



**Public Schools of North Carolina**  
State Board of Education  
Department of Public Instruction

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# **Report to the North Carolina General Assembly**

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Comprehensive Plan for Reading Achievement  
Session Law SL. 2012-142 (HB 950, Budget Bill),  
sec 7A 1(b) as amended by SL 2014 – 115,  
sec. 80 (HB 1133)  
G.S. 115C - 83.4

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**Date Due: October 15, 2020**  
Report #  
DPI Chronological Schedule, 2019-2020

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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 LEAs to implement the components of the law. As a result, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) established the K-3 Literacy Division, which is charged with the state-wide implementation of this law. The division includes a K-3 Literacy Director, one regional based consultant in each state board district, and one administrative assistant. Since the implementation of Read to Achieve in the 2012-2013 school year, the focus of support has changed as the schools and districts have become more familiar with legislation and components of the law. The mission of the K-3 Literacy Division has changed from a focus on supporting LEAs with implementation of the law to including more intensive support with the use of effective literacy instruction and using data to make instructional decisions to change student outcomes. In the effort for K-3 Literacy team to support an evidence-based approach to literacy, the team created a logic model with the horizon line for all K-3 students to receive instruction based on the science of reading (SoR) as a statewide approach to ensure children demonstrate grade level reading proficiency. The key strategic levers in the logic model are the following:

- 1) Create a statewide alliance (call to action) for the science of reading, using the Comprehensive Plan for Reading Achievement as the guiding light,
- 2) Build a collaborative team to explore and facilitate statewide implementation of SoR in

concert with the State Board of Education to affect funding, student standards, educator talent, licensure, and high quality curriculum,

- 3) Provide direct district supports to ensure the adoption of science of reading, including data-based strategic allocation of those supports.

In order to improve student reading proficiency in the early grades, the State Board of Education adopted the following nine-point Framework for Action on Early Reading. The Department of Public Instruction developed action steps for each of the priorities and proposed a Guiding Collaborative Framework for Early Literacy Education, including new or revised policies, Departmental initiatives using existing resources, and legislative recommendations, including both recommended statutory revisions and appropriations requests. The Comprehensive Plan for Reading Achievement is informed by Collaborative Guiding Framework for Early Literacy Education, developed and approved in 2019. This framework provides an outline of the elements for improving student reading proficiency in the early grades. The following identifies the nine elements from the Collaborative Guiding Framework:

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

The following section outlines efforts and updates for each of the components of the Read to Achieve legislation in alignment with the logic model and the Guiding Collaborative Framework for Early Literacy Education.

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

This component of the legislation states that the State Board of Education shall develop, implement, and continuously evaluate a comprehensive plan to improve reading achievement in the public schools. The plan is based on reading instructional practices with strong evidence of effectiveness in current empirical research in reading development. The K-3 Literacy Division received feedback and input from field experiences, stakeholder input, and consultation with national experts on literacy that it was necessary to revise and rewrite the Comprehensive Plan for Reading Achievement to provide a framework for districts and charters to use instructional practices aligned with current science of reading.

One of the components of the Collaborative Guiding Framework for Early Literacy Education from the State Board of Education involved creating a definition for high-quality reading instruction. With guidance and support from education stakeholders throughout North Carolina and beyond, a definition was created to guide best practices in reading instruction informed by an evolving evidence base built upon by decades of research. The definition serves as the foundation for building the proposed Comprehensive Plan for Reading Achievement. The plan provides

guidance to North Carolina educators in order to set each student on a path for success, meeting the North Carolina Standard Course of Study as adopted by the State Board of Education. This updated plan 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. Educators can use this plan to: 1) make decisions when selecting curriculum, 2) design instruction that will cultivate reading achievement, and 3) have strategic conversations about students' reading challenges, progress, and success in order to change outcomes. The Comprehensive Plan for Reading Achievement will serve as a guiding light for local system changes, instructional shifts, and direct district support. The plan will illuminate practices for teachers, school leaders, and district leaders.

