KBOR BLUEPRINT FOR LITERACY STUDY:

Advancing literacy excellence across Kansas

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A report prepared for the Kansas Board of Regents

by

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Concerns about student literacy outcomes and equitable access to high-quality instruction have grown nationwide, and Kansas is no exception. State assessments show that only about one-third of Kansas students read at or above proficiency, a trend echoed by NAEP and local benchmarks. These challenges are multi-systemic, involving educators, families, schools, and broader educational structures—meaning solutions must be equally comprehensive.

Kansas has taken important steps toward evidence-based literacy policies, scoring well on measures of educator support and funding (Papineau et al., 2025). These efforts reflect recognition that high-quality reading instruction and sustained investment in teacher knowledge are essential to improving literacy rates. However, professional learning investment remains a concern; Kansas ranks last nationally in spending per teacher, despite modest upward trends in recent years (Boluslav et al., 2025). This suggests both a challenge and an opportunity for future growth.

Senate Bill 438 established the KBOR Office of Literacy to lead statewide initiatives targeting educator preparation, classroom instruction, and family support. Although funding for the Blueprint for Literacy was not advanced in 2025, research and development efforts continued to build the foundation for future legislative support. Partnering with KU's Center for Research on Learning and Center for Research Methods Consultation, the Office has engaged educators, students, and families statewide since October 2024 to identify statewide literacy needs and develop solutions.

The ultimate goal of these efforts is to improve PreK-12 literacy outcomes through systemic change—addressing educator preparation, instructional practices, and family engagement. This report summarizes findings from four key initiatives:

- Validation of a tool to assess school systems' capacities to implement structured literacy
- Validation of a pre-service educator literacy assessment
- Statewide needs assessment through educator surveys, observations, and focus groups
- Pilot of a Foundations of Science of Reading course

Below are summaries of key findings from each of the four research and development efforts listed above. Each component is described in greater detail in the full report.

Key Findings

Infrastructure Profiler Tool Validation

A total of 12 experts participated in the validation of the Infrastructure Readiness Scale, the source of the Infrastructure Profiler Tool. Expert responses showed the following:

1. Experts rated high the validity evidence based on scale contents.
2. Experts suggested creating two surveys separately focusing on educators' personal experience and administrators' experience related to the school.
3. The scale may use more objective response options.
4. The scale may focus more on readiness and structured literacy.

Fifty-three educators from 10 schools throughout Kansas responded to a survey about the availability and use of resources, processes, and personnel to improve structured literacy implementation in their building or district. Questions addressed professional learning, coaching, and instruction. Validation efforts are part of ongoing research efforts, but preliminary responses indicated a need to **improve educator access to the following:**

1. Science-based professional learning
2. Literacy coaching
3. Needed instructional materials
4. Opportunities to learn and practice adjusting instruction to meet all learners' needs

Performance Assessment Validation

The performance assessment is a detailed structured literacy lesson plan completed by pre-service educators intended to be implemented in a general education setting during a 90-minute literacy block. A total of 7 literacy experts within and outside of Kansas participated in two performance assessment validation processes—expert review and cognitive interviews. Validation efforts are ongoing, but preliminary responses indicate the following:
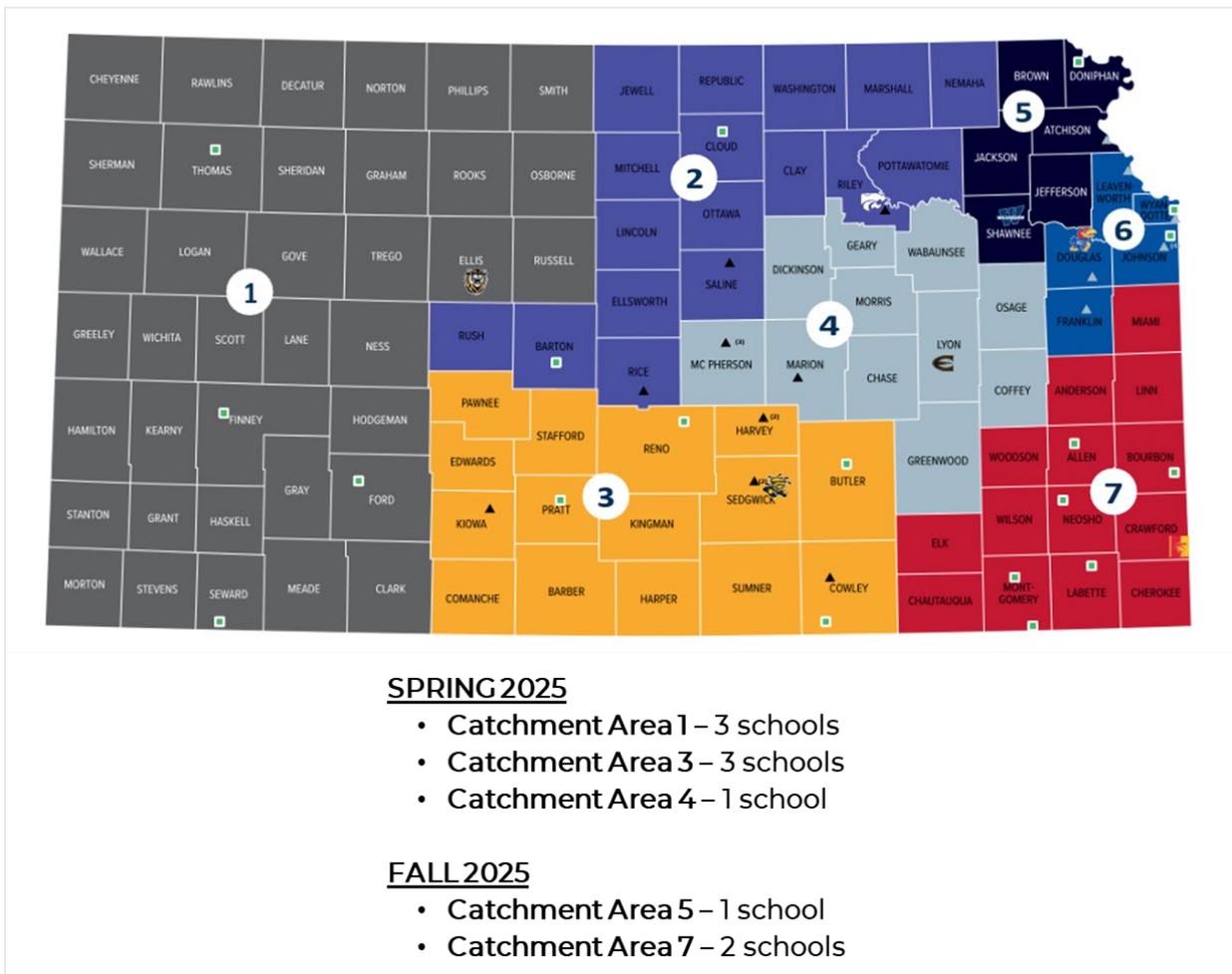
1. Performance assessment may not accurately reflect real classroom practices.
2. Performance assessment is especially challenging for pre-service preschool teachers to complete.
3. The 90-minute literacy block lesson plan may not be suitable for all classroom settings, particularly in lower elementary grades.

4. Lesson plan can be complemented by other performance assessment approaches, such as video of teaching based on the lesson plan, exams that include real classroom scenarios, or a self-reflection on the thinking process of making the lesson plan.

Statewide Literacy Instruction and Resource Needs Assessment

The research team conducted a statewide needs assessment, including site visits to 10 schools across Kansas in April, September, and October 2025. Although the research team partnered with the Center for Evaluation and Educational Leadership at The University of Kansas to recruit school sites to represent all seven geographic regions (or catchment areas) of the state, the forthcoming findings are only representative of the buildings, educators, families, and students whose data were captured for this study. Figure 1 shows a breakdown of school sites by catchment area.

Figure 1
Site Visit Locations

SPRING 2025
- Catchment Area 1 – 3 schools
- Catchment Area 3 – 3 schools
- Catchment Area 4 – 1 school

FALL 2025
- Catchment Area 5 – 1 school
- Catchment Area 7 – 2 schools

During each site visit, the research team conducted classroom observations and facilitated focus groups with educators, family members, and students in 24 elementary and 4 secondary classrooms. Researchers compiled, cleaned, and analyzed data from classroom observation and focus groups protocol forms. While efforts were made to gather a representative sample of schools from across the state, researchers were limited by each district's willingness and ability to participate. Select demographics of each site visit district and related statewide demographics are listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Needs Assessment Site Visit District Demographics

District	% Econ. Disadvantaged	% English Learners	% Special Education	% Race/Ethnicity			
				White	African Am.	Hisp.	Other
State of Kansas	49	10	17	60	7	23	10
District 1 (CA 4)	49	1	17	85	NR	10	4
District 2 (CA 7)	61	4	21	79	NR	11	9
District 3 (CA 3)	60	11	21	77	2	15	6
District 4 (CA 1)	52	6	16	86	NR	10	4
District 5 (CA 5)	54	0	28	92	1	1	6
District 6 (CA 7)	70	13	20	58	3	24	15
District 7 (CA 3)	42	8	25	71	NR	26	3
District 8 (CA 1)	40	3	14	85	NR	8	7

Note. Data from the 2024 Kansas State Department of Education Report Card. CA = Catchment Area; NR = Not Reported.

Classroom Observations

The research team completed a total of 72 classroom observations with 10 schools, including 7 elementary schools, 2 middle schools, and 1 high school. These schools were from 5 of the 7 KBOR-identified catchment areas, as shown above. Among these observations, 51 took place in elementary classrooms, 15 in middle school classrooms, and 6 in high school classrooms. The observations involved 40 teachers and 862 students PreK-12. These observations provide a representative and diverse sample of real-world literacy teaching practices.

Table 2

Classroom Observation Participants by School Level

School Level	Number of Schools	Number of Classes	Number of Teachers	Number of Students
Elementary School	7	51	31	574
Middle School	2	15	7	244
High School	1	6	2	44
Total	10	72	40	862

Observation data from classroom visits indicated several trends in frequency of topics from Scarborough's Reading Rope addressed during classroom instruction. The top three literacy areas of focus across all classroom observations were phonics, phonemic awareness, and writing. The bottom three areas of focus across all observations were word study, fluency, and discussion-based interactions. Observation data were limited by the timing of observations within a class period or school day, as well as specific school factors.

Literary Areas of Focus Across All Classroom Observations

Top 3
- Phonics
- Phonemic Awareness
- Writing

Bottom 3
- Word Study
- Fluency
- Discussion-based Interactions

Focus Groups

In 2025, the research team collected data from 22 focus group interviews across 9 schools, including 8 educator groups, 6 parent groups, 7 student groups, and 1 combined parent–student group. The educator focus group questions addressed literacy instruction, resources, implementation barriers, intervention scheduling, and student needs. The family focus group session addressed literacy supports available to families and students, as well as additional supports desired. Questions for student focus groups addressed their experiences with literacy development.

