NORTH CAROLINA
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

Report to the North Carolina General Assembly

Read to Achieve – Early Literacy Program

SL 2021-8 (SB 387)

Date Due: September 15, 2024
DPI Chronological Schedule, 2023-2024

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NC DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
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§ 115C-83.4B. Early Literacy Program.

(a)   There is established the Early Literacy Program within the Department of Public Instruction. The Department of Public Instruction, in consultation with the Department of Health and Human Services, shall use the Early Literacy Program to build strong foundational early literacy skills utilizing the Science of Reading for children in the North Carolina Prekindergarten (NC Pre-K) program.

(b)   As part of the Early Literacy Program, the Department of Public Instruction shall focus on at least the following components:

(1)   Provide a training program to educators and administrators working with children in the NC Pre-K program to ensure developmentally appropriate instruction grounded in the Science of Reading and outcomes promoting reading achievement in students. The Department of Public Instruction shall utilize a third-party independent teacher training program to deliver professional development that demonstrates evidence-based success with educators and administrators in establishing deep knowledge of literacy instruction.

(2)   Provide integration of age-appropriate resources, including digital and technological resources, in the NC Pre-K program for children to meet reading achievement goals.

(3)   Ensure administration of a formative assessment to children at the conclusion of their participation in the NC Pre-K program to determine their kindergarten readiness and the alignment of their literacy instruction with the Science of Reading. The Department shall also ensure that the results of each child's formative assessment are shared with the child's kindergarten teacher at the beginning of the next school year. (2021-8, s. 3(a).)

SECTION 3.(d) No later than September 15, 2022, the Department of Public Instruction shall report on the establishment of the Early Literacy Program to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee. The report shall include information on the required components of the Program, including at least the following:

(1)   Participation rates of NC Pre-K educators and administrators in the third-party independent teacher training program.
(2)   Examples of age-appropriate resources integrated into the NC Pre-K program.
(3)   The formative assessment provided to children at the end of their participation in the NC Pre-K program, including the number and percentage of (i) students who demonstrate kindergarten readiness and (ii) students who do not demonstrate kindergarten readiness.

Participation rates of Pre-K educators and administrators in the third-party independent teacher training program.

The following table provides the number of Pre-K lead teachers and site administrators who participated in the LETRS training during the 2023-2024 school year.

# of Pre-K lead teachers and site administrators who participated in the LETRS for Early Childhood Educators course	379

Examples of age-appropriate resources integrated into the NC Pre-K program.

The Office of Early Learning has worked with its partners to develop early literacy resources for early childhood leaders, teachers, and families of preschool children to support children's literacy development. The following table contains a list of these resources with a description and web link for each one. These resources are located on the NCDPI website.

Resources for Leaders	Description
LETRS® Early Childhood Conversations and Classroom Connections (PLC)	*LETRS® for Little Learners: Conversations and Classroom Connections* is a guide for leaders in Early Childhood who are supporting implementation of LETRS professional development. Sessions include reflective conversations based on knowledge gained through LETRS coursework, application of LETRS coursework to classroom practice, and leveraging documentation and data to inform classroom instruction.
Pre-K Science of Reading (SoR) Alignment Tool Brief Intro Video	The North Carolina Pre-K Science of Reading Alignment Tool provides guidance regarding the alignment of curricula to the body of research referred to as the science of reading, can be used when selecting a curriculum that specializes in addressing the domains of language and literacy development and/or to evaluate the language and literacy component(s) of a more comprehensive curriculum that addresses whole-child development, and informs stakeholders of the areas in the curriculum that need to be supplemented to achieve optimal alignment.
LETRS® Support for Pre-K Leaders Webinar Series	The LETRS Support for Pre-K Leaders Series will provide an overview of the Science of Reading while addressing the essential components of literacy instruction: oral language, phonological & phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. The goal of each session is to increase background knowledge of early literacy development by sharing effective instructional practices and resources.
LETRS® Early Childhood Conversations and Classroom Connections (PLC) **LETRS® for Little Learners Webinar Part 1** **LETRS® for Little Learners Webinar Part 2**	LETRS® for Little Learners: Conversations and Classroom Connections is a guide for leaders in Early Childhood who are supporting implementation of LETRS professional development. Sessions include reflective conversations based on knowledge gained through LETRS coursework, application of LETRS coursework to classroom practice, and leveraging documentation and data to inform classroom instruction. Part 1 Notecatcher and Slide Deck Part 2 Notecatcher and Slide Deck
Resources for Teachers	Description
OEL Pre-K Newsletter	This newsletter has been created to support prekindergarten teachers. Each issue contains tips, tricks, and reminders for the formative assessment process and a spotlight on age-appropriate literacy development for young learners.