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

This component of the 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, the K-3 Literacy Division supported districts in statewide implementation of mCLASS:Reading 3D as the formative, diagnostic reading assessment made available by the State Board of Education. For the 2019-2020 school year, Istation Indicators of Progress Early Reading (ISIP ER) was adopted as the statewide tool in order to identify potential reading difficulties and inform instruction, per general statute 115C-83.6. For the 2020-2021 school year the State Board of Education offers approved formative diagnostic assessment choices for districts and charters. The K-3 Literacy Division has worked with stakeholders, analyzed trends, and gathered data in order to develop crucial and targeted professional development to assist teachers and administrators in understanding and using data from the formative, diagnostic reading assessment to inform instruction. Within the regional framework, the K-3 Literacy Division 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. Parent notification is required by legislation. The formative, diagnostic reading assessment provided to districts by the NCDPI for the 2019-2020 school year, Istation, offers parents activities in a Parent Portal to engage and work with their students at home. Parent involvement is key for positive student outcomes. Access to the student/parent portal, is easily available at home, at the local library, or anywhere the student/parent can access the internet. Parents have access in real time to student progress. This provides invaluable information to parents on which activities best meet the needs of their child. The teacher may also share data during the parent/teacher conference and review the activities pertinent to each student's reading deficiencies.

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction K-3 Literacy Division also participates in an initiative that works specifically with high-need districts across North Carolina. Wolfpack WORKS (Ways to Optimize Reading/Writing for Kids Statewide) provides literacy-specific, intensive induction support to beginning, K-2 teachers with a focus on evidence-based, classroom literacy instructional practices. Wolfpack WORKS supports beginning K-2 teachers in 16 high need school districts across North Carolina as they learn to implement evidence-based literacy instruction in their classrooms for all children. The K-3 Literacy Division will continue to evaluate Wolfpack WORKS program and make adjustments needed in the three types of support (blended professional development, literacy-specific coaching, instructional literacy resources) and collaborate with IHEs for potential expansion of Wolfpack WORKS program to provide support for beginning teachers in additional districts, determining capacity needed based on feedback and evaluation. K-3 Literacy Division supports Wolfpack WORKS with assessment of the impact of program using data from Duke University Research Institute. In order to share lessons learned, it is necessary to explore opportunities to partner with RESAs and other entities such as districts' Beginning Teacher Support Programs to support teachers in their early career because providing training during onboarding process would be optimal.

The K-3 Literacy Division will continue to attend training and coaching sessions provided by Wolfpack WORKS and continuously support efforts to build beginning teacher knowledge of the science of reading and best practices as it is necessary to explore possible expansion of the coaching model incorporating lessons learned. Consideration and research of models of effective implementation statewide is one of the top priorities for our Division. Our division is gathering information and research for utilizing reading coaches trained in science aligned practices hired and coordinated through the NC Department of Public Instruction and ways to leverage virtual coaching and technology based tools for coaching (i.e., including technology-focused coaching such as bug in ear (BIE) technology, online video-sharing, and online conference platforms, etc). Options are being considered for determining reallocation of RtA budget needed for DPI to hire coaches and assign to schools based on performance data defined need beginning with lowest performing and extending. The K-3 Division has partnered with NCCAT to provide professional development to build capacity for teacher knowledge in science of reading and potentially provide training for teachers to become literacy facilitators/coaches as regional consultants develop statewide and regional literacy professional learning opportunities in a variety of ways (online modules, regional face to face, interactive technology, webinars, etc. Online professional development modules have been designed, piloted, and refined in Wolfpack WORKS and made available to all educators at <https://wolfpack-works.ced.ncsu.edu/>.

A survey was developed to research various instructional materials and supports currently being used in districts and analyzing data to determine effectiveness and needs for districts/schools. The K-3 Literacy Division has worked with national leaders to prepare a webinar and research brief regarding rationale and recommendations for using high quality instructional materials. Using data, consultants will create interactive instructional materials map showing what curricula districts are using in an ongoing effort to support districts in implementing high quality, standards aligned resources. In collaboration with other divisions, regional consultants can provide support for districts in selecting evidence based literacy interventions for supplemental and intensive support that meet WWC standards, placing emphasis on high quality curriculum materials with strong evidence level as described in ESSA and meeting expectations for all three gateways using EdReports. Our division will work with other divisions to streamline a process to provide support for districts in selecting high quality literacy curriculum and instructional materials based on the science of reading with standards aligned complex texts to provide high quality core literacy instruction and meet North Carolina Standards. Collaborative efforts to align high quality literacy curriculum and instruction is possible using the Comprehensive Plan for Reading Achievement, which can be used as the guiding light to illuminate practices that lay the foundation for all students to receive high quality education using high quality curriculum and instructional practices. The updated plan includes an interactive guide and link resources for districts, and regional consultants are in the final stages of development of a self-assessment tool that will assist districts/charters in this process.