Key findings from **Educator** focus groups:

1. There is limited capacity for professional learning, due to lack of classroom coverage (substitute availability), poor organization, and poor planning of professional learning opportunities.
2. Teachers want more professional learning opportunities focused on supporting the practical application of their learning in professional development sessions.
3. Teachers want student materials to support summer reading programs.
4. Teachers have inequitable amounts of time for planning, ranging from zero minutes to multiple hours per day.

Key findings from **Family** focus groups:

1. Families desire earlier identification of their children's literacy needs.
2. Families reported that school interventions did not fully meet the needs of their children with reading disabilities.
3. Families Identified a lack of interest in reading as a challenge for children without disabilities.
4. Families requested more support for grammar and vocabulary development.
5. Families emphasized the importance of children's interest in reading and provided suggestions for improving reading interest.
6. Families expressed concern that teachers do not have enough resources.

Families emphasized the importance of children's interest in reading and expressed concern that teachers do not have enough resources to meet the needs of all students.

Key findings from **Student** focus groups:

1. Students shared reading preferences and perspectives on reading and writing specifically.
2. Students mentioned specific games and apps as enjoyable ways to learn words.
3. Students discussed needing more support in reading and writing, such as one-on-one support, more teachers, and extra class time.

Washburn University Pilot Foundations Course with Coaching

Researchers worked in partnership with Dr. Carolyn Carlson, Professor and instructor for the Pilot Foundations of Science of Reading course at Washburn University. Dr. Carlson provided data from the course of pre- and post-knowledge assessments for each module, a self-efficacy survey, and a comprehensive, externally validated pre- and post- assessment for the two courses. Each educator in the course also engaged one-on-one with a virtual literacy coach. Seven coaches individually scheduled coaching sessions with teachers to set goals for their instructional practice and collect and track data pursuant to their goals. Coaches and teachers met 4-6 times per course, for a total of 8-12 times per teacher over the two courses. Coaches logged activities in researcher-created coaching logs and met as a group once per month to troubleshoot any technical difficulties, as well as to share and work through problems of practice.

In total, 7 coaches facilitated 350 coaching sessions with 35 educators for a total of 8,533 minutes. Goals focused primarily on assessment, phonics and spelling instruction, and vocabulary instruction.

> Pilot Foundations Course coaches facilitated 350 coaching sessions for a total of 8,533 minutes focused primarily on assessment, phonics, spelling, and vocabulary instruction.

Introduction

Within the last several years in the U.S., concerns about student literacy outcomes and equitable access to high-quality literacy instruction have surged. Most acknowledge that literacy challenges are the result of an abundantly complex, multi-systemic structure, a structure which radiates outward from a child to their family, teacher, school, district, community, and the systems that educate and support each of those influential entities. Therefore, it stands to reason that "fixing literacy problems" requires an equally complex, multi-systemic solution.

Kansans, like others in the U.S., have become increasingly concerned in recent years about literacy outcomes for PreK-12 students. Annual state accountability assessments indicate that only about one-third of Kansas students are reading at or above designated proficiency levels. While annual accountability assessments are designed primarily to inform programmatic decisions and should serve only as a portion of the picture of an individual child's literacy skills, The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), locally administered benchmark assessments, and progress monitoring assessments also show some concerning trends for PreK-12 literacy in Kansas.

Kansas has taken some positive steps toward addressing its literacy challenge. A recent policy brief on the state of evidence-based literacy policies targeting educators reveals that Kansas recognizes the need to provide educator support and has taken action to implement literacy-focused support for educators. The state scored a 10/12 on measures of policy and funding for literacy efforts for educators in preparation, and a 14/17 on measures of policy and funding for educators in practice (Papineau et al., 2025). The actions reflected in this brief are certainly a start for Kansans to begin addressing their multi-systemic literacy challenges. It is also a recognition that "high-quality reading instruction matters, and policies that support not only evidence-based literacy instruction but also funding to sustain the use of evidence-based literacy practices and promote teacher knowledge are essential to improving literacy rates" (Papineau et al., 2025, p. 189).

A less promising picture for Kansas was recently revealed in a report from the Annenberg Institute's Research Partnership for Professional Learning. The October 2025 report titled

The Cost of Improvement: How Districts Spend on Teacher Professional Learning showed that even with cost-of-living adjustments, Kansas ranks last in the country on professional learning spending per teacher (Boluslav, et al., 2025). The report provides detailed information about district professional learning spending across the U.S., as well as statewide data. A quick calculation of average percent change in spending on professional learning from 2014-2022 reveals that across a five-district sample of largest, smallest, and medium-sized districts in Kansas, spending on professional learning has increased in the reported eight-year span of time, by 11.2% in the largest districts, 114% in the smallest districts, and 3.6% in medium-sized districts. More exhaustive calculations would certainly reveal other trends in these data, but at minimum, they may indicate that even though Kansas currently occupies the lowest rank in the nation when it comes to spending on professional learning, the upward trend suggests that Kansas leaders may be open to investing more dollars in teacher learning in the future.

Context and Rationale

During the 2024 Kansas State Legislative Session, Governor Laura Kelly signed into law Senate Bill 438, which provided funding to the Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR) to establish an Office of Literacy, a Literacy Advisory Council, and to carry out activities focused on improving literacy outcomes for PreK-12 students by implementing several targeted initiatives. Some of these initiatives focused on reforms to literacy education for educators and educators in practice, and some focused on the provision of additional services and supports for Kansas families and students.

The KBOR Office of Literacy initiated a contract with the Center for Research on Learning at The University of Kansas (KUCRL) to conduct research to inform the development, validation, and evaluation of tools and resources that would become part of the KBOR Literacy Institute and Institute of Higher Education Literacy Center services and resources.

During the 2025 Kansas State Legislative Session, state legislators did not advance funding for the Blueprint for Literacy. However, it was determined that to work toward continued future funding, the research that was underway should continue. Beginning October 2024, the research team engaged educators, students, and families to conduct extensive research and development work to gain insights about PreK-12 literacy through varied lenses: Kansas PreK-12 educators, Kansas families, Kansas students, U.S. higher education literacy instructors, and U.S. literacy experts.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this work is necessarily multi-pronged, to capture the vast scope and reach of the KBOR Office of Literacy's charge. Efforts to improve PreK-12 literacy outcomes must address educator preparation, PreK-12 instruction, family resources and support, and broad educational systems at all levels. Therefore, research and development work thus far has also been multi-pronged, with a vast scope and reach. Efforts thus far have included:

- Data collection and initial analysis to validate an **infrastructure tool** to analyze education systems' capacity to implement structured literacy
- Data collection and initial analysis to validate a pre-service educator literacy **performance assessment**
- Data collection and analysis as part of a **statewide needs assessment** consisting of classroom observations and focus groups with educators, students, and families
- Data collection and analysis of a **pilot Foundations of Science of Reading Course** for PreK-12 educators

What follows are descriptions of methods, participants, key findings, and recommendations from each of the four research and development efforts listed above.

Assessment Tool Validation and Procedure

The research team validated two assessment tools. One was the Infrastructure Readiness Survey, which is the source of the Infrastructure Profiler Tool; the other was the structured literacy lesson plan used as the tool for assessing pre-service educators' performance in structured literacy. The validation process for both tools consisted of the same two steps— expert review and cognitive interview. The first step—expert review—aims to collect validity evidence based on content of the tool. In this step, experts were invited to independently review the assessment tool and provide their feedback on the consistency of the tool and the construct (i.e., readiness for implementing a new practice in professional development and student performance in structured literacy). Researchers prepared an expert review guide for experts to use in their reviews of the assessment tool. The guide instructed them to provide percentage ratings (0-100%) on the alignment between the tool and the construct and the clarity of the tool. It also contained more open-ended questions, such as "Do all the questions inform a K-12 school's readiness for implementing a new practice related to professional development?", "Does using pre-service teachers' lesson plan accurately assess their performance in structured literacy? If not, what else should be considered?" (see Appendix A and B for Expert Review Guide Sample Questions). Researchers exchanged emails with the experts about the expert reviews and compiled their responses in one document.

After expert review, the research team conducted cognitive interviews with experts who used the assessment tool or who are the targeted population using the assessment tool. This step aimed to understand the cognitive processes engaged in using the tool and examine whether participants' interpretations of the tool align with the construct being measured, thus providing validity evidence based on response processes of the tool. All interviews were conducted on Zoom in a semi-structured format. Participants were asked to read through the tool and provide feedback about each element of the tool and their suggestions for improving the tool (see Appendices A and B for sample interview questions). When analyzing the data collected from the two steps, the research team used descriptive statistics to analyze the percentages provided by the experts. For qualitative data collected from written responses and interviews, the research team used thematic analysis to summarize the main ideas. To ensure the credibility of the qualitative data analysis, two graduate research assistants and one researcher coded and cross-validated the data. All experts who participated in validation were compensated for their time.

Infrastructure Profiler Tool Validation

Description

To address a need for systematic, job-embedded follow-up support for teachers learning new instructional reform initiatives and innovations, CRL researchers have been developing the Adaptive Professional Learning Model (APLM) for the past five years through a cooperative agreement from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Program. The APLM tools and processes are housed in the APLM-Online, a dashboard for administrators, PD providers, instructional coaches, and teachers. One of several APLM tools is the Infrastructure Profiler Tool consisting of the Infrastructure Readiness Survey and Infrastructure Profile. Initial uses of and validation steps for the Infrastructure Profiler Tool focused on evidenced-based writing instruction and assessment for teachers of students with disabilities that affect writing performance. With KBOR funding, the Infrastructure Profiler Tool has been modified for use with schools focused on structured literacy (science of reading), and the validation process has expanded and will continue to do so, including reliability testing.

The Infrastructure Readiness Survey gathers input from educators in order to drive decision making about professional learning and classroom implementation of structured literacy practices. Thus, teachers who are responsible for literacy instruction, school administrators, and any existing onsite coaches take the Infrastructure Readiness Survey. The survey has approximately 36 questions (depending on branching), addressing three areas of infrastructure: PD, instructional coaching, and instructional practices. Eight of the 36 questions prompt yes, no, or "it depends" answers. Twenty-eight of the 36 questions use a 5-point Likert scale that, depending on the context of the question stem, offers response choices with varied ratings such as "significant negative influence" to "significant positive influence", "highly ineffective" to "highly effective", and "very limited" to "very strong." Some questions ask participants to provide an estimate from a range of choices for how often an activity takes place in minutes or percentages.

