

The Next Chapter in Early Literacy

Moving Theory to Practice

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Desired Outcomes

- **Understand** North Carolina's **shift from adoption to sustained implementation** in early literacy.
- **See** why **grades 2–3 are the next-phase instructional priority** and how data is guiding that focus.
- **Explore** how Office of Early Learning is **aligning supports to strengthen classroom practice statewide**.
- **Hear** how **LETRS training is translating into classroom implementation and impacting student learning** across districts.



ACHIEVING EDUCATIONAL **EXCELLENCE**



**Prepare Each Student
for Their Next Phase
in Life**

PILLAR 1

Focus Area 1 | Ignite Early Learning



ACTION 2

Build on the implementation of North Carolina's Science of Reading initiative by continuing to expand high-impact literacy practices and **launch a parallel focus on foundational mathematics** to support early learning.

“**The next chapter of early literacy is written in classrooms, where evidence-based practice becomes everyday instruction.**”

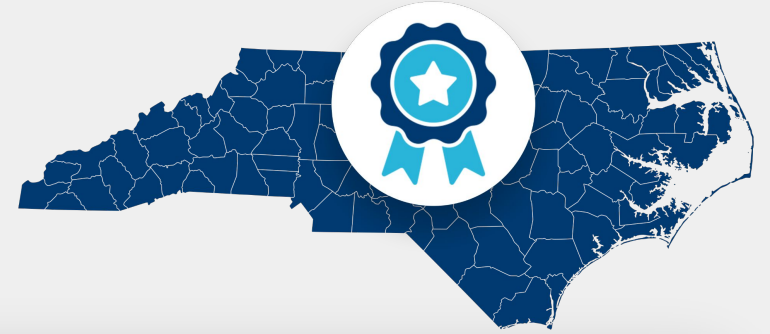
Focus Area 2 | Elevate Teaching and Learning



ACTION 3

Design a Pre-K–12 Teaching and Learning Framework with PSUs to set shared expectations for standards-aligned instruction, integrated supports and access high-quality learning for all students.

North Carolina led in training. Now we lead in *practice*.



1 **Strengthening** the grades 2–3 fluency-to-comprehension bridge

2 **Intensifying** coaching through a focused-school model

3 **Using** progress monitoring as a leadership decision system

4 **Aligning** Professional Learning, coaching, knowledge building, writing, & assessment

5 **Leveraging** the Literacy Intervention Plan as the coaching system





North Carolina Led and That Leadership Matters

North Carolina *Science of Reading*



**Early and Decisive
Adoption of the
Science of Reading**



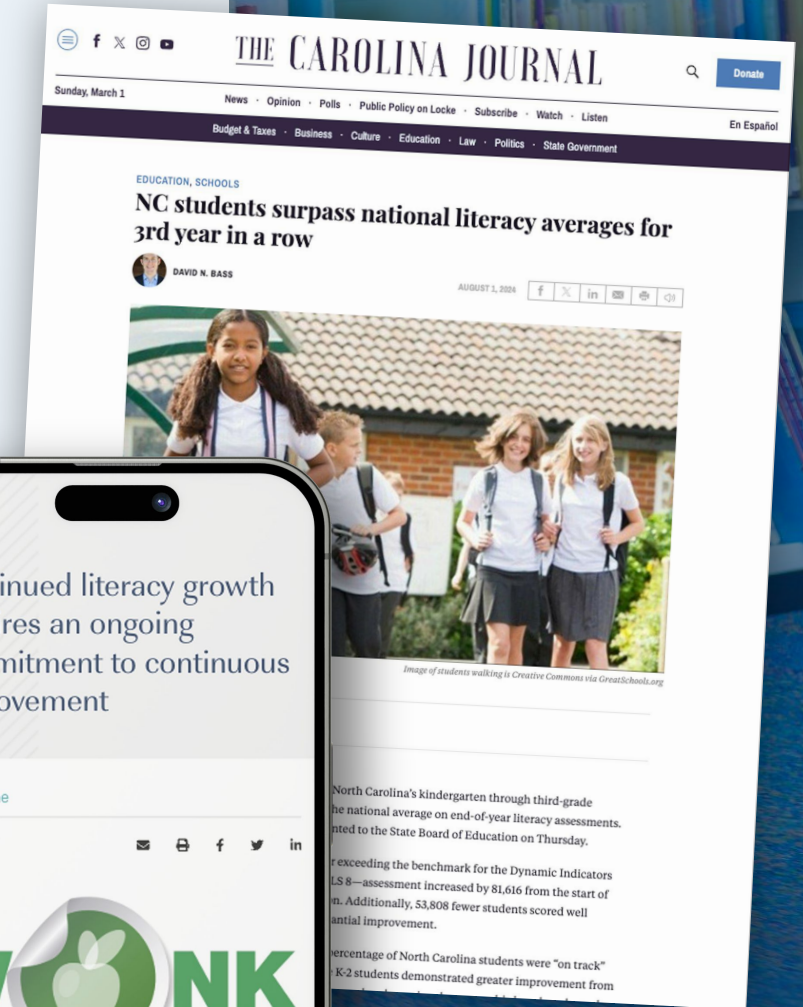
**Clear Statewide
Expectations for Evidence
Based Literacy Instruction**