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

The 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 an 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. DPI 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 Istation ISIP ER Overall score of 258 or Lexile score of 725 on the Reading Comprehension Subtest are also provided by the state as alternatives to the EOG. The State Board of Education also approved the use of eleven local alternative assessments and achievement levels that districts can use as a means for third graders and retained reading students to show proficiency with a Lexile equivalent of 725 or higher. DPI Accountability and K-3 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 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 supports 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. While the LEA is responsible for the planning of the camp, the K-3 Literacy Division provides districts with support in implementation.

Through collaboration with Regional Education Laboratories (REL) Southeast and Dr. Barbara Foorman on research and effective camp practices (IES guide), K-3 Literacy Division developed a Reading Camp Repository. The Repository provides online training to assist LEAs with effective implementation of Summer Reading Camp. The team collaborated with partners and districts including a full day conference with REL providing guidance and feedback on camp planning and effective practices. Districts were highlighted as Reading Camp “Spotlights” for using effective instruction in reading camps at the conference. Reading Camp “Spotlights” were created to share evidence based practices for the programs across the state with implementation models that focused on the science of reading. The challenges faced by achieving the desired outcomes of Reading Camps may be addressed by providing supports with the goal of improving implementation and by identifying and scaling up local-level implementations with strong evidence of success. Regional meetings were held in all 8 regions to provide camp training and share the Reading Camp Repository with stakeholders. K-3 Literacy consultants collaborate on a consistent basis with partners and districts to support effective practices in reading camps.

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 needed to make gains. It is important to note that although a student has a good cause exemption, the student still has access to instructional supports 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 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade Accelerated class. These classes are taught by a teacher with demonstrated outcomes in reading. 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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.

The K-3 Literacy Division partnered with the Duke Endowment in 2019 to provide a Summer Learning Program (SLP) with wrap around services at 12 sites. The program is six weeks long with six hours each day (three hours of focused literacy instruction and three hours of enrichment activities). The teacher/student ratio is 6:1 and wrap around services include daily breakfast, lunch, and snacks for students. Transportation is provided with early drop off and late pick up. Parents are involved in the program with a family dinner each week and a parent workshop each week. For the 2020 school year, five additional churches committed to implementing a Duke Endowment supported literacy program, bringing the total of churches and counties to 17. Even with the COVID pandemic, summer literacy leaders in thirteen communities committed to serving the children in the midst of the pandemic, offering some type of high quality reading camp (virtual or small group face to face) for the children identified as in need of literacy intervention over the summer months. The Duke Endowment has partnered with American Institutes for Research (AIR) in a two year agreement to assist the continued evidence-building efforts regarding the implementation and impact of the Summer Literacy Programs.

### **Component Five: Notification Requirements to Parents and Guardians (115C-83.9)**

This component provides notification to parents and guardians about retention in a timely manner if the student is not demonstrating reading proficiency by the end of third grade. Parents and guardians shall receive notice if their kindergarten, first, second, or third grade student is 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 Repository that provides guidance to LEAs and parents and templates for monthly progress reports for students retained under G.S. 115C-83.1G (<https://ncdpi.instructure.com/courses/1524>)

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 Read to Achieve Repository provides a parent resources section with links to information about NC Read to Achieve, <https://ncdpi.instructure.com/courses/1524/pages/repository-parent-resources> NCDPI Reading Resources, and online resources aligned with the current science of reading to support learning at home. 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.

### **Section Two: Evaluation**

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 website and reports the following information in writing by September 1 of each year. The following section

outlines the Read to Achieve Grade 3 End of Year results and Read to Achieve Grades 1 and 2 End of Year results for the 2018-2019 school year.

