0)
a) Letter Knowledge subscale	77.1% (27)	20.0% (7)	2.9% (1)
b) Syllable Types (or Syllable Patterns) subscale	71.4% (25)	25.7% (9)	2.9% (1)
c) High Frequency Words, Irregular Words, and Sight Words subscale	80.0% (28)	11.4% (4)	8.6% (3)
d) Morphology subscale	68.6% (24)	17.1% (6)	14.3% (5)
6. Spelling	71.4% (25)	17.1% (6)	11.4% (4)
7. Oral Reading Fluency	82.9% (29)	14.3% (5)	2.9% (1)
8. Vocabulary	85.7% (30)	11.4% (4)	2.9% (1)
9. Comprehension	80.0% (28)	17.1% (6)	2.9% (1)
10. Interventions	68.6% (24)	17.1% (6)	14.3% (5)

Comprehensiveness

The concept of Comprehensiveness was created to assess the extent to which respondents believed each area of study was fully explored and addressed across the one or more courses in which it was covered. A rating of “Comprehensively” suggests that an area of study was thoroughly addressed in the program of study. First, it should be noted that each of the respondents reported that each of the ten areas of study were addressed in each of the programs that were assessed. That stated, the degree of comprehension varied. The **most comprehensively addressed** areas included:

- Oral Reading Fluency (61.8% of respondents), and
- Concepts of Print (60%).

The **least comprehensively addressed** areas included Interventions (46.7% reported not comprehensively) and Spelling (45.2%).

Table 3. Area of Study Comprehensiveness of Coverage

Area of Study	Extent to which Area of Study Covered in Course(s)		
	Comprehensively	Not comprehensively	Very limited
1. Overview of the Science of Reading	38.2% (13)	44.1% (15)	17.6% (6)
2. Oral Language	36.4% (12)	39.4% (13)	24.2% (8)
3. Phonological and Phonemic Awareness	54.3% (19)	34.3% (12)	11.4% (4)
4. Concepts of Print	60.0% (21)	17.1% (6)	22.9% (8)
5. Phonics and Word Recognition	40.0% (12)	43.3% (13)	16.7% (5)
6. Spelling	22.6% (7)	45.2% (14)	32.3% (10)
7. Oral Reading Fluency	61.8% (21)	23.5% (8)	14.7% (5)
8. Vocabulary	41.2% (14)	44.1% (15)	14.7% (5)
9. Comprehension	38.2% (13)	41.2% (14)	20.6% (7)
10. Interventions	33.3% (10)	46.7% (14)	20.0% (6)

Effectiveness

Finally, each respondent indicated the level of effectiveness with which each area of study was addressed in the program that was assessed. This concept was established to assess whether respondents believed the coverage of each area of study was effective for educator preparation. The

two areas that were assessed as being **most effectively addressed** were **Oral Reading Fluency** (55.9% of respondents) and **Phonological and Phonemic Awareness** (45.7%). The areas that at least some respondents indicated were not effectively addressed included Oral Language (2 respondents) and Spelling (1 respondent). Otherwise, the areas most assessed as being addressed with **limited effectiveness** included **Spelling** (25.8%) and **Concepts of Print** (22.9%).

Table 4. Area of Study Effectiveness of Coverage

Area of Study	Effectiveness With Which Area of Study is Addressed in Course(s)			
	Very Effectively	Somewhat Effectively	With Limited Effectiveness	Not Effectively
1. Overview of the Science of Reading	35.3% (12)	47.1% (16)	17.6% (6)	0.0% (0)
2. Oral Language	30.3% (10)	51.5% (17)	12.1% (4)	6.1% (2)
3. Phonological and Phonemic Awareness	45.7% (16)	40.0% (14)	14.3% (5)	0.0% (0)
4. Concepts of Print	42.9% (15)	34.3% (12)	22.9% (8)	0.0% (0)
5. Phonics and Word Recognition	23.3% (7)	63.3% (19)	13.3% (4)	0.0% (0)
6. Spelling	19.4% (6)	51.6% (16)	25.8% (8)	3.2% (1)
7. Oral Reading Fluency	55.9% (19)	29.4% (10)	14.7% (5)	0.0% (0)
8. Vocabulary	38.2% (13)	47.1% (16)	14.7% (5)	0.0% (0)
9. Comprehension	29.4% (10)	50.0% (17)	20.6% (7)	0.0% (0)
10. Interventions	23.3% (7)	56.7% (17)	20.0% (6)	0.0% (0)