**LETRS at
Statewide Scale**



**National Recognition
(ExcelinEd, etc.)**



Investing in Educators at Scale



Statewide professional learning for Pre K through 3rd Grade teachers and administrators



Educator knowledge as the primary driver of instructional improvement



Consistent expectations across districts and schools



Implementation science predicts lag between knowledge and outcomes

What North Carolina Has Accomplished

Statewide Educator Training at Scale



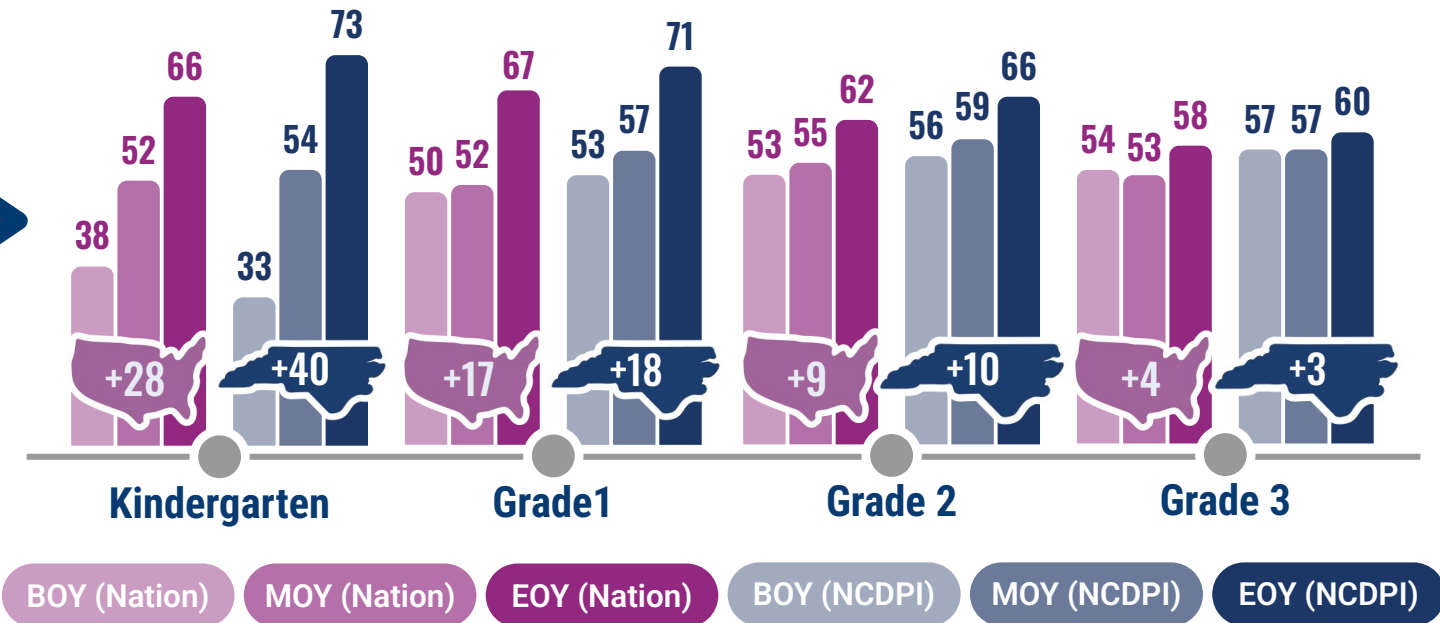
North Carolina made a **historic investment** in educator knowledge through statewide LETRS training for all PreK through 3rd grade teachers and administrators under the *Excellent Public Schools Act*.

Early Gains & Emerging Patterns

2024-25

- Strong K-1 Foundational Skill Growth
- NC Outperforms other National Users in Kindergarten
- Plateau Emerges in Grades 2-3