### Accountability Measures (115C-83.10)

<b>State of North Carolina 2018-19 Read to Achieve Grade 3 End-of-Year (EOY) Results</b>		G.S. §115C-83.10 requires “each local board of education to publish annually on a website maintained by that local school administrative unit and report in writing to the State Board of Education (SBE) by <b>September 1</b> of each year the following information on the prior school year:”	
		<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Percentage of Students</b>
<b>The denominator for calculating the required percentages for rows 1-2 is all students in membership at grade 3 for the first day of spring testing. The denominator for the State of North Carolina is 117,662.</b>			
1	Demonstrated reading proficiency on the Beginning-of-Grade 3 (BOG3) English Language Arts (ELA)/Reading Test, the End-of-Grade (EOG) ELA/Reading Test, or the EOG ELA/Reading Retest (i.e., scored Level 3 or higher).	67,449	57.3
2	Did <u>not</u> demonstrate reading proficiency on the BOG3 ELA/Reading Test, the EOG ELA/Reading Test, or the EOG ELA/Reading Retest	50,173	42.7
<b>The number and percentage of students exempt from mandatory retention in third grade by category of good cause. Students may be counted in only one of these categories. Denominator for each category in row 3 is row 2.</b>			
3	a. Students who took and passed an alternative assessment approved by the SBE (i.e., mClass/Text Reading and Comprehension [TRC], Read to Achieve Test, or locally determined SBE-approved alternative assessment).	14,550	29.0
	b. English Learner students with less than two (2) school years of instruction in an English as a Second Language [ESL] program.	1,309	2.6
	c. Students with disabilities whose current Individualized Education Program (IEP) indicates the use of the NCEXTEND1 alternative assessment, have at least a two (2) school-year delay in educational performance, or have received intensive reading interventions for at least two (2) school years.	7,843	15.6
	d. Students who have been previously retained more than once in kindergarten, first, second, or third grades.	137	0.3
	e. Students who demonstrated reading proficiency appropriate for third-grade students through a reading portfolio.	2,255	4.5

<b>State of North Carolina 2018-19 Read to Achieve Grade 3 End-of-Year (EOY) Results</b>		G.S. §115C-83.10 requires “each local board of education to publish annually on a website maintained by that local school administrative unit and report in writing to the State Board of Education (SBE) by <b>September 1</b> of each year the following information on the prior school year:”	
		<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Percentage of Students</b>
<b>The denominator for calculating the required percentages for rows 4 and 6 are all students in membership at grade 3 for the first day of spring testing. The denominator for the State of North Carolina is 117,662.</b>			
4	The number and percent of students eligible for priority enrollment in Reading Camp. This number equals row 2 minus the total of rows 3a through 3e.	24,079	20.5
<b>The denominator for row 5 is the number of students eligible for priority enrollment in reading camp from row 4.</b>			
5	The number and percentage of students eligible for priority enrollment who attended Reading Camp.	11,635	48.3
6	Total number and percentage of students retained for not demonstrating reading proficiency on third-grade standards (students deemed proficient after reading camp are subtracted from this number). Students who are not proficient will be either: [1] retained in a third-grade class, [2] placed in a 3/4 transitional class with a retained label, or [3] placed in a fourth-grade accelerated class with a retained reading label.	20,800	17.7
7	<b>Charter Schools Only:</b> Charter schools must indicate the number and percentage of retained students recorded in number 6 who do not return to the charter school for the upcoming school year.	102	6.5

<b>State of North Carolina 2018-19 Read to Achieve Grades 1-2 End-of-Year (EOY) Results</b>		G.S. §115C-83.10 requires “each local board of education to publish annually on a website maintained by that local school administrative unit and report in writing to the State Board of Education (SBE) by <b>September 1</b> of each year the following information on the prior school year:”		
		<b>Total Number of Students in EOY mCLASS: Reading 3D (denominator)</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Percentage of Students</b>
<b>The denominator for calculating the required percentages for rows 1-4 is all students in membership at grades 1-2 for EOY mCLASS: Reading 3D.</b>				
1	The number and percentage of <b>first-grade</b> students demonstrating reading comprehension at grade level.	109,797	78,066	71.1
2	The number and percentage of <b>first-grade</b> students <u>not</u> demonstrating reading comprehension at grade level and eligible for priority enrollment in reading camp.		31,731	28.9
3	The number and percentage of <b>second-grade</b> students demonstrating reading comprehension at grade level.	110,034	85,917	78.1
4	The number and percentage of <b>second-grade</b> students <u>not</u> demonstrating reading comprehension at grade level and eligible for priority enrollment in reading camp.		24,117	21.9
<b>The denominator for row 5 is the number of students eligible for priority enrollment in reading camp from row 2.</b>				
5	The number and percentage of <b>first-grade</b> students eligible for priority enrollment who attended reading camp.		9,753	30.7
<b>The denominator for row 6 is the number of students eligible for priority enrollment in reading camp from row 4.</b>				
6	The number and percentage of <b>second-grade</b> students eligible for priority enrollment who attended reading camp.		6,783	28.1

**Note:** Privacy policies dictate that any group with less than 10 students, the specific number and percentage should not be given. An \* indicates that the student population number and percentage is too small to report the value. The percentage and number of students are not shown if the percentage is greater than 95 percent (>95) or less than 5 percent (<5).