Taken together, the ratings of Coverage, Comprehensiveness, and Effectiveness have provided NCICU and the participating EPPs important and powerful data for designing an approach to educator preparation fully aligned with the SoR. This information has armed NCICU and its participating EPPs with a means of prioritizing refinements, opportunities for direct support and assistance (including the Summer Faculty Institute, sub-grants, LETRS training, and other professional development opportunities), and the potential for peer support and mentoring across teams.

Science of Reading Interventions

The baseline assessment also asked respondents to reflect on literacy interventions, as defined by the Excellent Public Schools Act of 2021: *“intentional strategies used to facilitate reading develop and remediate emerging difficulty with reading development.”* Respondents were asked to indicate which

interventions, grounded in the Science of Reading, were introduced in their program of study. As shown in Table 5, the most frequently used intervention was **Individual or Small Group Instruction** (97.1% of respondents), followed by **Frequent Progress Monitoring** (85.7%). The least used interventions were **Extended Learning Time** (31.4%) and **Reading Camps** (20%).

Table 5. Interventions Grounded in the Science of Reading

Intervention	Percent (Number)
Individual or small group instruction	97.1% (34)
Frequent progress monitoring	85.7% (30)
Instruction throughout the school year	82.9% (29)
Tutoring in addition to the regular school day	57.1% (20)
Reduced teacher-student ratios	42.9% (15)
Extended learning time before or after the school day	31.4% (11)
Reading camps	20.0% (7)
Other	22.9% (8)

Additional interventions that were noted as “Other” included:

- Family Support materials, Family Literacy Nights, etc. (n=2)
- 1:1 systematic and sequential (n=1)
- Systematic phonics instruction (n=1)
- Use of differentiation and/or individualized instruction; also, consultation with instructional specialists and/or special educators in the building to tap into their expertise; also, continued professional development for the teacher to continual enhance and learn strategies for meeting the needs of students in need of intervention (n=1)
- We will be adding reading camp (Freedom School) and after-school programming in the 2022-23 academic year. (n=1)

On a related topic, respondents were asked to consider the extent to which candidates in their program(s) of study were aware of instructional supports and services for remediating emerging difficulties with reading development (as defined by Excellent Public Schools Act of 2021). As is shown in Table 6, more than half of respondents (54.3%) reported that candidates were “well, but not highly aware” of instructional supports and services. Only one respondent reported that candidates were “highly aware,” and five respondents reported that candidates had “little or no awareness.”

Table 6. Candidate Awareness of Instructional Supports and Services

Level of Awareness	Percent (Number)
Highly Aware	2.9% (1)
Well but not Highly Aware	54.3% (19)
Somewhat but not Well Aware	28.6% (10)
Little or No Awareness	14.3% (5)

Preparing for the North Carolina Foundations of Reading Examination

Earlier in the assessment, 71.4% of respondents reported that they used the Foundation of Reading examination scores to reflect on their program’s effectiveness (three respondents indicated that they did not use the scores in this way). The Task Force was interested in learning more about the strategies used to help educator candidates prepare for the examination. Table 7 provides important information for NCICU and EPPs in helping teams plan for how best to support candidates and use the examination to strengthen their program of study. For example, six respondents (17.6%) reported needing more information about the use of explicit test preparation strategies and activities before they could accurately assess the extent to which these strategies were used. This type of information can help NCICU and EPPs create and distribute information specific to this strategy. Many respondents (73.5%) reported using suggested books, study guides, or materials to support test preparation. This raised awareness among the Task Force of the wealth of resources across EPPs that can be shared through peer learning and mentoring (e.g., a library of resources that could be shared). Some new or innovative strategies were shared as well, including:

- Faculty-Developed Test Preparation Modules (not tied to a class)
- General test preparation sessions
- Study groups

Table 7. Strategies for NC Foundations of Reading Exam Preparation (*percent based on row total*)