DIBELS 8 Composite | NCDPI vs. Nation
% Students Scoring At/Above Benchmark



Other National Users: 3 Million Students Across All 50 States

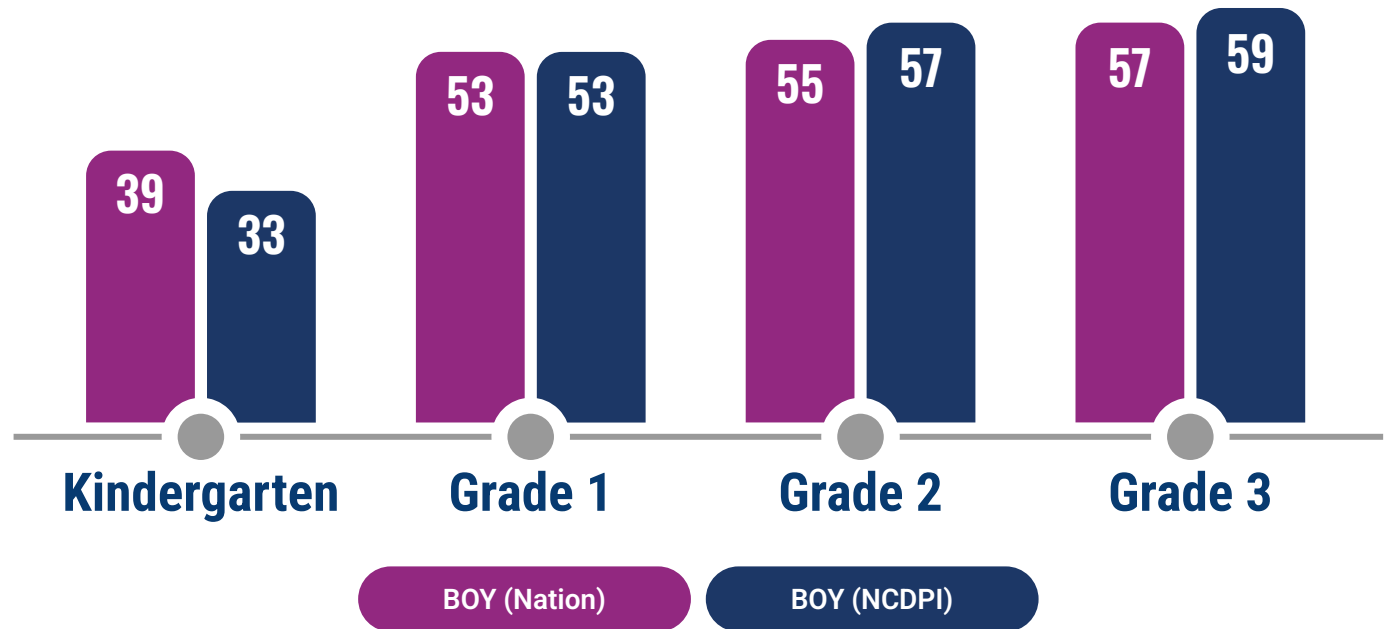
Early Gains & Emerging Patterns

2025-26

- Kindergarten is Lower than Other National Users

- Plateau Emerges in Grades 2-3

DIBELS 8 Composite | NCDPI vs. Nation
% Students Scoring At/Above Benchmark

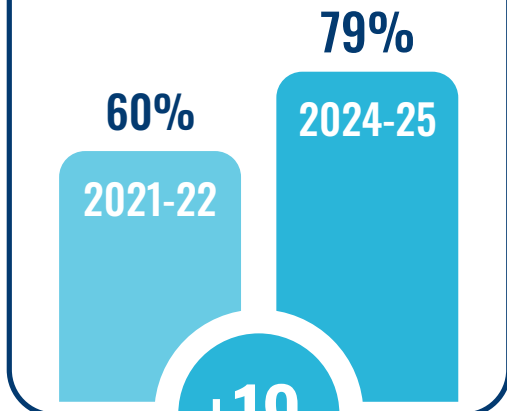


Foundational Literacy

Statewide K-3 literacy assessment (DIBELS) trends show measurable early gains in foundational literacy.

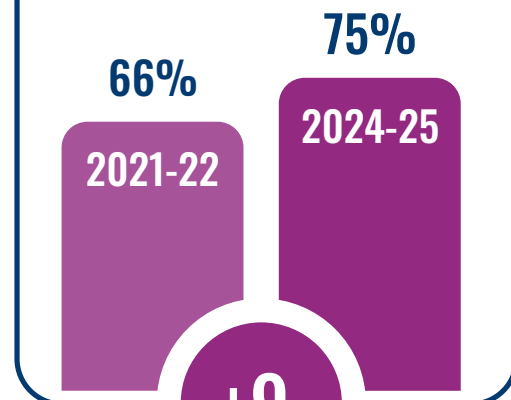
1st Grade Phonemic Awareness

% Met Benchmark

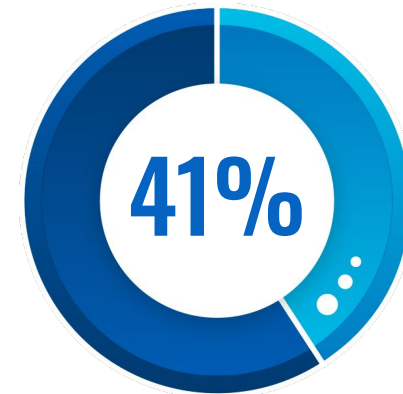


1st Grade Decoding & Word Recognition

% Met Benchmark



2nd & 3rd Grade Text Reading Fluency

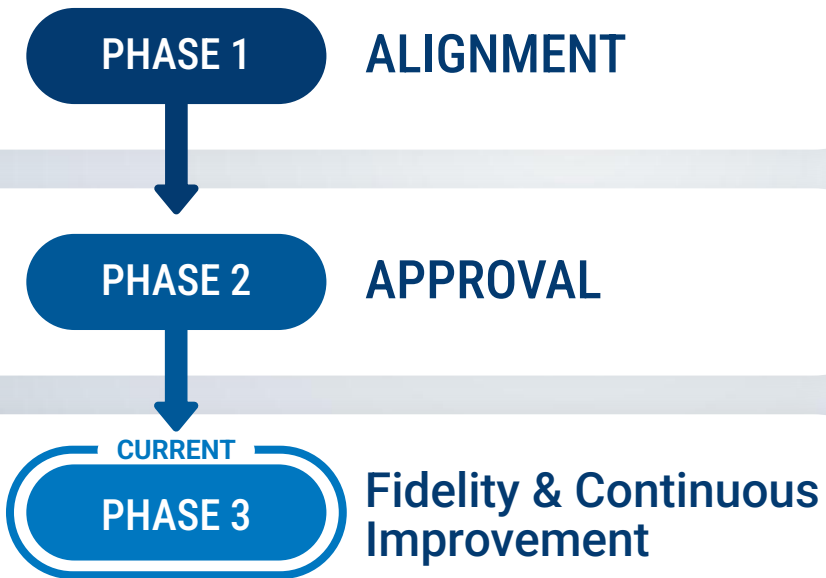


of students remain below benchmark



From Training to **Coaching** Implementation

The Literacy Intervention Plan as the Anchor for Coaching



NC Literacy Interventions Guiding Document

Purpose:

The purpose of the NC Literacy Intervention Guiding Document is to describe best practices for planning, implementing, and evaluating effective literacy intervention systems. This document will guide the local school administrative unit's completion of the District Intervention Plan and aligns literacy intervention practices to the NC Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) Framework.

Literacy Interventions Best Practices:

1. Screen all students for potential reading problems.
2. Provide differentiated core reading instruction for all students.
3. Provide systematic supplemental support (tier 2) for students who require intervention based on data decision rules.
4. Provide intensive support (tier 3) for students who demonstrate minimal progress with supplemental support.
5. Monitor the progress of students receiving supplemental and intensive support regularly.

Information provided in this document is adapted from:

Gersten, R., Compton, D., Connor, C.M., Dimino, J., Santoro, L., Linan-Thompson, S., and Tilly, W.D. (2008). Assisting students struggling with reading: Response to Intervention and multi-tier intervention for reading in the primary grades. A practice guide. (NCEE 2009-4045). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.




Retrieved from http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications/practice_guides/

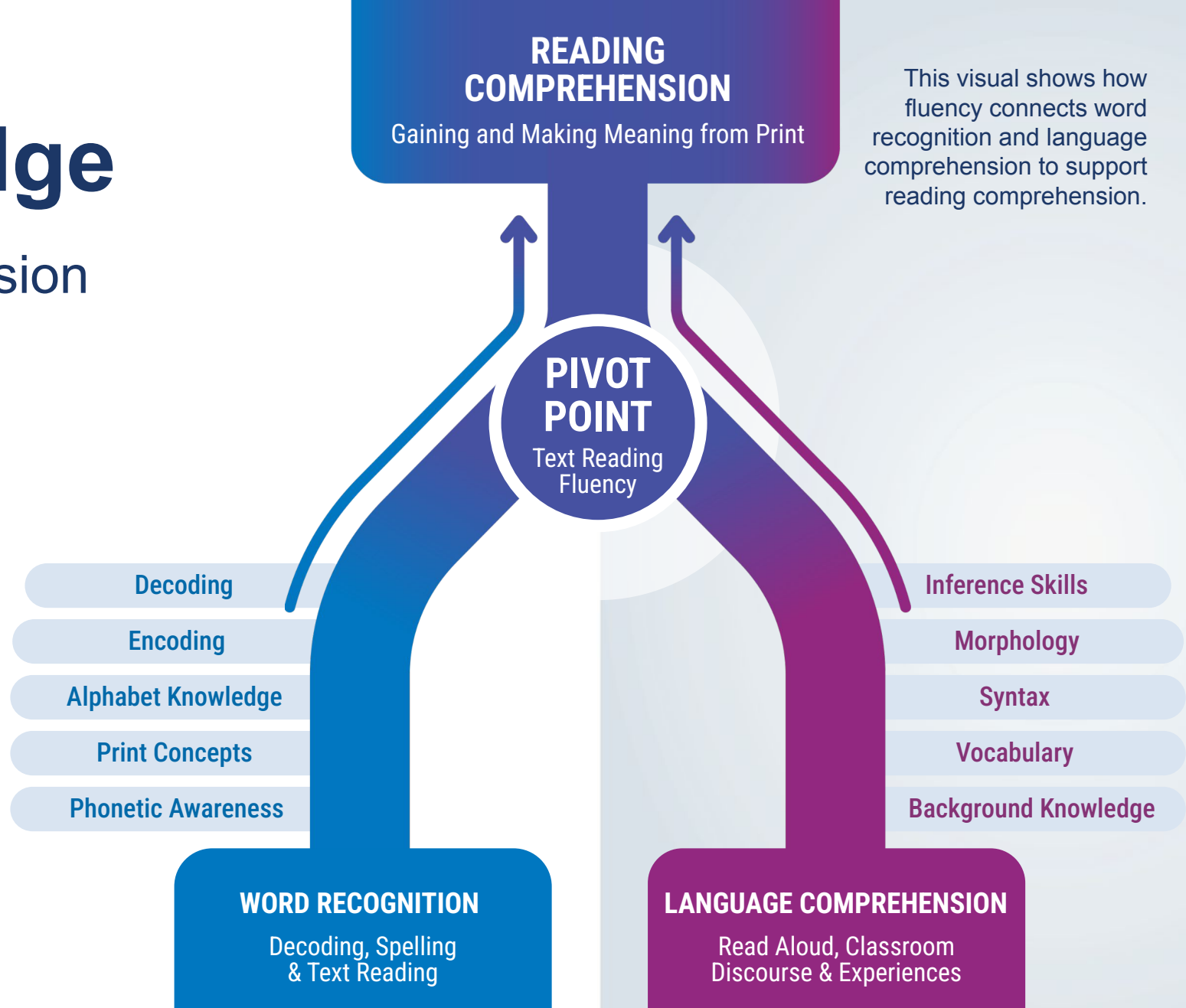
Spear-Swerling, Louise (2015). *The Power of RTI and Reading Profiles: A Blueprint for Solving Reading Problems*. Paul H. Brooks Publishing Co., Inc.