### Section Three: Revisions to the Comprehensive Plan for Reading Achievement

The following section outlines the revisions to the Comprehensive Plan for Reading Achievement. Prior to and since the Guiding Collaborative Framework was established, a cross divisional group of directors recognized the need to find a way to address existing policy, legislation, programs, and initiatives (such as RTA, Early Learning, SCOS, EC – RRTP, etc) in one plan that stakeholders can easily access for needed information, resources, and guidance. The B12 Literacy Committee group formed to align cross-divisional/cross-agency efforts for Birth - 12th into one plan for NC Public Schools. The collaborative group conducted a review of the literature regarding reading instruction and drafted a definition that would serve as the foundation on which to build the Comprehensive Plan for Reading Achievement. The team gathered stakeholder input from internal and external stakeholder meetings, regional stakeholder meetings, State Board of Education Literacy Task Force, and public review.

Based on stakeholder input, feedback, and consultation with national literacy experts, the final version of the definition of high quality reading instruction that was approved by the State Board of Education on July 9, 2020 follows:

A comprehensive approach to literacy encompasses reading, writing, speaking, and listening and occurs in a safe, nurturing, and culturally responsive environment. Learning to read is a continuum of knowledge and skills, beginning at birth with oral language development and progressing to the development of written language skills and knowledge of the world that continues until adulthood.

High quality reading instruction is grounded in the current science of reading regarding the acquisition of language (syntax, semantics, morphology, and pragmatics), phonological and phonemic awareness, accurate and efficient word identification and spelling, word knowledge, and comprehension. High quality reading instruction includes explicit and systematic phonics instruction, allowing all students to master letter-sound relations, and it is guided by state-adopted standards and informed by data so that instruction can be differentiated to meet the needs of individual students. Ultimately, the purpose of high quality reading instruction is to empower all children to become deep readers who have the foundational skills and word and world knowledge to read and understand increasingly complex text.

In order to form the K-3 Literacy writing and reviewing team for the development of the plan, Directors from each division were asked to participate or assign team members to represent their division on the K-3 Literacy team to create the Comprehensive Plan for Reading Achievement. This collaborative team had two representatives from Office of Early Learning, one representative from IABS, 2 representatives from Exceptional Children Division, and 1 representative from ELA (2 additional consulted on the standards section). Initially, the team reviewed literacy plans from other states with strong statewide plans and/or high NAEP scores. The initial review led to a deeper dive into specific state plans including Mississippi, Pennsylvania, Colorado, South Carolina, Louisiana, Arizona, Nevada, and Massachusetts in order to establish an outline and guiding principles. The team established guiding principles, called transformative equity practices, to be the focus of the plan that serve to pivot practices. Each section went through an internal review process including meetings, receiving input/feedback from review team, editing, and incorporating feedback. The Science of Reading section was presented to the State Board of Education Task Force Committee and shared with the B12 Committee as well as national literacy experts for input. The following sections are included in the Comprehensive Plan for Reading Achievement:

- Purpose
- Transformative Equity Practices
- What is the Science of Reading
- Definition of High Quality Reading Instruction
- Implementation of Evidence-Based Practices in Early Reading
- Leadership
- Standards-Aligned Instruction
- Assessment
- Resources
- Appendices
- Glossary
- References

Following the internal process, the team compiled a draft and held a meeting with stakeholders from across the state inviting them to review and provide feedback. This draft was also sent to national experts in literacy for feedback. All feedback from internal, external statewide, and national experts was incorporated into a final draft of the Comprehensive Plan for Reading Achievement.

## **Section Four: Recommendations for Legislative Changes**

Legislative changes may be necessary to enable implementation of current empirical research in reading development. The following section outlines recommendations for revisions in implementation of the legislation to ensure stronger statewide support for K-3 literacy.