Activity/Strategy	Yes	No	Need more information first	N/A
Suggested books, study guides, or materials	73.5% (25)	8.8% (3)	5.9% (2)	11.8% (4)
Explicit test preparation strategies and activities	67.6% (23)	5.9% (2)	17.6% (6)	8.8% (3)
Embedded in weekly coursework and assignments	67.6% (23)	8.8% (3)	11.8% (4)	11.8% (4)
Assigned test preparation activities	54.5% (18)	21.2% (7)	9.1% (3)	15.2% (5)

Supports and Services

The final major section of the baseline assessment asked respondents to consider what types of supports and services would be helpful in making changes to coursework and teaching strategies that are fully aligned with the SoR. As regards general resources, the most popular resources that were reported as likely to enhance the program of study included:

- Sample resources and materials (91.4% of respondents), and
- Supports for children with special learning or developmental needs (85.7%).

Table 8. Types of Resources Most Likely to Use to Enhance Program of Study

Resources	Percent (Number)
Sample resources and materials	91.4% (32)
Supports for children with special learning or developmental needs	85.7% (30)
Activity ideas	85.7% (30)
Evaluation or assessment ideas or samples	85.7% (30)
Field experience opportunities	65.7% (23)
Opportunities to work with guest lecturers or other supportive staff	60.0% (21)
Sample textbooks	57.1% (20)
Peer teaching opportunities	51.4% (18)
Other	16.2% (6)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Videos (clips - short real-world examples of instructional strategies; great examples in actual classrooms; teachers teaching excellent Science of Reading lessons) (n=4)• Tech Tools (n=1)• Virtual mini sessions/idea sharing for getting at particular skills/strategies (components) that we need to do much better in facilitating for our teacher candidates (n=1)	

The Task Force recognizes that educators work with a range of students who have a variety of needs. To better support the EPPs, the baseline assessment captured data on these needs. First, the assessment asked respondents to indicate the extent to which there are diverse populations for which additional supports would be helpful. As can be seen in Table 9, all respondents (100%) reported that supports for working with English Learner students would be helpful. Supports for working with students who were not performing at grade level also were highly rated (91.4% of respondents).

Table 9. Diverse Populations for which Additional Supports Related to SoR Would Be Helpful

Diverse Populations	Percent (Number)
Working with EL students	100.0% (35)
Working with students who were not performing at grade level or as expected when they started the year	91.4% (32)
Working with students with special learning or developmental needs	80.0% (28)
Working with students with multiple ACES or risk criteria	65.7% (23)
Other	5.4% (2)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • motivation for learning (n=1) • working with students with (specifically) dyslexia (n=1) 	

Second, the assessment explored the extent to which supports would be helpful for the preparation of educators working with children with special learning or developmental needs. As can be seen in Table 10, support for working with students with speech or language impairments was the most popular response.

Table 10. Students with Special Learning or Developmental Needs for which Additional Supports Related to SoR Would Be Helpful

Student Population	Percent (Number)
Speech/language impairments	62.9% (22)
Visually impaired/blind	40.0% (14)
Deaf or hard of hearing	40.0% (14)
Other	30.8% (8)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autism, LD (n=2) • English learners (n=1) • Specific Learning Disabilities (n=1) • We would appreciate any/all additional supports provided (n=1) • Dyslexia (n=1) • Learning disabilities (n=1) • Specific learning disabilities; autism (n=1) 	

Implications

The baseline assessment generated important information for NCICU and the 31 NCICU EPPs. First, **the assessment generated a landscape analysis of educator preparation in the SoR across NCICU EPPs.** This analysis revealed strengths and weaknesses across EPPs; the information is being used by the NCICU SoR Task Force and NCICU staff to provide sub-grants, technical assistance, training opportunities, and peer supports. In addition, **the assessment is a starting point from which individual EPPs can develop a plan for enhancement and refinement.** Each EPP is treated as its own

case study, asking for and receiving support that is specific to the needs of its faculty and students. This approach also facilitates an analysis of the popularity and effectiveness of different enhancement strategies across EPPs with unique contexts and student bodies, whose united goal is to provide world-class educators for North Carolina's students. Moving forward, NCICU, in partnership with its EPPs and collaboration with North Carolina's public university and community college systems, can continue to study and support effective methods for training educators. At the time of writing, mid-term assessments have been completed and results are being compiled that will help the team understand barriers and challenges to progress as well as additional or emerging needs for support.