**LIP = Legislative Delivery System
for Science of Reading
(NOT a document to submit)**

Grades 2-3 Bridge

The Fluency-to-Comprehension Transition in Grades 2–3

-  Fluency is not the endpoint – it is the bridge.
-  Comprehension depends on automatic word recognition.
-  This is the system's highest-leverage transition point.



This visual shows how fluency connects word recognition and language comprehension to support reading comprehension.

What We Are Doing Differently

Based on the Data

Operational Shifts



Sharpen Focus on
Grades 2–3 Text Reading
Fluency



Refine Professional
Learning Community
tools



Align Coaching Cycles
to Data Patterns



Utilize Progress monitoring
as a leadership
decision-making system



Implement Focus-school
Model for Early Literacy
Specialists



Leverage Literacy Intervention
Plan as our Coaching System

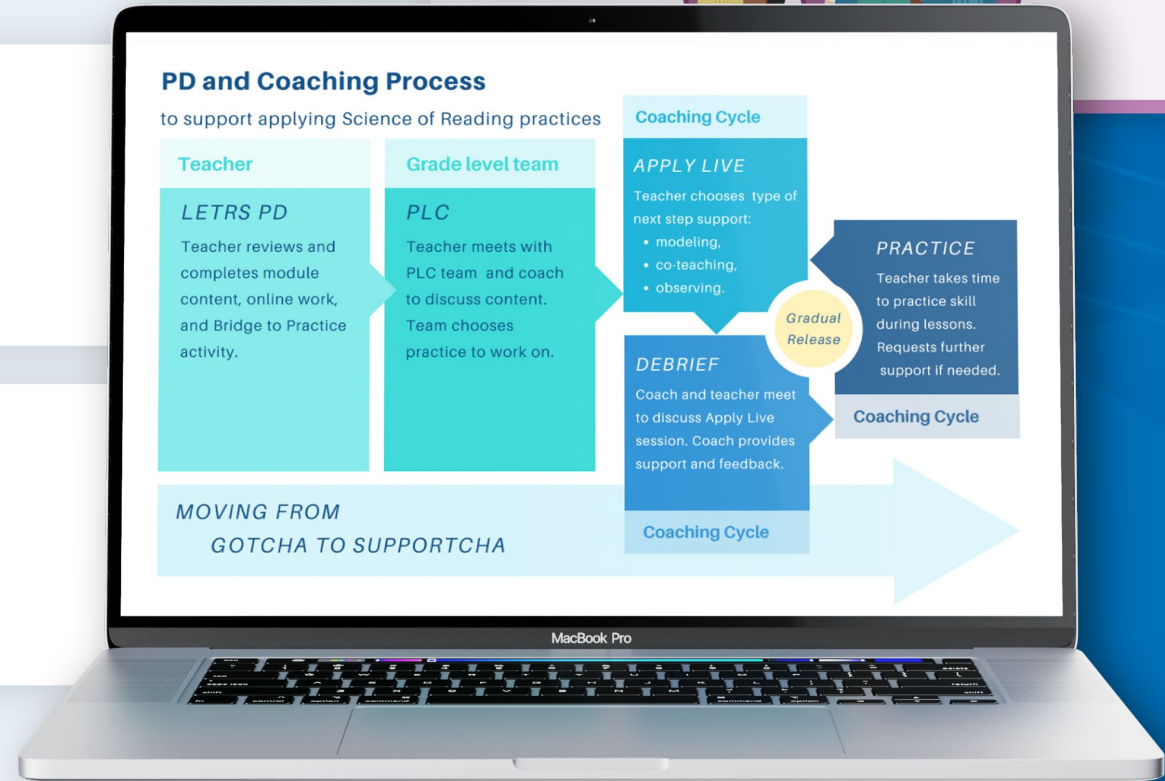
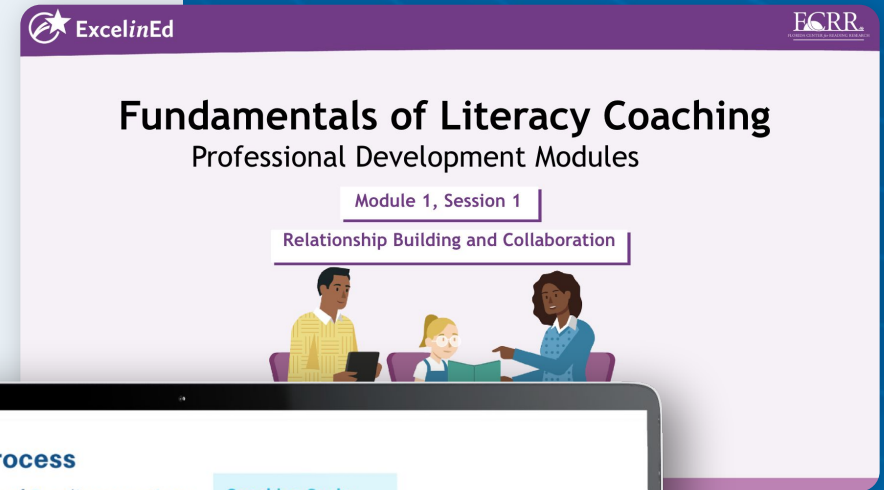
Coaching Structure Has Evolved