### **Collaborative Guiding Framework for Early Literacy Education:**

As outlined earlier in this report, the State Board of Education adopted a Framework for Action on Early Reading. NCDPI developed action steps for each of the priorities and proposed a Collaborative Guiding Framework, including new or revised policies, NCDPI initiatives using existing resources, and legislative recommendations, including both recommended statutory revisions and appropriations requests. The Collaborative Guiding Framework for Early Literacy Education was adopted with a focus on the plan for NC to transition to evidence based approach to literacy, including the development of the Comprehensive Plan for Reading Achievement that will serve as the guiding light for local system changes, instructional shifts, and direct district support.

The Comprehensive Plan for Reading Achievement is informed by the Collaborative Guiding Framework for Early Literacy Education, developed in 2019, by the North Carolina State Board of Education. This framework provides an outline of the elements for improving student reading proficiency in the early grades. The following identifies the nine elements from the Collaborative Guiding Framework:

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

### **State Board of Education Literacy Task Force Recommendations:**

The following section outlines the State Board of Education Literacy Task Force recommendations. In September 2019, the North Carolina State Board of Education announced a Literacy Task Force. Having a strong reading foundation impacts a student's educational success. The State Board of Education Task Force was charged with developing a report that includes recommendations for modifications to educator preparation and licensure that support the improvement of K-3 reading instruction. The State Board of Education requested that the Task Force consult the research on early childhood learning, including early literacy instruction, and evidence-based methods of training in educator preparation programs to support literacy education for all students, including economically disadvantaged students, English language learners, and children with disabilities; and best practices in educator preparation program design. The Task Force's recommendations address, but are not limited to, the following issues related to early reading instruction and teacher preparation:

- The minimum number of credit hours in literacy instruction that an educator preparation program shall include in its course of study. This shall include whether phonics instruction is adequately integrated into the course of study or if a separate course dedicated to phonics instruction is needed.
- The alignment of preservice educator preparation for early learning instruction with actual classroom instruction, including clinical experiences, that reflect well-designed, effective educator preparation programs for early learning instruction.
- Implications for teacher licensure and other teaching credentials, including potential incentives and compensation.
- The number and type of continuing education credits related to literacy that the State should require for the renewal of a teacher license.
- Professional development models for educator preparation program faculty and teachers throughout their careers on evidence-based instruction in literacy that is consistent with the most recent standards and curriculum established by the State and well-designed, effective educator preparation programs.
- Implications for administrator preparation programs and principal professional development to support evidence-based literacy instruction in the early grades

A comprehensive approach to literacy encompasses reading, writing, speaking, and listening and occurs in a safe, nurturing, and culturally responsive environment. Learning to read is a continuum of knowledge and skills, beginning at birth with oral language development and progressing to the development of written language skills and knowledge of the world that continues into adulthood.

High quality reading instruction is grounded in the current science of reading and addresses the acquisition of language (syntax, semantics, morphology, and pragmatics), phonological and phonemic awareness, accurate and efficient word identification and spelling, world knowledge, and comprehension. It is guided by state-adopted standards and informed by valid and reliable assessment data so instruction can be differentiated to meet the needs of individual students. High quality reading instruction includes explicit and systematic phonics instruction, allowing all students to master letter–sound relations so that they can understand the meaning of increasingly complex text.

When considering the evidence base for the current science of reading, it is useful to review the levels of evidence in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; Pub. L. 114-95, 2015) as well as the definition of scientific inquiry from the National Research Council, the public face of the National Academy of Sciences:

At its core, scientific inquiry is the same in all fields. Scientific research, whether in education, physics, anthropology, molecular biology, or economics, is a continual process of rigorous reasoning supported by a dynamic interplay among methods, theories, and findings. It builds understanding in the form of models or theories that can be tested. Advances in scientific knowledge are achieved by the self-regulating norms of the scientific community over time, not, as sometimes believed, by the mechanistic application of a particular scientific method to a static set of questions (National Research Council, 2002, p. 2).