Infrastructure Readiness Survey output is the school's (or system's) Infrastructure Profile. The profile is a visual depiction of a system's resources, processes, and personnel to support professional development, coaching, and classroom instruction of structured literacy. Figure 2 shows the combined results from schools participating in the statewide literacy needs assessment. Their surveys are informing the ongoing tool validation and reliability process. As a point of interest, preliminary results show that participating schools have "emerging" infrastructure for almost all aspects of their collective profile with one exception—their infrastructure to support a process for coaching falls into the "needs attention" range.

In the coming year, the Infrastructure Readiness Survey and profiler tool will continue through additional rounds of validation and reliability and validity data will be gathered for use by K-12 schools in Kansas. Future use of the results of the infrastructure profile will include four planning guides to prepare for intensifying a focus on structured literacy as well as interactive coaching tools with tailored reports and views for teachers, coaches, and administrators.

Figure 2

Combined Infrastructure Profile of Schools Participating in the KS Literacy Needs Assessment
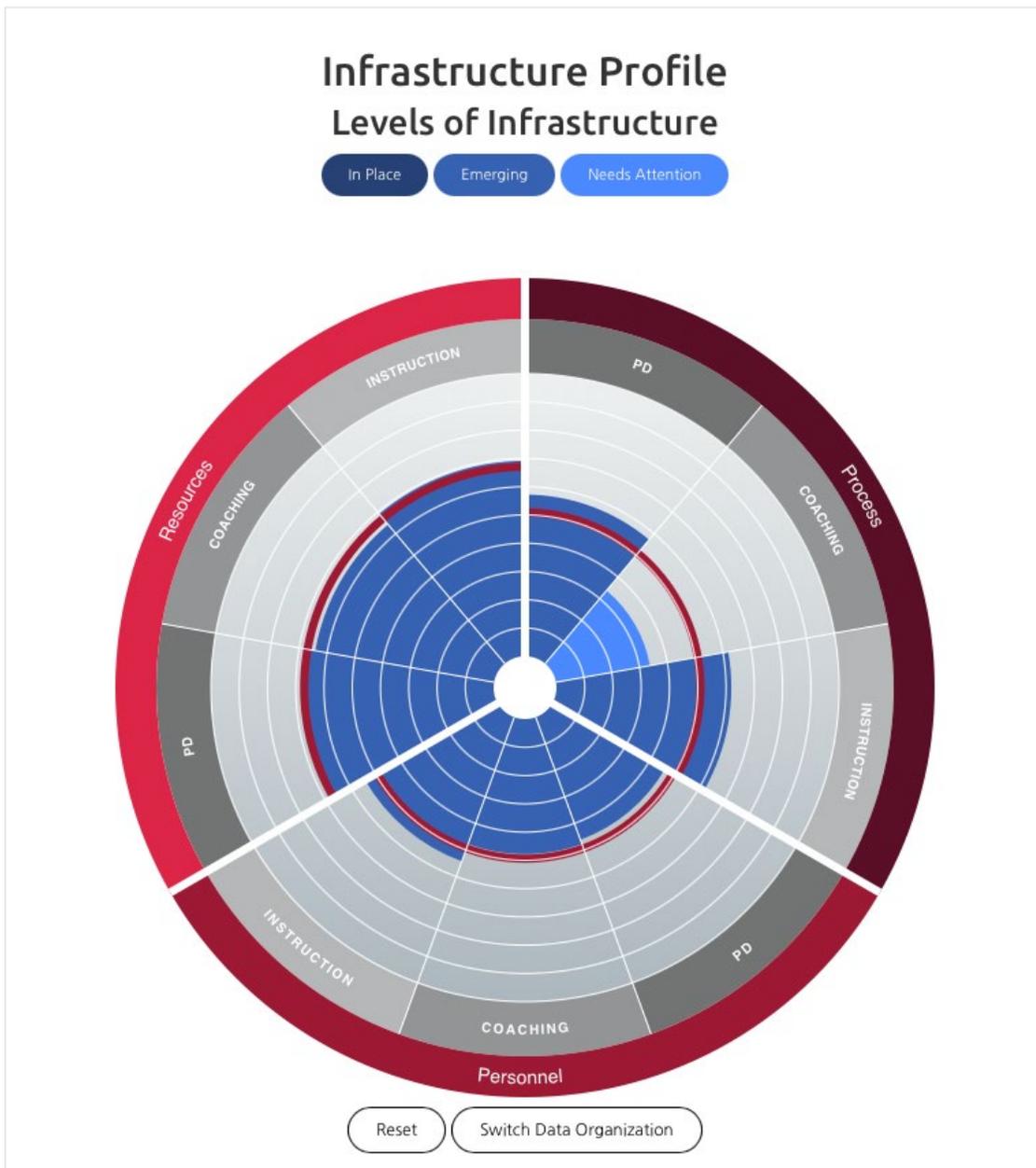
Below we provide details about participants, key findings, and recommendations related to the validation of Infrastructure Readiness Scale.

Participants

A total of 12 experts participated in the two-step validation process. There were six experts who provided expert reviews. Three of them held PhD or EdD degrees, three were nationally renowned literacy consultants, three worked as curriculum or literacy coordinators at school districts, and four worked outside Kansas. Another six school staff from a Kansas elementary school, including four teachers at different grade levels, an instructional coach, and a principal, participated in cognitive interviews.

Key Findings

The average percentages provided by experts ranged between 79% and 100%, with an overall mean across all questions being 95.84% and the standard deviation being 13.73% (see Appendix A). This indicated that all experts rated high the validity evidence based on scale contents. The questions that were assigned the lowest average percentage included questions related to teachers' experience supporting explicit instruction of literacy skills relative to standards for student population and amount of professional development available to teachers.

During each of the two steps, the experts observed some level of confusion in the questions asking teachers' personal experience regarding their readiness for implementing new practices at schools or asking teachers' perceptions or thoughts about their school's readiness. This confusion was largely from the wording in the questions as some asked about the happenings in a classroom while others asked about those in the school. Additionally, some teachers may not know much about what is going on at schools but can clearly articulate what is happening in their classroom. Experts provided lots of feedback on specific wordings in each question or statement on the scale. For example, experts suggested the survey use "observations of other teachers" to replace "teacher-to-teacher peer observation" in a question. They also suggested the survey use frequency rather than wording like "significant positive influence" as the response option of a question (see Appendix A for some feedback from experts at two steps). Experts also suggested more questions to be included in the survey, such as questions about the school administrator's communication related to professional development prior to delivery and their expectations regarding the implementation of the new practices, questions on the process for the teacher to refer a student to special program or intervention, and questions about the resources that can support teachers in teaching and meeting their students' literacy needs.

Recommendations

- Create two surveys: one specifically tailored to teacher's personal experiences of implementing a new practice or a PD at schools; the other survey for instructional coaches or school administrators about how they think their teachers' readiness for implementing a new practice or a PD.
- Focus on aspects that are objective as the response options. For instance, it may be easier for respondents to indicate how often they do something than to indicate whether something has a positive or negative influence.
- Provide a clearer description of some terminologies in the questions. For instance, what does a professional learning community refer to?
- Rethink some questions and their purposes to ensure they align with the readiness and structured literacy. Remove questions that may not be closely related to the readiness.

Performance Assessment Validation

Description

In response to the Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR) requirement of assessing pre-service educators' performance of structured literacy, faculty from each of the seven public institutions was tasked with developing a performance assessment for use in literacy courses in pre-service educator programs. The group altogether created a structured literacy lesson plan grounded in the elements and principles of structured literacy as outlined by the International Dyslexia Association (IDA), with a focus on explicit, systematic, and multisensory instruction. Additionally, they developed a rubric to assess both the integration of structured literacy principles and the level of proficiency with each element of the lesson plan. To facilitate student learning, the group also provided an example lesson plan. The performance assessment, the rubric, and the example lesson plan (see Appendix B) have been used by instructors in Science of Reading I and II courses for junior and senior pre-service educators in elementary education majors. Below we provide details about participants, key findings, and recommendations related to the validation of the structure literacy lesson plan.

Participants

A total of 7 literacy experts participated in the first two steps of validation process—expert review and cognitive interviews. Three experts provided feedback in expert review, including 1 professor at a Kansas university who has never used the performance tool in their classes, 1 practitioner working at a Kansas school district, and 1 practitioner working as a national

literacy consultant. Four experts participated in cognitive interviews, who all worked at different Kansas universities and used the performance assessment tool in their pre-service educator courses. Three of them were faculty members at different ranks, and one was an assistant educator at a teacher apprentice program.

Key findings

Expert Review

The ratings provided by three experts across each focus area and sub-areas ranged from 56.67% to 100%, with an average rating of 76.12% and a standard deviation of 20.14% (see Appendix B). This reflects that experts assigned moderate ratings to the tool's validity in assessing pre-service educators' performance in structured literacy. The focus areas and sub-areas that received the lowest ratings were from overall focus areas of written expression and vocabulary, syntax tasks, writing instruction, and vocabulary tasks.

In their written responses, experts highlighted several strengths of the lesson plan's foundation and recommended targeted enhancements, such as clearer integration of structured literacy principles, stronger alignment with assessment data, expanded scaffolding and multimodal instruction, and greater adaptability for diverse learners, small-group instruction, and multiple grade levels. However, experts noted several issues with the lesson plan: 1) there is a missing connection between some single focus areas or sub-areas, such as phonics and syllable tasks, and reading a whole text or authentic reading and writing contexts; 2) some focus areas, such as written expression and comprehension, would benefit from more details than is

The experts highlighted several strengths of the lesson plan's foundation and recommended targeted enhancements, such as clearer integration of structured literacy principles, stronger alignment with assessment data, expanded scaffolding and multimodal instruction, and greater adaptability for diverse learners, small-group instruction, and multiple grade levels.

currently required in the lesson plan. In other words, experts believed that the current structure of the lesson plan offers limited guidance for pre-service educators on how to teach these focus areas effectively; 3) explicit instructional expectations are missing from the lesson plan, which specify components such as modeling, guided practice, independent practice, feedback, sufficient opportunities to respond, review, and activation of background knowledge; 4) though the lesson plan includes assessments, it does not require details about when and how assessments are used during instruction; 5) the lesson plan misses providing opportunities for students to apply the literacy skills in real reading or writing tasks with decodable, controlled, or authentic texts to strengthen instructional coherence; 6) the lesson plan needs to allow to incorporate multi-model instructional elements and articulate learning progressions; and 7) a lesson plan only may not fully capture pre-service educators' performance in structured literacy, and incorporating additional performance tools, such as video-recorded teaching sessions and in-class modeling, may be more effective.