to Ensure Sustainability



- Broad systems support
- LETRS facilitation
- Statewide rollout

- Focus schools (1–2 per ELS)
- Instructional coaching cycles
- Group PLC coaching
- Data-informed support



Strengthening Instructional Coherence



Professional Learning Aligned to Classroom Practice



Coaching Aligned to Data Patterns



Leadership Aligned to Instructional Priorities



Reduced Fragmentation across Initiatives



Support Coherence: Systems Effectiveness Checks + Instructional Focus Tools + ELA Standards



District Co-Design Challenge Implementation to Action

District Co-Design Challenge

District Success. Statewide Impact

Your Challenge...

Learn about your assigned district's approach and impact.

Together, identify and prioritize the most critical conditions or investments needed to scale this work across the state.

Share out to surface key themes and insights across districts.



**Wilkes County
Schools**



**Orange County
Schools**



**New Hanover
County Schools**



Group Assignments

Table Facilitator
Mary Derfel



**Wilkes County
Schools**

Eric Davis

Dr. Olivia Oxendine

Wendell Hall

Advisor: Rachel Candaso

Advisor: Freddie Williamson

Table Facilitator
Dr. Stacey Wilson-Norman



**Orange County
Schools**

Alan Duncan

Jill Camnitz

Mo Green

Advisor: Jason Johnson

Advisor: Daniela Uriostegui

Table Facilitator
Dr. Cynthia Barber



**New Hanover
County Schools**

Reginald Kenan

John Blackburn

Catty Moore

Advisor: Kim Jones

Advisor: Carol Worley

Group Share



What are the **most important takeaways** about your **district's approach and impact**?



What **impact on students and teachers** stands out most?



What is one critical condition or investment needed to **scale this work across districts and statewide**?

Wilkes County Schools

22 schools
~8,300 students

Diverse Student
Population

Cohort 1 LETRS
Participation



Focus Areas

- LETRS
- Literacy Intervention Plan
- ELS
- Coaching Cycles



What Changed in Practice

- Increased Teacher Capacity
- Prioritized High Quality Instructional Materials
- Aligned MTSS Practices
- Scaled Coaching Opportunities



Impact

- Highest in Northwest Region at MOY in K and 1st grades
- Biggest Gain from BOY to MOY
- Exited Two Low-Performing Schools
- Completed 99 Coaching Cycles (15% of certified staff)

Orange County Schools

13 schools
~6,908 students

Diverse Student
Population
40+ Languages

Cohort 2 LETRS
Participation



Focus Areas

- LETRS
- Curricular Resources
- RtA Camp Revamp



What Changed in Practice

- Aligned PD for K-8 administrators, coaches, and K-5 teachers
- Aligned K-8 comprehensive knowledge building core
- Curricular resources, community partnerships, and job embedded PD



Impact

- District DIBELS composite 70% at or above benchmark with all grade levels over 60%
- All schools met or exceeded growth for SY 2024-2025
- 3-8 Reading EOG proficiency increased 15 percentage points from 2021 to 2025

New Hanover County Schools

42 schools
~25,000 students

Diverse Student
Population

Cohort 1 LETRS
Participation



Focus Areas

- Strategic Plan Goal to support 3rd Grade reading proficiency
- Early Literacy Facilitators in every school
- Aligned Professional Development



What Changed in Practice

- District-wide alignment around 3rd grade reading success
- Grant funded Early Literacy facilitators providing targeted, school-based supports
- Ongoing walkthroughs, coaching, and Professional Development