The recommendations of the North Carolina State Board of Education’s Literacy Task Force that should be considered for legislative changes for Pre-Service Preparation and Licensure, Professional Development, and Curriculum and Instruction are:

### **Pre-Service Preparation and Licensure**

- **Recommendation 1:** Set clear expectations that early childhood, elementary, special education, and educational leadership preparation programs align their curriculum to the principles and practices identified in the Standards for the Preparation of Literacy Professionals 2017 (ILA, 2018) and the International Dyslexia Association Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading (2018).
- **Recommendation 2:** Require all Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) to engage candidates in intentionally sequenced clinical experiences that include opportunities to: a) Observe literacy teaching practices (e.g., faculty, university supervisors, mentors) that reflect the principles and practices of the current science of reading b) Engage in early, deliberate and sustained practice opportunities during which candidates enact the principles and practices associated with the current science of reading (e.g., low-stakes practice with teacher educators and peers; authentic practice opportunities with children in early and elementary settings), c) Receive substantive and actionable feedback on enacted teaching practice using an observation instrument focused on the principles and practices identified within the current science of reading, especially as it relates to the teaching of reading.
- **Recommendation 3:** Direct the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Local Education Agencies, Educator Preparation Programs (EPP), non-profit agencies, and community stakeholders to collaborate on the alignment between pre-service educator preparation of early childhood, elementary, and special education candidates and the expectations and professional development of in-service teachers. Related recommendations include: Advocate for, identify, and distribute funds to support EPPs and their P-12 partners to develop and implement redesigned programs. To that end, EPPs should: a) Design and refine coursework grounded in principles and practices aligned with the current science of reading and the Standards for Reading Professionals. b) Provide high-quality clinical experiences and coursework that increase in complexity over time. c) Develop and implement meaningful and common assessment(s) of candidate learning; these data can also be used to inform the continuous improvement of EPPs. And LEAs should: a) Design and refine professional development for in-service teachers grounded in principles and practices identified within current science of reading. b) Develop meaningful and common assessment(s) of teacher learning as well as clear methods for feedback to teachers; these data can also be used to inform the continuous improvement of instructional programs.
- **Recommendation 4:** Provide compensation incentives for teachers, teacher leaders, instructional coaches, and school leaders with a master’s degree in reading or a master’s level reading specialist certification from an approved EPP.
- **Recommendation 5:** Develop a comprehensive statewide strategic plan for recruiting and retaining underrepresented, diverse candidates to become early childhood, elementary, English Language Learner, and special education teachers trained in the current science of reading.
- **Recommendation 6:** Require all EPP educational leadership programs to include meaningful and in-depth curriculum based on the current science of teaching reading.
- **Recommendation 7:** Define a statewide common definition of “ready on day one” to distinguish between a novice teacher of reading and a master teacher of reading.

## Curriculum and Instructional Resources

- **Recommendation 1:** Create guidance and resources to support the understanding of the current science of reading. (e.g., definition, model, framework, resources for teachers, caregivers, and families)
- **Recommendation 2:** Identify, fund, and implement a valid and reliable literacy screener or diagnostic that aligns with the current science of reading and administer to all K-3 students and to fourth and fifth graders who are below grade level in reading.
- **Recommendation 3:** Define criteria for selecting evidence-based instructional resources (core instruction, supplemental instruction, and intensive intervention) that are aligned to the current science of reading. Assist public school units with identification of instructional curriculum and resources that meet the criteria for alignment with the current science of reading.
- **Recommendation 4:** Allocate funding for only evidence-based instructional resources (core instruction, supplemental instruction, and intensive intervention) aligned to the current science of reading so every K-5 student has equitable access to evidence-based literacy curriculum and instructional materials.
- **Recommendation 5:** Allocate funding for only high quality professional development and job-embedded coaching so all teachers receive consistent feedback and support to implement the district-selected evidence-based resources (core instruction, supplemental instruction, and intensive intervention) aligned to the current science of reading.
- **Recommendation 6:** In order to support the highest quality reading instruction, develop an implementation rubric aligned to the current science of reading. This tool could be used by teachers, school leaders, and district leaders to assess and reflect on the implementation of instructional practices and strategies aligned with the current science of reading. 8
- **Recommendation 7:** Align all NCDPI created, purchased and shared literacy resources with the current science of reading, including, but not limited to, formative and summative assessments, shared resource banks, state-purchased literacy materials, or shared digital content.