For the lesson plan rubric, the average expert rating across all elements of the rubric was 67.79% with a standard deviation of 12.67% (see Appendix B), showing a moderate rating of the validity of the rubric assessing pre-service educators' performance in structured literacy. In their written feedback, experts indicated that clarification is needed for some descriptions in the rubric, such as what constitutes "high-quality" materials and the differences between the levels of "Approaches Expectations" and "Below Expectations". They also emphasized the importance of ensuring the rubric's diagnostic and responsive use and suggested adding another level of "Exceeds Expectation".

Cognitive Interview

The four faculty members who used the lesson plan and rubric in their classes provided feedback on how to improve them. With regard to the lesson plan, all experts agreed that it and its rubric are effective for a statewide initiative. Some experts mentioned that the lesson plan develops pre-service educators' ability to be creative by creating something from scratch. Other experts also thought that the lesson plan is adaptable to students with diverse needs. However, experts mentioned that the lesson plan is complex and the required template is a burden to pre-service educators' cognition, thus it is not as productive as it is expected to be. Some experts thought that the lesson plan did not work well because it required pre-service educators to write a lesson plan for an imaginary class who they had never taught. Additionally, they were concerned that the current template was too rigid to meet the needs of students with diverse needs and that the lesson plan was just a product and did not show the thinking process of pre-service educators as they were making a lesson plan.

> **Experts emphasized the importance of pre-service educators' high-frequency, long-term engagement with the lesson plan.**

All experts provided several suggestions for improving the lesson plan (see Table 3). They suggested breaking it into smaller components and teaching these components throughout the semester. In some classes, pre-service educators were asked to develop individual mini lesson plans aligned with each class module, which were later compiled into a comprehensive final lesson plan. Experts emphasized the importance of pre-service educators' high-frequency, long-term engagement with the lesson plan. They also suggested adding contextual details, such as student characteristics in the class and clear class goals at the beginning of the lesson plan.

Experts also provided suggestions for improving the rubric. Some noted that the existing levels do not adequately capture the uneven performances of pre-service educators across components in the lesson plan. A student, for example, might demonstrate strong skills in word study, spelling, and written expression while showing weaker performance in other components (e.g., fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension). Consistent with what was found in expert reviews, experts also suggested adding a fifth category, "Exceeds Expectations," in the rubric so that pre-service educators who provide more detailed and comprehensive lesson plans can be awarded higher scores. Additionally, experts proposed supplementing the current lesson plan as the performance assessment tool with additional measures, such as immediate feedback from course instructors, exams that include real classroom scenarios such as Praxis exam, and teacher observation of pre-service educators' teaching based on the lesson plan.

Table 3

Experts' Feedback on Lesson Plan and Rubric during Cognitive Interview

Suggestions	Details
Lesson Plan	
Scaffolding	Breaking the lesson plan into smaller components and teaching them throughout the semester.
	Asking students to develop mini lesson plans in each module, which will be later compiled into a final lesson plan.
Priority	Placing greater emphasis on "vocabulary" and "comprehension".
Morphology	The "Morphology for older" under focus area of word study/coding is also relevant to younger learners and could be addressed in both word study/coding and vocabulary focus areas.
Length	90-minute length of the lesson plan is too lengthy for some contexts, such as K-2 students.
Instruction	Allowing pre-service educators to select a text or scenario as the foundation for developing their lesson plan.
	Including contextual details and clear goals at the beginning of the lesson plan.
Rubric	
Levels	The current four assessment levels ("Meets Expectations," "Approaches Expectations," "Below Expectations," and "Missing") require revision.
	Adding a fifth level of "Exceeds Expectations".
Others	
Supplement	Incorporating elements such as immediate feedback.
	Supplementing the lesson plan with additional measures, such as exams that include real classroom scenarios (e.g., Praxis), observation of pre-service educators' teaching based on lesson plans, and self-reflection of the thinking process.

Recommendations

- Include in the lesson plan a section that allows pre-service educators to demonstrate their performance in delivering the structured literacy lesson plan as a whole in real-world reading or writing contexts.
- Ask pre-service educators to report characteristics of the classrooms they are teaching and provide clear goals for the lesson at the beginning of the lesson plan.
- Include in the lesson plan explicit instructional expectations, require more details on assessments, incorporate multi-model instructional elements, and allow pre-service educators to articulate learning progressions.
- Allow more flexibility about the length and contents of the lesson plan, enabling pre-service educators to decide the length and contents of the lesson they work on.
- Complement the lesson plan, if any possible, by other ways of measuring pre-service educators' performance in structured literacy, such as Praxis exam score, class observation, videos of teaching based on the lesson plan, or a self-reflection on the thinking process of making the lesson plan.

STATEWIDE LITERACY INSTRUCTION AND RESOURCES NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The statewide needs assessment consisted of site visits in April, May, and September 2025. Prior to their site visit, educators completed the structured literacy infrastructure survey. During each visit, researchers visited classrooms during literacy instruction and completed a structured literacy observation checklist. While on site, researchers conducted separate focus groups with educators, students, and family members associated with each site. During the educator focus group, researchers shared the results of the infrastructure survey with the educators who had completed it. The primary focus of all focus groups was to capture participant insights about the state of literacy, as well as literacy needs, resources, and support within their school and community.

Across ten school sites in eight districts, researchers completed 144 individual observations with data from 72 classrooms. They were able to capture focus group interview data from 51 educators, 41 family members, and 49 students across all school sites. Our classroom observations were primarily completed in elementary schools, with 51 K-5 classrooms, 15 grades 6-8 classrooms, and 6 grades 9-12 classrooms. In all, researchers observed 862 students across grades PreK-12 (see Table 4). While this breakdown of classroom observations is certainly skewed toward younger grades, the research team believed the emphasis on elementary grades was fitting, considering the Blueprint's initial focus on elementary grades, supporting scholarships for PreK-6 teachers to complete their seal of literacy. The research team did, however, wish to include older grades in the needs assessment work because while they may not be the focus of the Blueprint's initial work, it is broadly understood that middle school and high school teachers and their students who are unable to read proficiently will ultimately need additional support, to which the Blueprint might be able to provide or contribute.

Table 4

Classrooms Observed by School Level

Building Level	No. Classrooms Observed
Elementary (PreK-5)	51
Middle (6-8)	15
High School (9-12)	6
Total	72

Procedures

The needs assessment was conducted in PreK–12 school districts located within five of seven designated catchment areas in Kansas, as outlined by the Blueprint for Literacy legislation. Researchers used a stratified sampling approach to ensure representation of schools with varying characteristics, including size, geographic location, and socioeconomic status. Participants included Kansas PreK–12 teachers, school administrators, literacy support staff, students, and parents and caregivers of enrolled students. Researchers contacted school district superintendents via email and phone and provided them with recruitment flyers to share with school leaders and educators. School staff assisted with recruitment of students and families. After researchers gathered informed consent, data were collected through an online survey, focus group interviews (on-site or via Zoom), and on-site classroom observations.

Data Collection

Data were collected from multiple sources: survey, observations, and focus group. First, participating teachers of literacy and their school administrators received the Structured Literacy Infrastructure Readiness Survey via Qualtrics. Next, researchers visited their school to conduct classroom observations. Classroom observations were conducted by the research team using a structured observation tool (see Appendix C). Each observation lasted between 10 and 30 minutes, and whenever possible, two observers were present in each classroom to document structured literacy elements and structured literacy teaching practices. During the school visit, researchers conducted focus group sessions separately with educators and students. When possible, focus group sessions were conducted with parents/caregivers after school; when not possible, they were conducted afterwards via Zoom. Focus group sessions were supported by printed questions, audio recordings, and facilitator notes. Focus group sessions lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes. The educator focus group questions focused on literacy instruction, resources, any barriers, literacy instruction and intervention scheduling, and student needs. The family focus group session focused on literacy supports available to families and students, as well as additional supports desired. Questions for the student focus groups asked about their experiences with literacy development (see Appendix C).

Data Analysis

Survey data were analyzed by calculating the frequency of responses for each question. Classroom observation data were organized by the frequency of observed components and

by grade level. Focus group transcripts underwent thematic analysis to identify codes and themes within and across participant groups of educators, students, and families. The analysis addressed several research questions, including:

- What structures and resources were most needed for teachers to implement structured literacy practices successfully?
- What barriers did schools encounter in implementing structured literacy?
- How were schools assessing literacy skills and using data to inform instruction?
- How did Kansas teachers use materials and resources to provide reading instruction at each grade level?
- What literacy supports did families need, and how did these differ by region?
- What supports do school systems most need to successfully implement structured literacy?

Key findings

Summary of Educator Survey Results

From the 10 participating schools, 53 educators (8 administrators, 35 general education teachers, 9 special education teachers or interventionists, and 1 coach; Figure 3) completed the Structured Literacy Infrastructure Readiness Survey. The following figures present a select set of responses that provide insight into educators' current perspectives on their needs for science-based literacy professional development, coaching, and classroom practice. Specifically, Figure 4 provides information about the types of literacy-focused programs or certificates educators have already experienced; most educators in the participating schools have some prior literacy background. Figure 5 shows that forty-five percent of schools or districts have personnel with science-based literacy preparation or certification who can provide PD, whereas the other half of schools or districts do not or are unsure if they do. Figure 6 shows that approximately half of educators perceive that their school or district has an adequate degree of funds allocated towards science-based literacy instructional materials.