Summer Faculty Institutes on the SoR

The NCICU SoR Task Force assisted by NCICU staff members developed and hosted Summer Faculty Institutes, as one component of its suite of supports for the EPPs. The first institute occurred in June 2022 and was held across two days and in two locations (Elon University and Lenoir-Rhyne University). The first institute had over 80 participants, including representatives from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI) and the University of North Carolina (UNC) System. The schedule of events included three keynote speakers, educational opportunities focused on literacy, interactive workshops, collaborative sessions, and dedicated work time for drafting sub-grant proposals. The institute also provided information and a Question-and-Answer opportunity focused on LETRS training (see below). The agendas for the 2022 Summer Faculty Institutes are included in Appendix A. A second institute is planned for June 2023.

Institute Feedback

...there is such a variability of teacher knowledge and effectiveness on teaching reading. This really put into perspective the importance of aligning our coursework to the Science of Reading.

The importance of building our diverse literature focus in Children's Literature. Providing opportunity for teachers to learn how to read aloud - getting comfortable with doing that so that they take that into their classrooms because the benefits of read aloud are numerous.

Excellent overview of resources and implications of the Science of Reading.

I learned about the gap in implementation of strategies that exists in our teachers and the importance of intentionally moving from intervention understanding to the how to, for example, not just knowing that explicit instruction is necessary but how do you do this.

The support from DPI should not be overlooked. It was great learning about the support options that exist at the state level for EPPs.

We are all in the same boat. We are moving forward to better the literacy skills of children in NC.

Informational Meetings and Updates

The NCICU SoR Task Force and staff have offered three one-hour virtual “office hour” sessions for all NCICU EPPs to attend and discuss ideas for materials, activities, and projects to meet their needs as determined through self-assessment. These meetings were well attended, and feedback has been positive about their utility. Additional “office hours” will be provided during the second year of the grant-funded project.

NCICU has created the NCICU SoR contacts listserve. It is used frequently by NCICU staff to provide updates about placing orders for items such as decodable books, professional development opportunities, LETRS Bridge-to-Practice ideas, and to respond to ongoing funding and reporting questions.

Sub-Grants

With the generous support of the Goodnight Educational Foundation, sub-grants (a total of \$15,600) were made available to all NCICU EPPs. The sub-grant process was structured to reflect each EPP’s strengths and weaknesses as well as the use of evidence-informed or best practices related to the Science of Reading. A sub-grant team, comprised of NCICU staff and EPP faculty and scholars, guided the sub-grant application and review process. Key steps in the process included:

- (1) Use of the baseline assessment to focus EPPs on major areas of need;
- (2) Guidance and assistance to applicants during grant development, to help applicants focus their best practices and effective Science of Reading strategies; and
- (3) Team reviews of applications, using a double-blind procedure to ensure confidentiality and impartial reviews.

Through this process, all applicants were approved for sub-grants. In general, the EPPs submitted applications that contained more than one strategy, indicating a **multi-faceted approach to full alignment with the SoR**. Sub-grant requests were analyzed by the team to identify common themes and strategies. These included:

- **Specific professional development opportunities for faculty** including:
 - a. Support for additional faculty to receive LETRS training;
 - b. DPI's Reading Research to Classroom Practice (RRtCP) training;
 - c. Dyslexia Training of Instructors (ToI);
 - d. Orton-Gillingham (OG) training;
 - e. Faculty book clubs and online training for working Culturally Responsive teaching, working with students who are EL; and
 - f. Attending conferences like The Reading League Conference and the International Dyslexia Association Conference.

- **Increased collaboration with local elementary schools and other community organizations to:**
 - a. Enhance field experiences for teacher candidates via activities like tutoring in the schools, mobile tutoring and campus-based tutoring labs, and supporting students in-school participation by providing transportation;
 - b. Creating a Regional Center for Literacy Research; and
 - c. Offering literacy nights and seminars for teacher education candidates, elementary students and their families, and school personnel together.