## Professional Development

- **Recommendation 1:** Allocate funding to support ongoing professional development for K-5 teachers, teacher leaders, literacy coaches, and school leaders. This professional development will address the current science of reading, utilizing multiple learning approaches, job embedded coaching, and a variety of digital platforms.
- **Recommendation 2:** Fund literacy coaches for every elementary school, with at least one coach dedicated to grades K-2 and one coach dedicated to grades 3-5.
- **Recommendation 3:** Establish advanced degree compensation for K-5 literacy coaches trained in the current science of reading.
- **Recommendation 4:** Require 30 contact hours of literacy professional development based on the current science of reading for elementary teacher licensure renewal.
- **Recommendation 5:** Develop and offer an early literacy micro-credential (at least 60 contact hours) that requires candidates to demonstrate proficiency in the acquisition of language (syntax, semantics, morphology, and pragmatics), phonological and phonemic awareness, accurate and efficient word identification and spelling, world knowledge, and comprehension.
- **Recommendation 6:** Require five contact hours for literacy professional development based on the current science of reading for principal licensure renewal.

- **Recommendation 7:** Provide opportunities and incentives for educators who work with preservice teachers, including clinical faculty, mentors, and university supervisors, to engage in professional learning opportunities to enhance their ability to support candidates' enactment of principles and practices identified within seminal and current research that result in a literacy credential. The State Board of Education should work with EPPs to convene a team of NC literacy experts to identify or develop online, self-paced and face-to-face training modules. Training modules should cover principles of the current science of reading focused on reading and evidence-based methods (e.g. modeling, practice and feedback)

### **Reading Camp**

The recommendations in this section are aligned with the State Board of Education adopted Collaborative Guiding Framework for Early Literacy Education based on stakeholder feedback and findings of a recent study by Weiss, Stallings, and Porter (2018) to enable implementation for current empirical research in reading development. The final section of that report offered three high-level recommendations for North Carolina to consider for improving RtA outcomes. Those recommendations included the following:

- 1) Providing greater financial and human capacity supports with a goal of improving implementation fidelity statewide
- 2) Identifying and scaling up local-level implementations with strong evidence of success
- 3) Transitioning from a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade social promotion mindset to a literacy development mindset that spans all education settings leading up to and including 3<sup>rd</sup> grade

The K-3 Literacy Team developed a process to collect reading plans from districts and charters for the 2019-2020 summer reading camps in order to provide feedback. Prior to school closures due to COVID-19, districts would have had the opportunity of submitting Reading Camp Plans for review and the K-3 Literacy team would focus on providing feedback and guidance to ensure the instructional portion of the plan is grounded in evidence-based practices aligned to the science of reading. The process included requirement for LEAs to submit a Reading Camp Plan to NCDPI for feedback that would include overall structure, proposed delivery of evidence based instruction that has been proven to impact student outcomes, staffing and personnel, schedule for service delivery, community partnerships with local community organizations for more impact, and parent involvement to improve achievement. Districts did not submit plans for summer camp for 2019-2020 due to COVID-19, but the following components will be required in plans submitted by districts for feedback in 2020-2021:

- Total instructional hours
- Core Reading Program and standards alignment to NCSCoS
- Core Reading Program and focus on the five components of reading
  - Phonological and phonemic awareness
  - Phonics
  - Vocabulary
  - Fluency
  - Comprehension
- Supplementary Reading Program aligned with the five components of reading
  - Systematic and Explicit
  - Focus on all 5 components of reading

- Assessment Structure
  - Assessments that meet psychometric standards
  - Diagnostics that inform the 5 components of reading
  - Quantitative or qualitative measures from progress monitoring

The mission of the K-3 Literacy Team is to provide support to ensure all students acquire the foundational literacy skills necessary to read, comprehend, integrate, and apply complex texts necessary for college and career success. Regional consultants strive to achieve this mission by focusing on the action steps to accomplish the goals of the Collaborative Guiding Framework for Early Literacy Education and by focusing on the strategic levers outlined in our logic model to reach the horizon line for all K-3 students to receive instruction based on the science of reading as a statewide approach to ensure children demonstrate grade level proficiency. The first action of the Collaborative Guiding Framework was to develop a statewide definition of high quality reading instruction, which has been approved. Improving focus on reading instruction in teacher preparation programs, improving summer reading camp quality, providing reading coach supports in low performing schools and districts, expanding partnerships to support beginning teachers, ensuring high quality reading curriculum and instructional materials in elementary schools, exploring a statewide system of training in reading for teachers, principals, and reading coaches on the science of reading, are components of the Collaborative Guiding Framework with steps or recommendations included in this report. Considering revisions in implementation of the RtA legislation based on the recommendations outlined above would ensure stronger statewide support for K-3 literacy.