Figure 3

Current Role
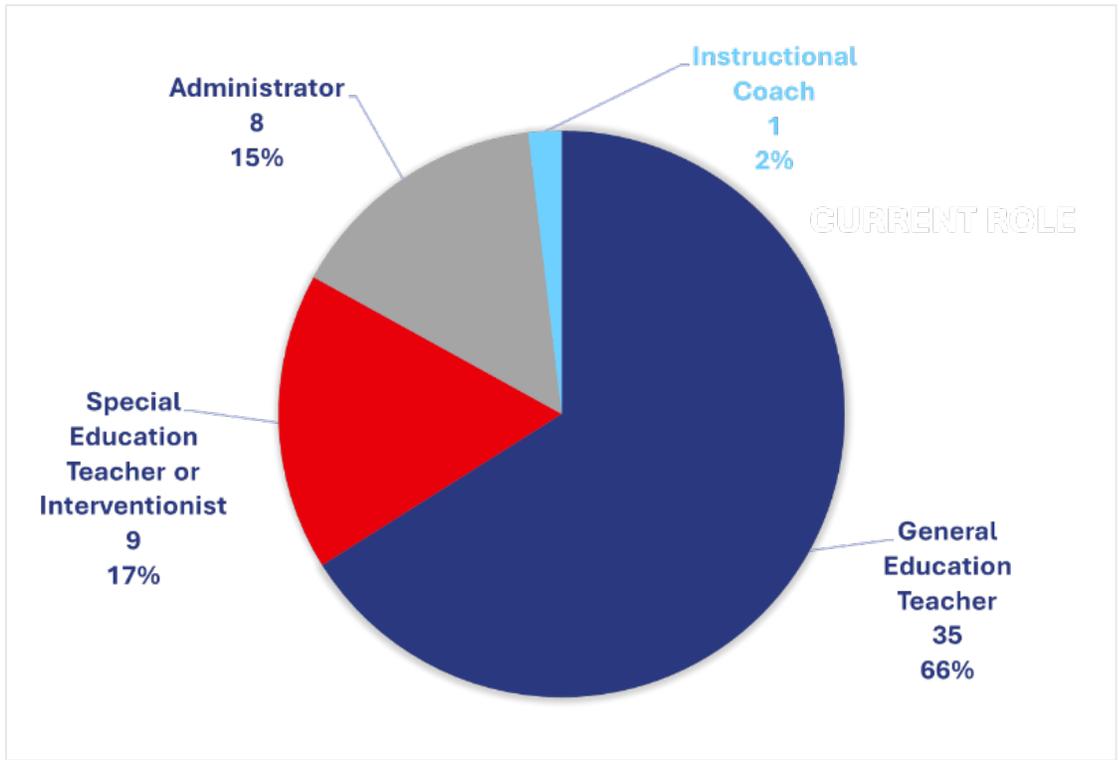
Figure 4

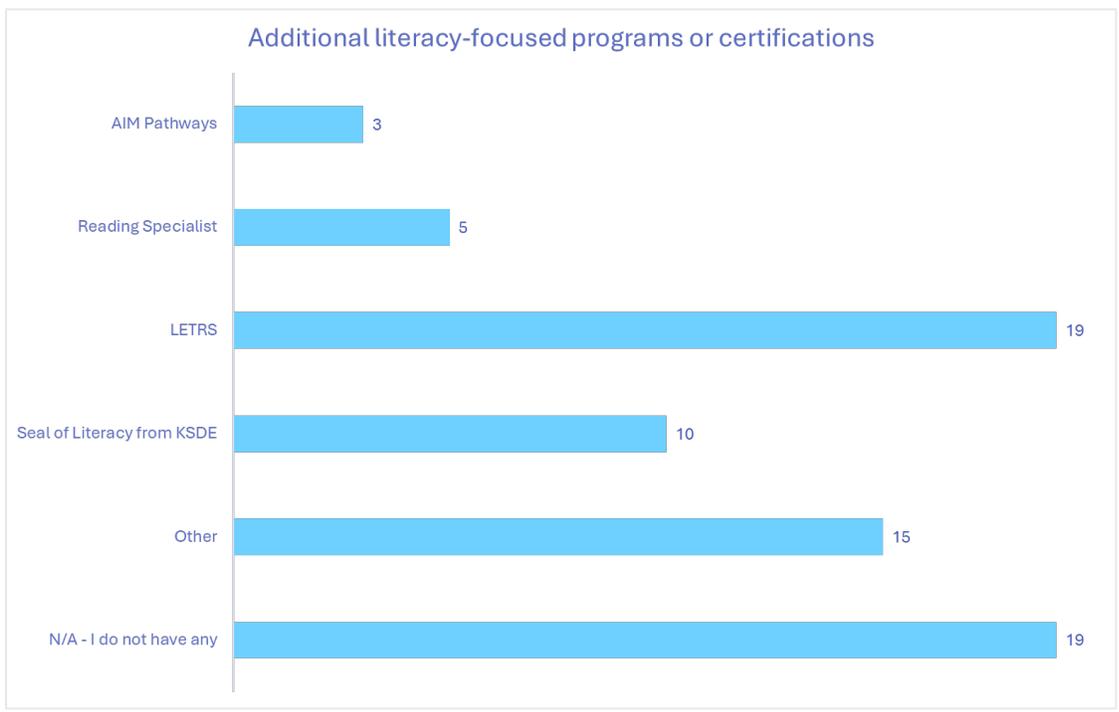*Literacy Focused Programs or Certifications*

Additional literacy-focused programs or certifications

AIM Pathways	3
Reading Specialist	5
LETRS	19
Seal of Literacy from KSDE	10
Other	15
N/A - I do not have any	19

Figure 5

School or District PD Providers with Literacy Preparation or Certification

Our school or district has personnel with science-based literacy preparation or certification who provide PD.

No 33%

Yes 45%

Unsure 22%
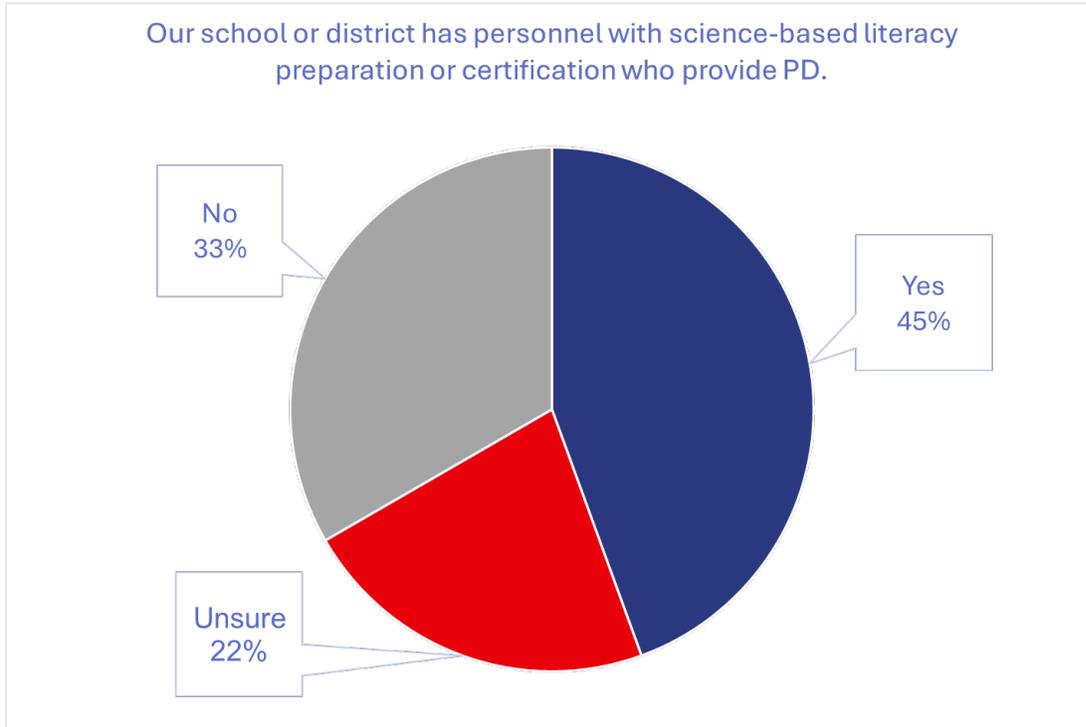
Figure 6

Degree Schools or Districts Allocate Funds for Literacy Materials

To what degree does your school or district allocate funds for science-based literacy instructional materials?

We have funds to purchase a few of the materials we need. 11%

We have funds to purchase all the materials we need. 33%

We have funds to purchase most of the materials we need. 56%
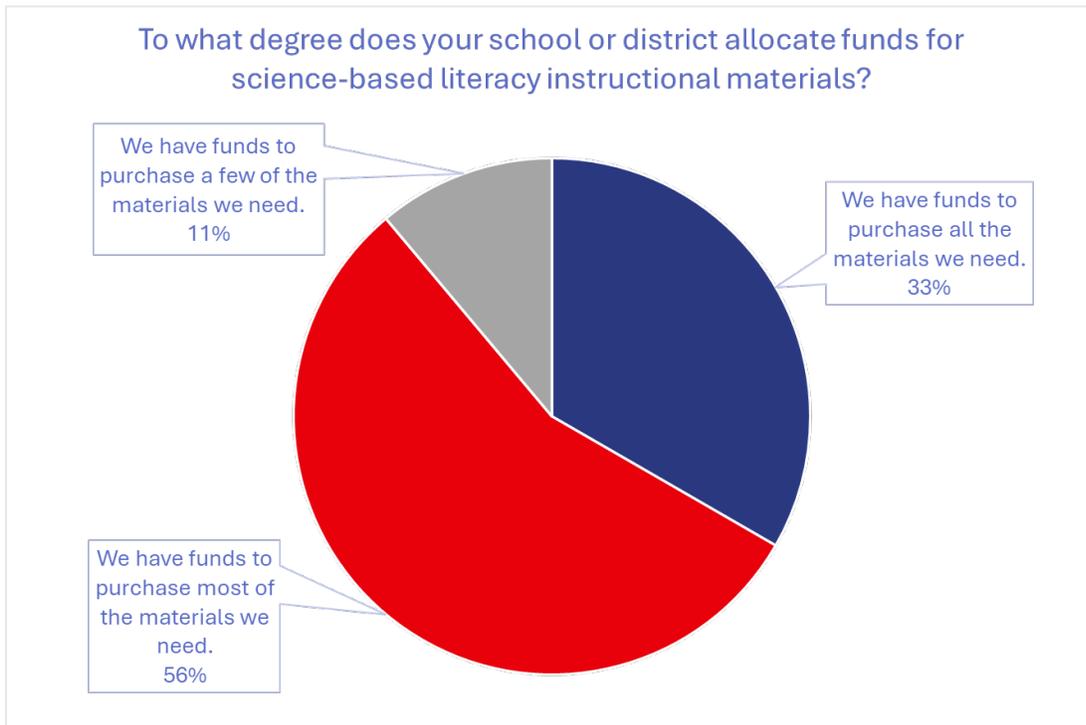
Figures 7-9 provide side-by-side comparisons of teacher and administrator views on three topics: (a) experience using a variety of literacy assessment tools and techniques (see Figure 7), (b) experience providing science-based literacy instruction (see Figure 8), and (c) experience adjusting instruction to meet varied student learning needs (see Figure 9). Most participating teachers and administrators perceive teachers are moderately or very experienced across all three areas.