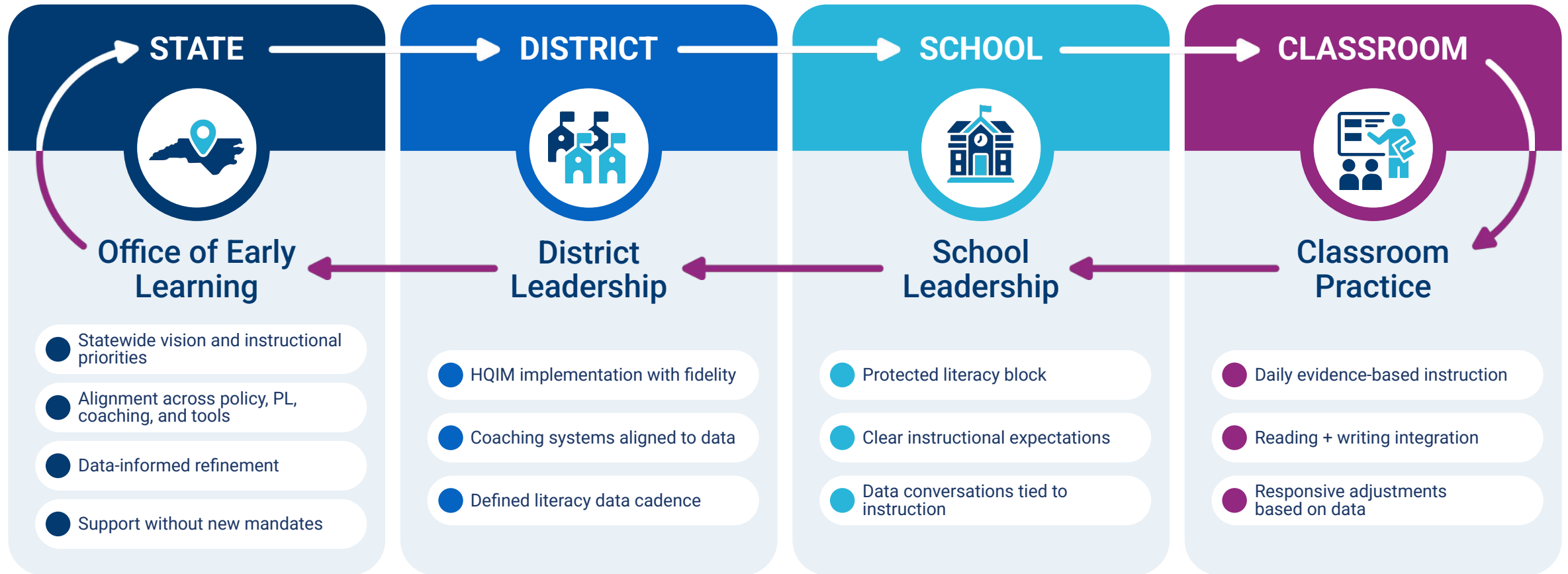


Impact

- Highest DIBELS BOY to MOY gains in 3+ years (↑ 10%)
- DIBELS by grade all over 60%
- Increased teacher capacity (evidenced through walkthrough data and perception surveys)

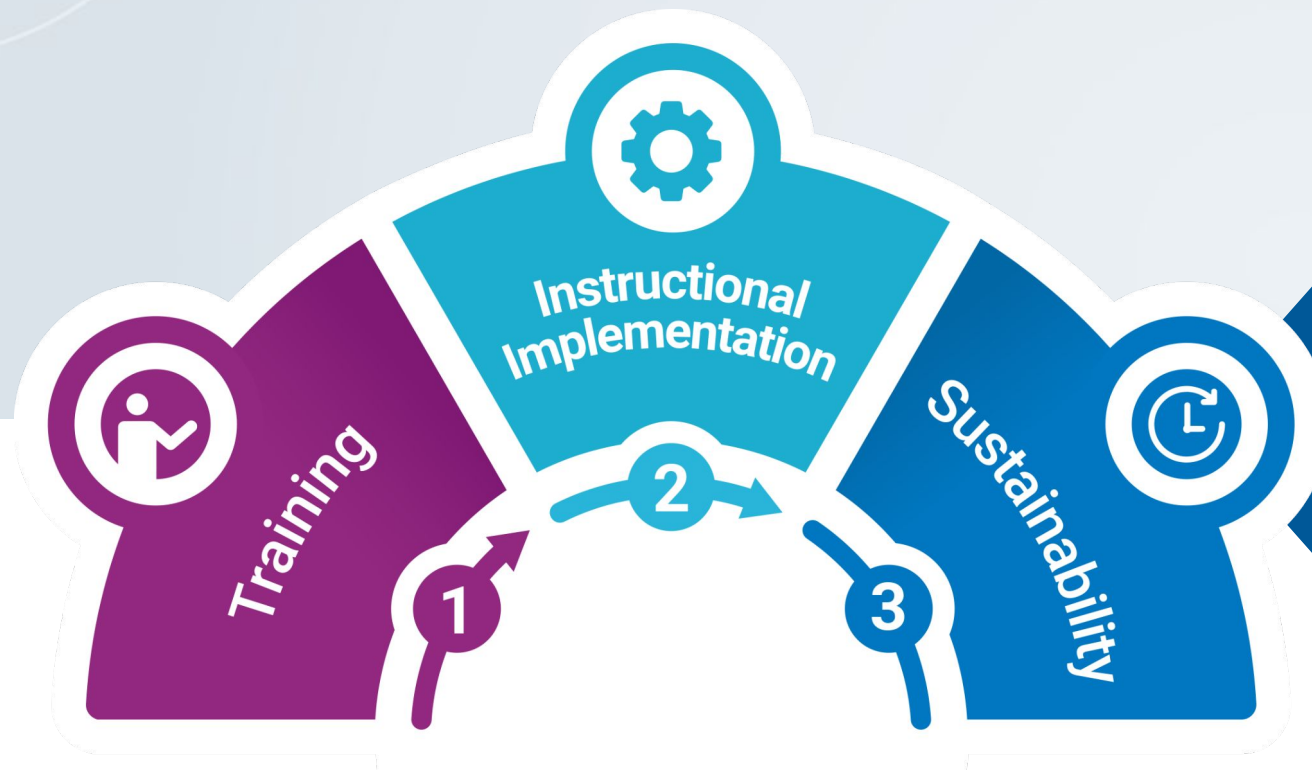
Shared Responsibility for Sustained Literacy

Sustained literacy improvement is built through *alignment* across every level.