- **Course and program re-design,** specifically to address self-study and other program evaluation findings and incorporate information used through LETRS training and new materials purchased with subgrant funds.
- **Increasing support for teacher education candidates to:**
 - a. Enhance Foundations of Reading scores and
 - b. Scores on other required evaluations such as the PPAT or edTPA
 - c. Implementing progress monitoring (e.g., sample test questions, Socratic tests on each section) and
 - d. Providing tutoring and targeted teaching for teacher candidates not passing these questions.
- Using teacher candidates' assignment scores, required evaluations, perceptions, and pre-post SoR self-assessments as **measures of impact** for the proposed projects and for continued program enhancement.
- **Development of faculty and teacher candidate resource libraries** of online programs, training, and hard-copy texts and other materials.

Enhancement in Action

Brevard College's SPARK program (Sharpening Phonemic Awareness and Reading Knowledge) engages students in intensive professional development to experientially develop a teaching toolbox and address first graders' learning needs. The series includes a 3-hour workshop to build or review their knowledge of phonological and phonemic awareness and a 3-hour workshop to orient students to the multi-sensory curriculum materials from Key Learning Center's Building Blocks for Literacy and train them to use these materials to provide critical phonological intervention with groups of first grade students. The third component started in February 2023 and provides small group instruction during the local elementary school's Intervention and Enrichment time.

Duke University's Program in Education worked with the Hill Center in Durham, NC to develop a customized Duke Science of Reading Pathway and is implementing four required courses for senior students which contain Science of Reading principles: the Science of Reading Short Course, Framework for Structured Literacy Instruction, Breaking the Code, and Hill Strategies for Reading.