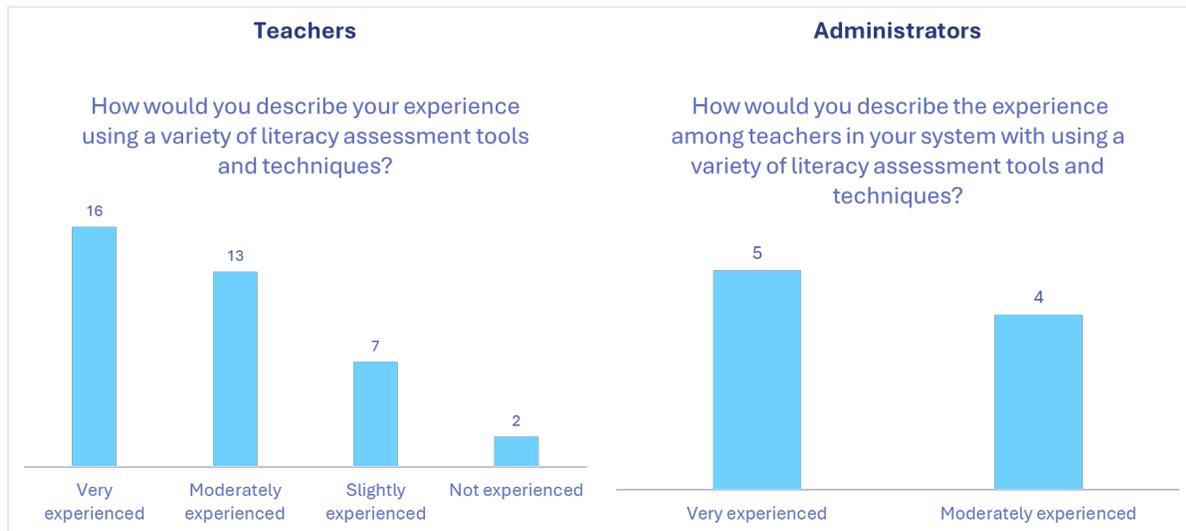**Figure 7**

Experience Using Literacy Assessment Tools

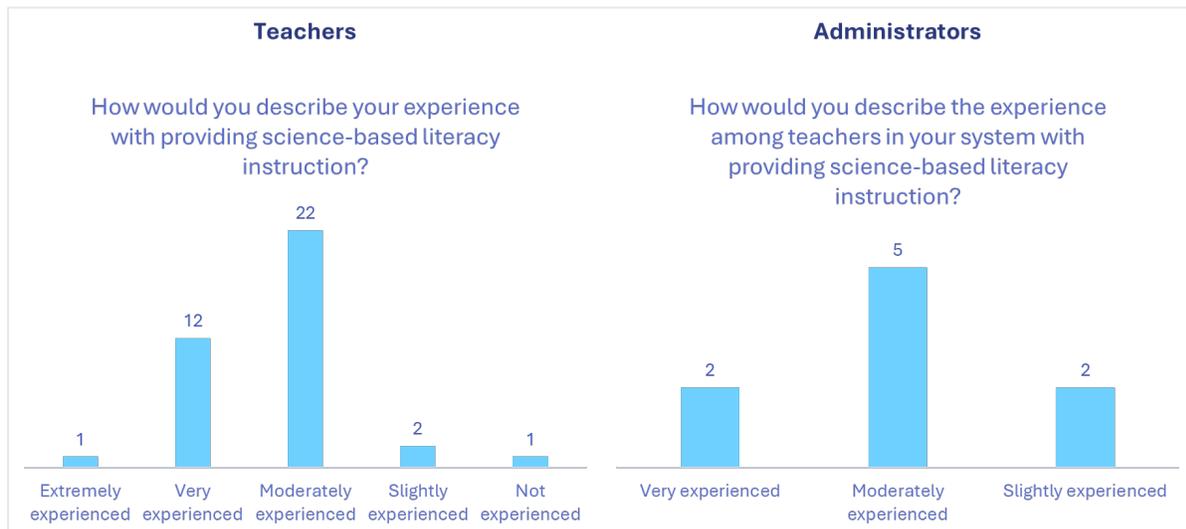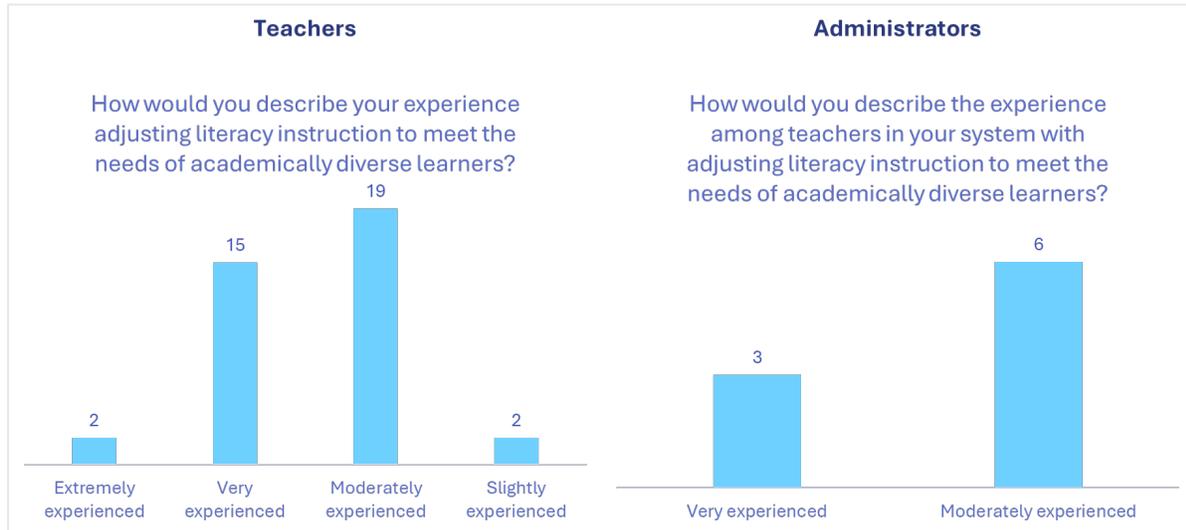**Figure 8**

Experience Providing Science-Based Literacy Instruction

Figure 9

Experience Adjusting Instruction to Meet Varied Student Learning Needs

Teachers

How would you describe your experience adjusting literacy instruction to meet the needs of academically diverse learners?

Extremely experienced	Very experienced	Moderately experienced	Slightly experienced
2	15	19	2

Administrators

How would you describe the experience among teachers in your system with adjusting literacy instruction to meet the needs of academically diverse learners?

| Very experienced	Moderately experienced
3	6

Classroom Observations

Classroom Context

The research team completed 72 classroom observations and documented 78 classroom contexts. A total of 6 classrooms were under more than one classroom context, mostly combining general education-single taught and general education with paraeducators. About half of the 72 classrooms were general education-single taught (*n* = 40), 23% of the classrooms were general education with paraeducators (*n* = 18), 18% of the classrooms were resource/intervention (*n* = 14), and 8% of the classrooms were general education, co-taught (*n* = 6; see Figure 10).

Figure 10

Classroom Context Across Three School Levels

| Classroom Context	Count	Percentage
General Education (single-taught)	40	(51%)
General Education (with paraeducators)	18	(23%)
Resource/intervention	14	(18%)
General Education (co-taught)	6	(8%)
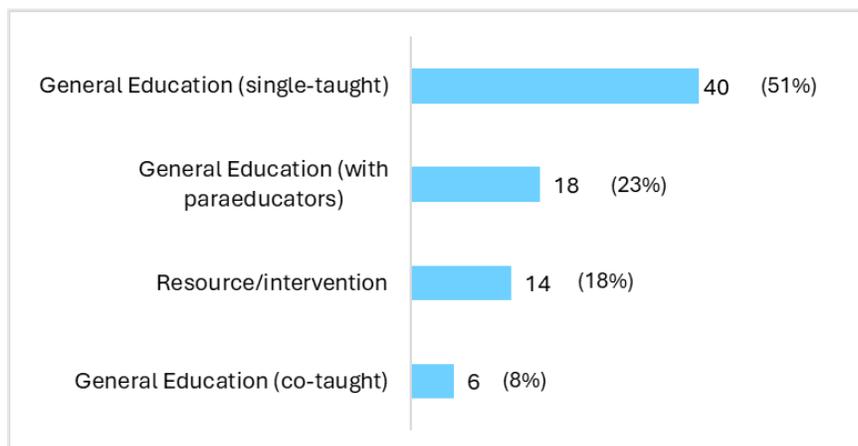
Note. The percentage was calculated based on a total of 78 classroom contexts.

Forms of Instructional Delivery

The research team collected 144 instructional delivery forms from 72 observed classrooms. A total of 63 classrooms employed more than one form of instructional delivery form. Figure 11 shows that teacher-delivered instruction was the most common form, being used in 43% of the classrooms (n = 62). Whole-group instruction was employed in a third of the classrooms (n = 48), while small-group instruction was observed in 14% of the classrooms (n = 19). Less frequently used forms included other instructional methods (n = 8, 6%), hybrid instruction (n = 5, 3%), and computer-based instruction (n = 2, 1%). These patterns suggest a strong reliance on traditional teacher- and whole-group–led forms of instructional delivery.

Figure 11

Forms of Instructional Delivery Across Three School Levels
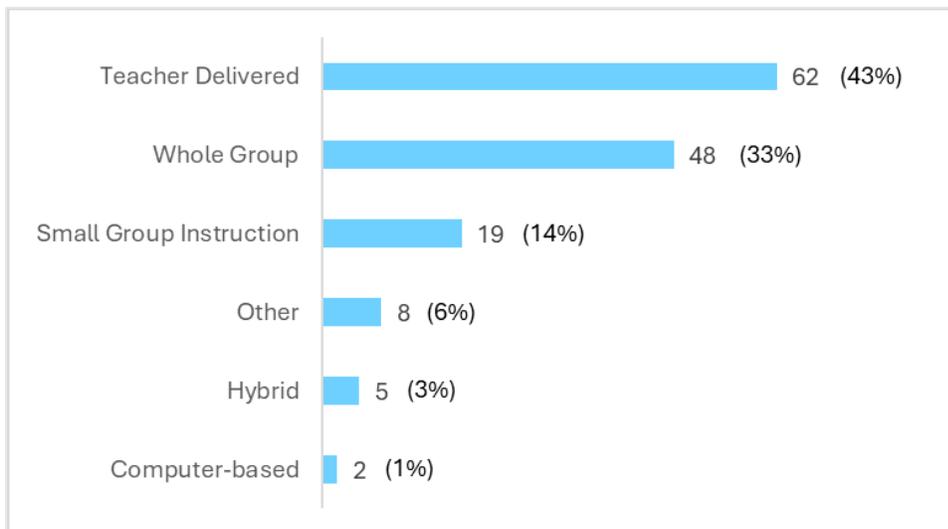
Note. The percentage was calculated based on a total of 144 responses.