NC Pre-K Crosswalk Document	The crosswalk shows alignment among skilled reading strands from Scarborough's Rope, NC Foundations for Early Learning and Development, Teaching Strategies GOLD® objectives and dimensions, and Kindergarten standards that are supported with early literacy instruction.
Literacy Instruction Standards – Pre-Kindergarten	The LIS for Preschool serve as a framework for the development and alignment of curriculum and instruction with research-informed practices. The LIS for Preschool, when used with the North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development 2013, define the quality of early language and literacy teaching and learning. The LIS for Preschool provide guidance to early childhood educators on essential, evidence-based, early language and literacy practices that lead to improved literacy outcomes.
PlaytoRead**: Activities for Literacy Development in the Pre-K Classroom**	This resource is intended to support teachers as they intentionally support children's development of literacy concepts and skills that are aligned to the Science of Reading. Similar activities should occur throughout the learning environment, providing multiple opportunities for children to authentically practice literacy skills.
PlaytoRead**: Activities for Literacy Development with a Caregiver**	This resource is intended to support caregivers as they support literacy development while engaging with young children. Teachers are encouraged to share the resource with caregivers and then highlight activities as the skills align to classroom activities. Teachers are invited to create more activities based on needs/interests in their classroom.
Phonological Awareness Throughout the Day	This resource provides many ways to incorporate activities that support phonological awareness during play, transitions, mealtimes, and more. Recorded Webinar: Phonological Awareness Throughout the Day
Vocabulary Throughout the Day	This blogpost from Dr. Timothy Shanahan provides "Five Things Every Teacher Should Know about Vocabulary Instruction". Consider how they can be implemented in a pre-k classroom. Read Aloud is a great way to increase young children's vocabulary as well. See "Read Aloud Support" below.
Read-Aloud Support for Pre-K	Intentional planning for read-aloud is essential. Templates and completed examples below demonstrate how each reading of a book focuses on specific literacy skills. In-Depth Interactive Read Aloud Guide (template) Read Aloud Example (Fiction) Read Aloud Example (Nonfiction) Abbreviated Interactive Read Aloud Guide and Planner (template)
In the Classroom: Foundations Unpacking Guides for Language Development and Communication	This resource unpacks NC Foundations for Early Learning and Development indicators for Language Development and Communication. Unpacking Guides are available for three subdomains: Learning to Communicate, Foundations for Reading, and Foundations for Writing.

Early Childhood Education and the Science of Reading: Recipes to Last a Lifetime	This blog post by Lucy Hart Paulson, author of LETRS for Early Childhood Educators, describes recipes for learning to read, oral language development, optimal learning, and learning through play.
Literacy Foundations with Families	This resource set includes a recorded webinar for educators and a family-facing slide deck with speaker notes that educators can use when encouraging literacy and language development beyond the classroom.
Early Literacy in Pre-K Sway	This resource provides Pre-K teachers support with the implementation of evidence-based language and literacy strategies in print knowledge, phonological awareness, vocabulary, and oral language.
Resources for Families	**Description**
PlaytoRead: Activities for Literacy Development with a Caregiver	This resource is intended to support caregivers as they support literacy development while engaging with young children. Teachers are encouraged to share the resource with caregivers and then highlight particular activities as the skills align to classroom activities. Teachers are invited to create more activities based on needs/interests in their classroom.
Literacy at Home: Digital Children's Reading Initiative	This digital resource provides literacy activities at each grade level, pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. Families and communities may access this resource for activities that specifically target the literacy skills of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and oral language. When children grow in each of these foundational areas, they are well on their way to becoming proficient readers.

The formative assessment provided to children at the end of their participation in the NC Pre-K program, including the number and percentage of:

(i)   students who demonstrate kindergarten readiness and
(ii)   students who do not demonstrate kindergarten readiness.

Teaching Strategies *GOLD®* is an authentic formative assessment system designed and validated to help teachers understand the developmental and learning status of children they serve. The information the measure provides helps teachers identify each child's strengths and areas where more support is needed, and plan instruction accordingly. Teachers collect evidence of child development, growth, and learning across the academic year. This evidence emerges from regular classroom activities. Teachers analyze this evidence and make placements on developmental progressions that include specific behavioral anchors that are tied to state learning standards. The progressions are organized by the following domains of development: Social-Emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive, Literacy, and Mathematics. The information from the progressions within each domain can be combined to indicate whether each child is below, meeting, or exceeding Widely Held Expectations for child growth, development, and learning for their age group. Children served by the NC Pre-K program are assessed using this system throughout the academic year. Scores are computed three times each year (fall, winter, and spring). The information in the table below reports the results for the spring of 2024. A total of 24,762 children funded by the NC Pre-K program were assessed. The table below includes information for only those children who were assessed by their teachers on enough of the progressions to yield a score. The percentages of children with complete ratings by domain were as follows: Social-emotional (98.4%), Physical (98.1%), Language (97.8%), Cognitive (97.9%), Literacy (97.5%), and Mathematics (97.0%). The table below indicates that the majority of NC Pre-K children assessed finished the 4-year-old year meeting or exceeding Widely Held Expectations: Social-emotional (84.8%), Physical (89.4%), Language (81.7%), Cognitive (82.4%), Literacy (85.9%), and Mathematics (76.1%).

Percentages of NC Pre-K children below, meeting and exceeding
Widely Held Expectations by domain of development

		Below	Meet	Exceed	Meet + Exceed
Social-Emotional	%	13.6	61.8	23	84.8
	n	3358	15298	5706	21004
Physical	%	8.7	72.8	16.6	89.4
	n	2159	18031	4108	22139
Language	%	16.2	68.3	13.3	81.7
	n	4019	16924	3296	20220
Cognitive	%	15.5	72.5	9.9	82.4
	n	3844	17944	2452	20396
Literacy	%	11.6	75.4	10.5	85.9
	n	2866	18669	2609	21278
Mathematics	%	20.9	65	11.1	76.1
	n	5179	16100	2737	18837