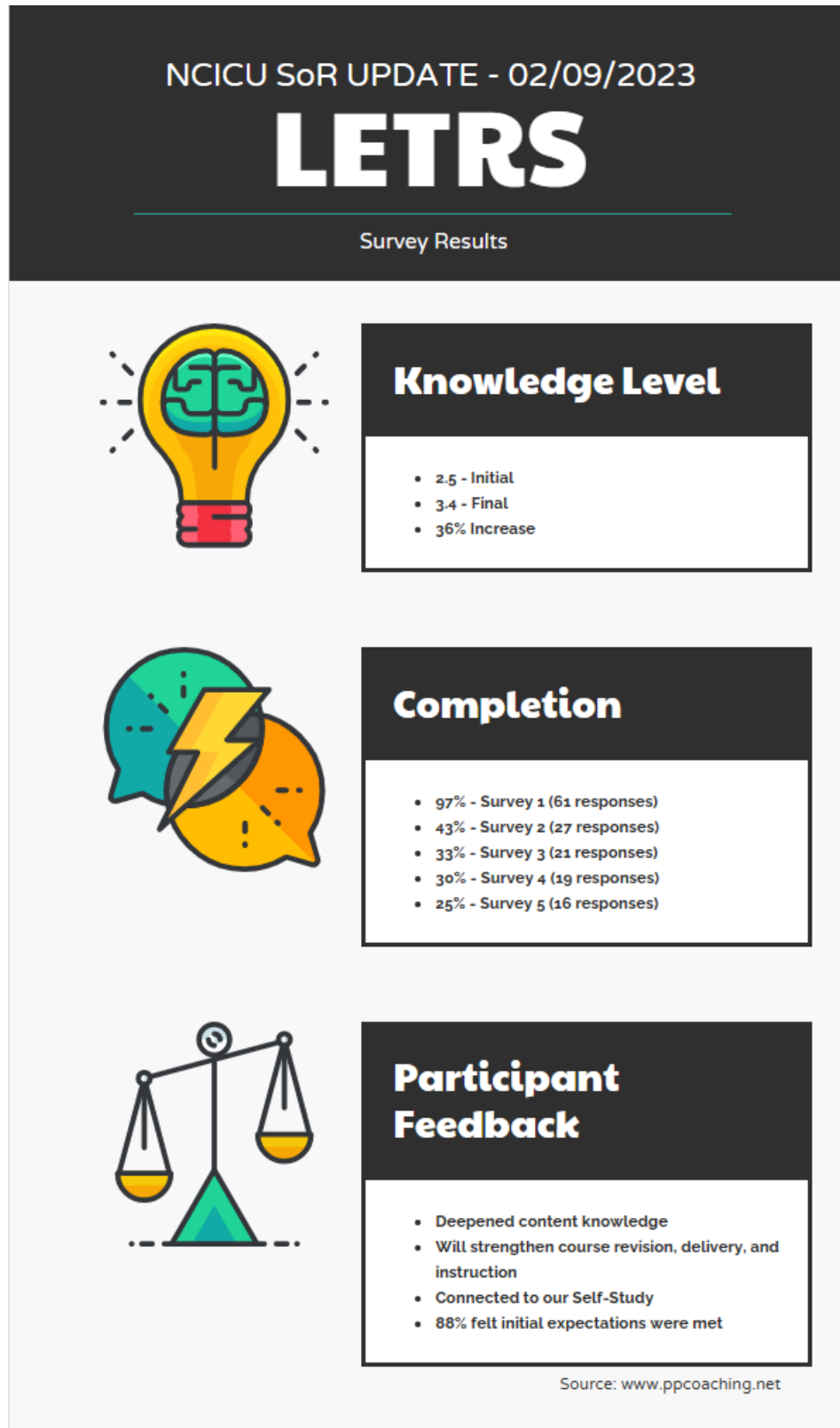
LETRS Training

LETRS stands for Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling. As reported by EdWeek², the LETRS program can take up to 160 hours, over two years, to complete and covers topics such as phonemic awareness, phonics, morphology, vocabulary, comprehension, and linkages to writing. In North Carolina, the LETRS training is required for elementary and special education (general curriculum) teachers in the traditional public schools.

The NCICU SoR Task Force deemed it was critical to ensure EPPs receive training in LETRS to better prepare pre-service educators and have a “shared language” with cooperating teachers in student internship classrooms. Support for training (96 hours over two years) two faculty at each EPP was provided through NCICU’s SoR faculty support initiative funded by the GEF. As of the time of this report, 16 of 62 faculty members completed all components of the LETRS training as part of the GEF funded project. Additional faculty members are in the process of completing the full training (Figure 1). So far, there has been a **36% increase in knowledge level across participants. Further, participants are reporting that LETRS training contributed to deeper content knowledge and will help strengthen course revision, delivery, and instruction.**

² <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/leters-program-teacher-training>

Figure 1. LETRS Program Update



Next Steps

The NCICU Science of Reading Task Force is focused on several questions in its assessment and planning to support EPPs. First, **have we learned what we need to know in order to strengthen educator preparation programs of study?** Several points are worth noting:

- The Science of Reading self-assessment was designed to focus EPPs on an **evidence-based framework that aligns with the Science of Reading**. This framework contains ten areas of study, each of which contains multiple items related to educator preparation for Reading instruction. Participants were asked to reflect on three aspects of their programs: Coverage, Comprehensiveness, and Effectiveness. The self-assessment process generated rich information for use by individual EPPs and the NCICU team to re-design elements of their program of study so that it is fully aligned with the SoR.
- **The assessment received the full cooperation and participation of all NCICU's EPPs**. Thus, the Task Force is confident that the results represent the state of practice in at least one program of study across all 31 EPPs.
- The assessment provided **concrete, granular data**. Specifically, there are 104 competencies across the 10 areas of study. Respondents indicated the course or courses in which each of these competencies was addressed. Updates on the inclusion of competencies across courses will be collected again in the final assessment. In addition, in responding to an earlier request for information, NCICU EPPs submitted sample syllabi to NCICU for review.
- Additional information continues to emerge in regularly scheduled meetings and events, allowing EPPs to meet with peers and Task Force members to identify challenges and needs and brainstorm effective practices.

Second, **are EPPs receiving evidence-based supports that will help align with and strengthen their programs in the Science of Reading?** EPPs are receiving multiple supports. First, there is the technical assistance, training, mentoring, and guidance provided by the NCICU SoR Task Force and staff, with the support of the Goodnight Educational Foundation. This support includes sub-grants to each EPP in support of the assessment-based enhancement plans, which are aligned with effective practices for the SoR. This report contains details on specific strategies. Second, the NCICU initiative is supporting LETRS training to faculty at EPPs. Third, there has been a groundswell of support among EPPs. The convenings that are made possible with GEF support have facilitated peer networking and collaboration across EPPs. The ongoing evaluation of this initiative will, in part, assess the nature and importance of each of these supports for program enhancements.