Literacy Instructional Focus

Different school levels demonstrate distinct instructional focuses (see Figure 12). Elementary and middle school classrooms demonstrate a more similar pattern than elementary and high school classrooms, prioritizing fundamental literacy components such as phonics and phonemic awareness. However, elementary school classrooms also focus on writing, while middle school classrooms also focus on content/disciplinary literacy. In contrast, high school classrooms rely more on advanced literacy skills, such as comprehension and content/disciplinary literacy but did not cover much of the foundational literacy skills.

Figure 12

Literacy Instructional Focus Across Three School Levels
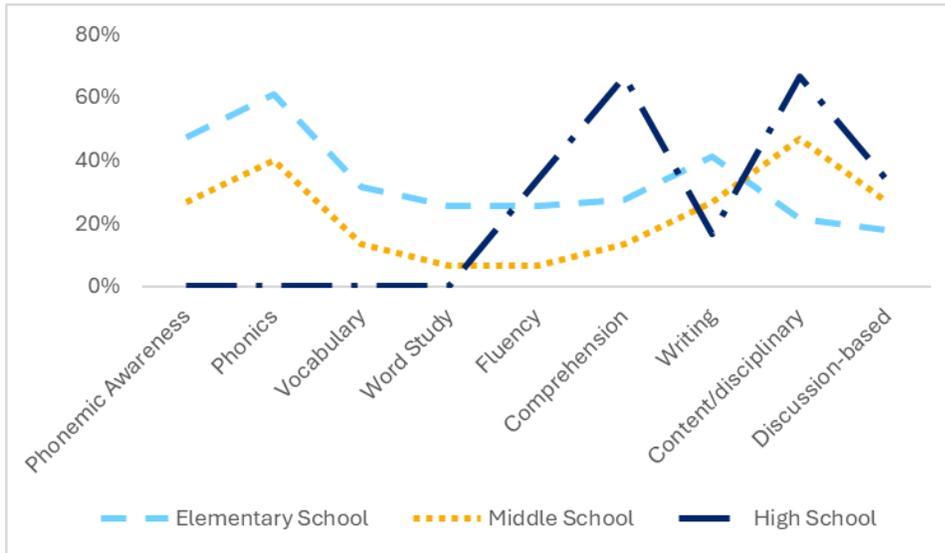
Explicit and Cumulative Instructional Practices

Overall, the automaticity principle was most widely observed instructional practice across all school levels, indicating that students of all ages were encouraged to think independently and actively participate in class activities (see Figure 13). The three school levels also demonstrate similar patterns of the use of the instructional practices, including the least frequently used post-organizer. However, middle school classrooms used these strategies less frequently than classrooms at other school levels.

Figure 13

Explicit and Cumulative Instructional Practices Across Three School Levels
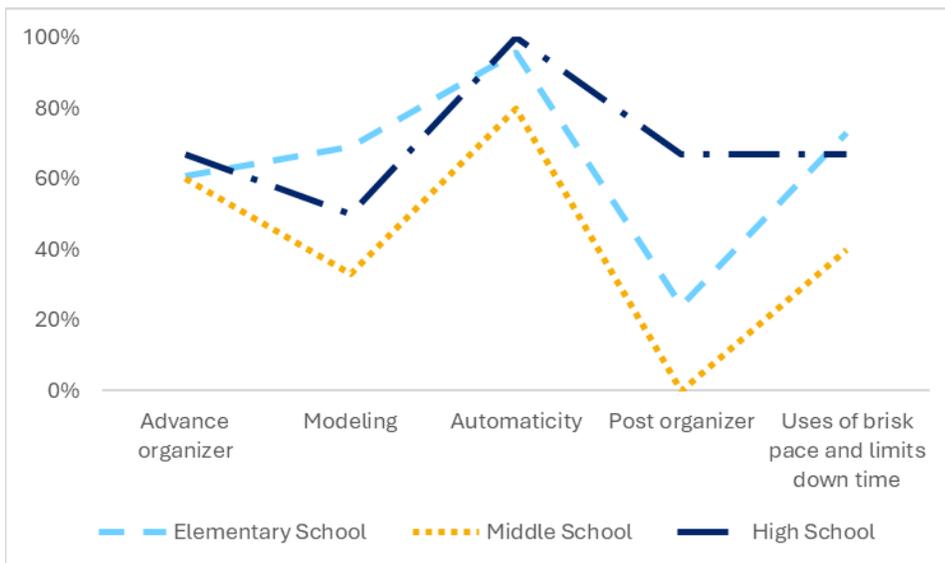
Systematic Instructional Practices

Overall, in the classrooms across the three school levels, systematic instructional practices, such as focusing on critical content, using clear signals throughout the lesson, and breaking instruction into manageable steps, were used more frequently, while other practices, such as using a range of examples and non-examples and addressing different forms of knowledge, were used less frequently (see Figure 14). Additionally, elementary school classrooms used all practices most frequently among the three school levels. Middle schools and high schools used the systematic practices in a similar pattern, except that middle schools used the practice of focusing on critical content and skills more frequently than high schools, and high schools used the practice of using a range of examples and non-examples slightly more frequently than middle schools.

Figure 14

Systematic Instructional Practices Across Three School Levels
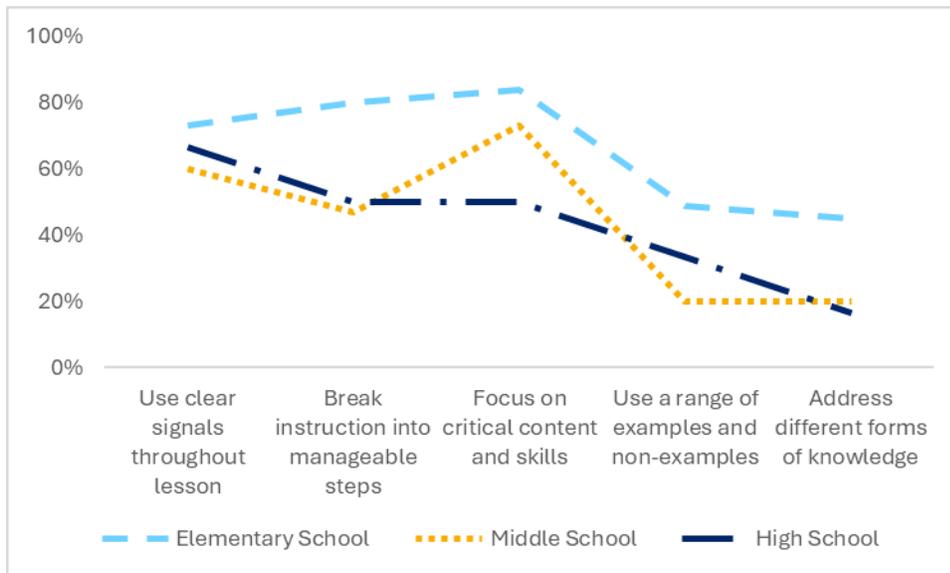
Assessment Practices

Overall, classrooms at all three school levels used the assessment practices of providing feedback to students and using formative assessments to monitor students' understanding most frequently (see Figure 15). High school classrooms used the practice of providing feedback to students more frequently than elementary and middle school classrooms, while classrooms across the three school levels implemented formative assessments and observable use of data at similar percentages. Further, elementary and middle schools provide students with multiple opportunities to respond more frequently than high schools.

Figure 15

Assessment Practices Across Three School Levels
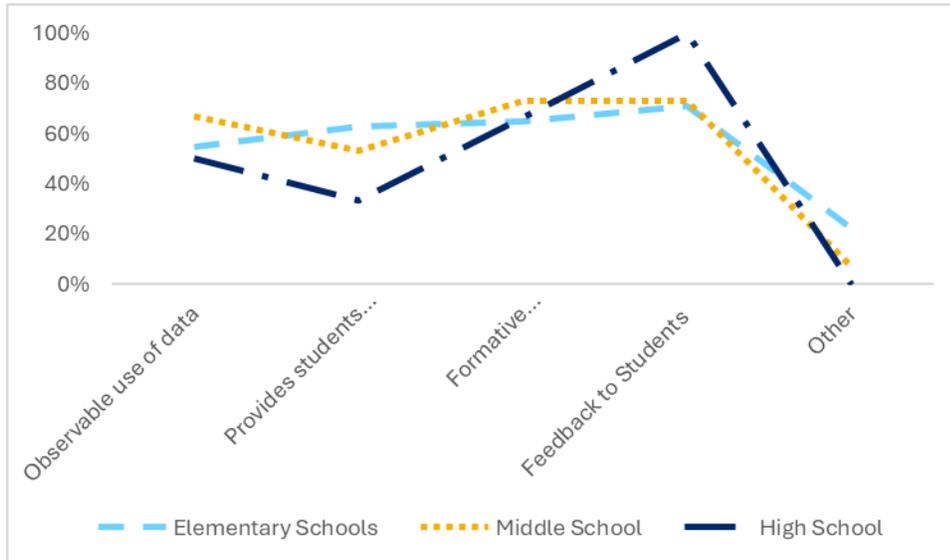
Focus Group

Overlapping Themes Across Three Groups

Across educators, students, and parents, several overlapping themes were observed. All groups emphasized the **importance of making good use of technology** while **remaining cautious about its potential drawbacks**. Parents expected that schools can provide readily accessible online resources. Both parents and students brought up digital tools like Lexia and Epic. While participants all agreed that AI tools could help improve students' grammar, they also expressed concerns about how AI might affect the originality of students' writing. Moreover, overreliance on digital tools may impair students' handwriting skills and ability to focus. Therefore, they suggested that **continued emphasis on pen-and-paper writing, cursive practice, reading physical books, and engaging in real-world conversations** remains essential.

All three groups **valued family literacy activities**. Some families reported intentionally limiting screen time to ensure sufficient time for reading. At the same time, educators expressed a desire for **increased parental engagement** through school-based activities, such as workshops, while they also described challenges in recruiting parents to participate in those activities. There was a shared call for **hiring more educators** and **offering greater support to those who are currently teaching**. Individualized support is critical to addressing diverse student needs, yet the shortage of educators remains a challenge. Parents expressed concerns that many educators lack adequate resources and often have to pay out of pocket for classroom supplies, books, and teaching tools.

Main Themes from Educator Focus Groups

There are two main themes of educators: resources and collaboration. Educators emphasized the need for **stronger principal leadership** to ensure a coordinated implementation of the Professional Development (PD) and Professional Learning (PL) activities. They expected **consistent support** such as built-in PD/PL hours and structured, high-quality training across generations of educators. One teacher shared,

> *I see the value of professional learning, but I don't know if everyone in the building sees it. On in-service days, all of the ELA teachers in the district get together, but we don't have any guidance on what we are supposed to be doing or tools. I believe that when we start it next year, it needs to be structured and we'll have to work on getting buy-in.*

They expressed a need for **curricula and evidence-based materials** to guide them on what a professional literacy educator would do across an entire instructional unit, from planning to implementation. They also highlighted **the importance of coaching**. Most schools, especially well-resourced schools, had coaches in the schools who observed classrooms, shared instructional tools, and participated in professional learning community meetings. However, some smaller schools had to rely on coaching services outside the schools, such as service centers.