The Implementation Arc

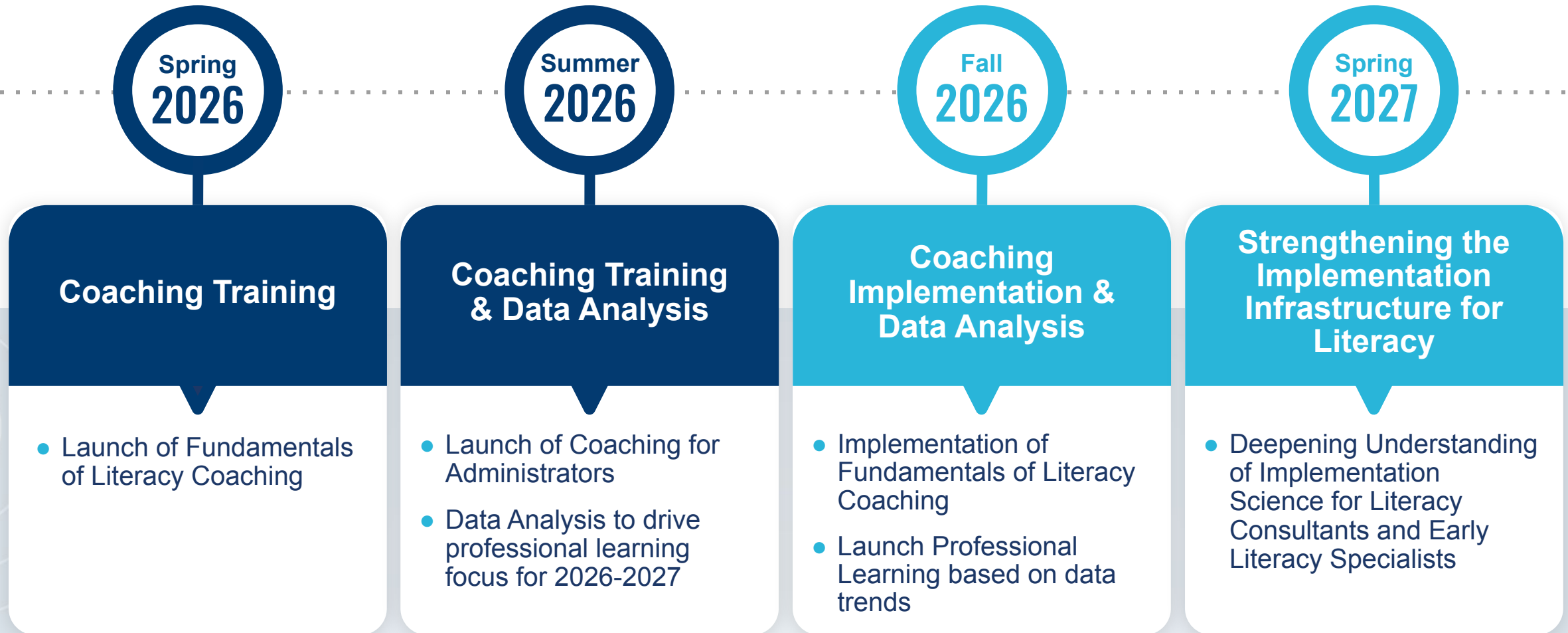
Making Instructional Shifts Sustainable



Key Indicators of Sustainability

- ✓ Stable Grades 2–3 Text Reading Fluency
- ✓ Reduced Statewide Variation
- ✓ Sustained Comprehension Growth

Timeline of Actions



Partnerships for this Work

NCDPI Partners

Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL)

Development, design, and implementation of standards

Office of Advanced Learning and Gifted Education (OALGE)

Supporting SOR for AIG students

Office of Exceptional Children (OEC)

Supporting implementation for EC students

Office of District and School Support Services (ODSSS)

Supporting LIP implementation

Office of Accountability and Testing

Supporting data and analysis of assessment results

External Partners



National Early Literacy Network

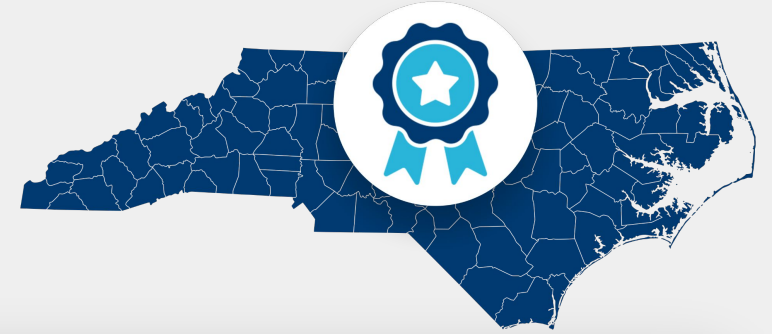
Distinguished Professors

Partnering to do research on our work



Reading Comprehension Webinar Series - Administrators & Teachers

North Carolina led in training. Now we lead in *results*.



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Questions?

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