Finally, **are EPPs making progress? What additional supports may be necessary?** The NCICU Science of Reading initiative is receiving an independent evaluation. The evaluation study uses a case study approach to better assess and reflect each EPP's unique context and needs and the extent to which each EPP is making progress against its goals and enhancement plans. At the time of this reporting,

participants recently completed a second iteration of the self-assessment. This iteration is providing valuable information on the areas of study and instructional strategies in which EPPs are making progress as well as new or emerging needs that will need to be addressed in order to amplify and secure the project's success.

Appendix A

2022 Summer Faculty Institute Agendas

Summer Institute 2022 Agenda Elon University

Day 1 - June 6, 2022

8:30 - 9:15	Registration with Coffee, Pastries
9:15 - 10:00	Welcome, Event Logistics, and Icebreakers
10:00 - 10:45	Keynote: Amy Mattingly, Helps Education Fund <i>Pulling Back the Curtain: Growth and Vulnerability with the Science of Reading</i>
10:45 - 11:15	Literacy Lounge Break
11:15 - 11:45	Interactive Workshops: Session 1

Topic	Presenter	Location
Lessons Learned	Amy Mattingly, Helps Education Fund	McKinnon Hall
Systematic and Explicit Phonics Instruction	Beth Gilchrist, NC DPI	Sankey 106
Building Strategic Readers: Systematic and Explicit Reading Comprehension	Ginger Starling, NC DPI	Sankey 104
Syllable Types	Mary Knight-McKenna, Elon	Moseley 215

11:50 - 12:25	Interactive Workshops: Session 2
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Topic	Presenter	Location
LETRS Lessons Learned	Stacie Wood, LETRS State Success Manager	McKinnon Hall
Systematic and Explicit Phonics Instruction	Beth Gilchrist, NC DPI	Sankey 106
Building Strategic Readers: Systematic and Explicit Reading Comprehension	Ginger Starling NCDPI Online Literacy Consultant	Sankey 104

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and the Science of Reading	Kathleen Castillo-Clark, Campbell	Moseley 215
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12:30 - 2:00 Lunch and Keynote:
Carole Boston Weatherford, Children’s Author

2:00 - 2:30 Program and Course Redesign Presentation:
Ed Crowe & Holly Womack

2:30 - 4:00 Guided Work Time

Day 2 - June 7, 2022

8:30 - 9:00 Welcome with Coffee and Pastries

9:00 - 10:00 Keynote: Teri Queen, NCDPI
Reading Research to Classroom Practice and SOR in North Carolina

10:00 - 10:15 Literacy Lounge Break

10:15 - 10:45 Sub-Grant Application Information

10:45 - 12:15 Guided Work Time with UNC Fellows Support

12:15 - 12:30 Closure Circle, Evaluation & Reimbursement

12:30 - 1:00 Optional Boxed Lunch (pre-registered only)

1:00 - 3:30 Optional Guided Work Time

Summer Institute 2022 Agenda Lenoir-Rhyne University

Day 1 - June 6, 2022

8:30 - 9:15	Registration with Coffee, Pastries
9:15 - 10:00	Welcome, Event Logistics, and Icebreakers
10:00 - 10:45	Keynote: Amy Mattingly, Helps Education Fund <i>Pulling Back the Curtain: Growth and Vulnerability with the Science of Reading</i>
10:45 - 11:15	Literacy Lounge Break
11:15 - 11:45	Interactive Workshops: Session 1

Topic	Presenter	Location
Ehi's Spelling Development Stages for Encoding and Decoding	Amy Thornburg, Queens University	Cromer
Systematic and Explicit Phonics Instruction	Ann Jolly, UNCC	Fireside
Building Strategic Readers: Systematic and Explicit Reading Comprehension	Teri Queen, NCDPI	Hickory

11:50 - 12:25 Interactive Workshops: Session 2

Topic	Presenter	Location
LETRS Lessons Learned	Diana Betts, Gardner-Webb	Cromer
Systematic and Explicit Phonics Instruction	Ann Jolly, UNCC	Fireside
Building Strategic Readers: Systematic and Explicit Reading Comprehension	Teri Queen, NCDPI	Hickory

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