COACHING

Most schools, especially well-resourced schools, had coaches in the schools who observed classrooms, shared instructional tools, and participated in professional learning community meetings. However, some smaller schools had to rely on coaching services outside the schools, such as service centers.

Educators further noted the **importance of learning how to use assessment data** from coaches. They referenced multiple assessment systems, including FastBridge, Crossbridge, and state-level assessments. While initial modeling videos/training from coaching were helpful, educators expressed a need for **ongoing, one-on-one feedback** in real classroom settings, especially related to meeting **diverse student needs** at different grade levels, including both high-performing and struggling students, with MTSS time dedicated to implementing tiered interventions.

Educators also raised concerns about **insufficient funding to hire more staff** and about engaging in-service educators in unrelated duties. A teacher noted,

> *We have limited capacity. Coaches have too many responsibilities.*
> *They're often pulled into subbing, lunch duty, or behavior coverage. While*
> *those are necessary, they don't support instruction directly. If we had*
> *more support staff, we could schedule more consistent PL.*

They also expressed **a desire for increased parental engagement** through school-based activities, such as workshops, while also describing **challenges in recruiting parents** to participate. They also emphasized the importance of **team collaboration and administrative support**. One teacher described,

> *We are all also friends outside of school, so I think that helps us a lot.*
> *Because we're able to share ideas a lot of times… We can talk about it at*
> *lunch, or we are talking about these things outside of the school day or*
> *outside of our PLC time.*

Main Themes from Family Focus Groups

Compared to educators and students, parents had limited knowledge of literacy development and little exposure to the classroom contexts, therefore, they **lacked a clear framework for supporting their children** and expected the school to provide **more targeted support for their children**, especially those with special needs, either with reading difficulties or gifted children. They emphasized the importance of one-on-one, personalized support, peer learning, and early intervention. A parent described their daughter's experience of accepting help,

> *My daughter was really struggling with reading in first grade. She was*
> *behind, and we went to the second semester of parent teacher*
> *conference, and they said, 'she's struggling, we could have her tested.'*
> *We said fine… So come to find out she had ADHD. I know it's a big stigma,*
> *but we decided pros and cons, it was better to have her on medication. It*
> *made a world of difference for her, she's still a couple levels behind*
> *classmates or peers, but at least she's caught up.*

However, they realized **the challenges faced in under-resourced and bilingual communities**, as one parent shared,

> *We also have a lot of poverty in our area, which impacts so many things. I know we have a lot of kids that translate for their parents, that brings its own set of struggles for those kids knowing things that they probably shouldn't know or be introduced to adult concepts, because they're advocating for their parents.*

Parents reported intentionally **limiting screen time** to ensure sufficient time for reading and expressed their willingness to **conduct literacy activities at home**.

Main Themes from Student Focus Groups

From the students' perspective, **interest in reading and writing** plays a key role. Although they view large books or lengthy textbooks overwhelming, they **enjoy reading graphic novels and mystery books**, adding illustrations, using verb songs to memorize new vocabulary, and creating their own stories. Students referenced **a range of authors and series**, including Percy Jackson, Raina Telgemeier, Mike Lupica, and Tim Green, as well as works such as *Harry Potter, Star War, Dog Man, Captain Underpants, and Bad Guys*. A student passionate about mystery fiction shared:

> *I'm more like a murder mystery, like crime, I like Nancy Drew, it piques my focus more... Usually someone's died or someone got murdered, I feel like I want to keep reading until I'm done and to figure out who it is like.*

Another student noted,

> *Writing is exciting because you never know what is going to come out of that pen.*

Students expressed a need for more **one-on-one, individualized support** from teachers and called for **more teachers in their classrooms**. One student shared that because their teacher offers frequent one-on-one help, they feel less dependent on technology or AI. Students mentioned their **use of digital tools**, such as Chromebooks, IXL, AR tests, ABC Mouse, Cleo and Theo, and Kahoot. They also shared the learning **activities with their parents,** including parent–child alternate reading, listening to audiobooks with parental support, daily reading, and reading time at church. Students noted that they are motivated for literacy by the combination of **interest, competition, and peer interactions**. They frequently mentioned other motivations, such as earning points, dragon dollars, toys, and comic cash for strong reading performance.

Table 5

Main Themes of Focus Groups

Themes	Details
Educators	
Resource	Top-down, built-in professional development hours; structured high-quality training across generations of educators; intentional practice following initial training
	Modeling curricula; evidence-based materials
	Money; hiring more teachers/coaches/substitutes; freeing in-service staff from unrelated duties
	More guidance on supporting both struggling students and gifted students; accommodations for vulnerable middle school students
Collaboration	Educating parents by offering knowledge about literacy development and providing literacy practice materials that they can use at home; Teacher-parent conferences; parent workshops
	Team collaboration and administrative support
Parents	
Resource	Digital resources
	Guidance for supporting both gifted and struggling children; Early intervention from language specialists or school psychologists; bilingual and under-resourced communities
Literacy Activities at Home	Screen time management
	Developing positive literacy habits; visiting libraries; identifying engaging books with children
Collaboration	Parent-teacher conference
Students	
Interest	Engaging reading materials and creative writing practices, e.g., reading mystery books and writing original stories
Resource	One-on-one, personalized support from teachers
	Effective use of digital tools, e.g., AI, apps
Collaboration	Parental engagement
	Connections with teachers facilitate student learning
	Communication with peers, such as storytelling groups and book recommendations

Recommendations

Educators may need to improve collaboration with professionals in inclusive classrooms. Given most classes observed were taught by a single general education teacher, with only 8% co-taught with a special educator and 23% supported by a paraeducator, the research team recommends schools increase opportunities for educators to collaborate in classroom settings. Similarly, teacher focus groups noted the need for collaboration within the school to coordinate literacy instruction. School administrators are influential decision-makers who can enable the context for successful collaboration by (a) structuring the master schedule to include co-planning time, (b) creating a master schedule that includes co-teaching, (c) coordinating with the special education department to include training for paraeducators, and (d) providing professional learning about collaborative behaviors (e.g., active listening, problem-solving) as well as how to co-plan, co-instruct, and co-assess to provide literacy instruction in inclusive classrooms (Aceves & Kennedy, 2024; Grissom et al., 2021).

Educators across all grade levels may need to increase their focus on vocabulary and word study instruction. Observation data for all grade bands revealed a dip in vocabulary and word study instruction. Vocabulary and word study are key components of knowledge-building for students and are a particularly important area of focus for students with disabilities, English Learners, and students with limited exposure to language in general (Gallagher et al., 2019). Educators could benefit from learning how to select appropriate words for deeper study, and different strategies for exploring and analyzing word parts and their meanings. Educators would also benefit from professional learning focused on word study and vocabulary building across all disciplines (Loiro & Woods, 2020).

Educators should routinely use cognitive and metacognitive strategy instruction. Overall, classroom observations showed that teachers across grade levels are generally not including examples and non-examples in their instruction nor addressing different forms of knowledge (i.e., declarative/factual, procedural/how, conditional/when & where). All students, particularly students with learning challenges, require examples and non-examples to help them categorize and distinguish simple to complex concepts and key details (Singleton & Filce, 2015). Examples and non-examples help clarify boundaries of concepts, reduce confusion, strengthen schema-building, and reduce cognitive load (Kennedy & Romig, 2021). Also, varied types of knowledge support different dimensions of learning (facts, skills, and judgement), and together they enable students to become independent, strategic thinkers. Teachers may benefit from professional learning that supports their integration of these specific elements of systematic instruction and practices in their lesson planning, implementation, and assessment of learning.

Schools need to add more robust implementation support for educators. As mentioned in a prior recommendation, the majority of observed classrooms were general education classrooms with a single educator providing instruction. While educators may be able to manage classrooms from moment to moment, being the sole educator for 20 students (or 150+ for a secondary educator) who each have different needs at different times in different areas is a significant ask for even an experienced teacher. Parent and educator focus groups shared that teachers need more support. Reviews of whole school models find that effective instruction depends heavily on school structures (Calderon et al., 2011). Regular and frequent on-site or virtual instructional coaching can help teachers implement evidence-based literacy practices at a level that makes measurable impacts on student learning (Kraft et al., 2018). Time alone is not necessarily the key to greater educator support. Strategic investment in support structures that maximize teacher time and efficiency are key.

Systems need to provide support for principal literacy leadership and thoughtful planning. Educators and families largely expressed appreciation for their building and district leaders. However, they also acknowledged the challenges they faced in being able to make the best possible informed decisions about literacy programming, literacy curricula, schedules, and other relevant structures that may enable or prevent evidence-based literacy practices from occurring. The research team recommends principals be provided role-relevant literacy professional learning, and assistance with building a comprehensive and professional learning plan that includes details about how teachers will be supported through learning, implementation, and sustaining new literacy practices.

Educators should differentiate instruction based on student performance data. Teacher focus group findings indicated teachers desire more targeted support for students who perform in the outlier ranges (e.g., students identified as gifted and talented, students with disabilities, students at risk for school failure). Structured literacy is grounded in the use of ongoing formative assessment to guide instructional decisions. School administrators can support teachers with using student performance data to make and adapt instructional decisions by not only providing access to data, but also professional learning how its use and the time and space in the school day to respond to the data and collaborate to coordinate tiered supports (e.g., Lee et al., 2020; WWC, 2009). Responding to the data may involve intensifying instruction by adding intervention time (Tier 3) to the schedule or by using flexible small group instruction as part of Tier 1 or 2. Professional learning and school infrastructure support to provide responsive, data-driven instruction will increase teacher effectiveness and efficiency in meeting individual student needs (Sailor et al., 2021).

Recognize and differentiate support based on community-specific challenges. Families expressed a need for literacy solutions to be tailored to the specific needs of each

community and school family. Some family members recognized the need in their community for more family support, given economically disadvantaged households, or households with caregivers working multiple jobs and being less available to assist children with literacy growth and development. Some schools have strong community library collaboration and others less so. The research team recommends that community, family, and school partners be included in creating, implementing, and sustaining literacy solutions as they are provided (Coba-Rodriguez, 2020).

Provide support for educators to address both instructional needs and student interests. Not surprisingly, our students want to read interesting things. Students across grade bands reported that they had unique interests and preferences for reading, which may or may not have aligned with the materials and resources used during classroom instruction. Studies show that students have distinct genre and content preferences, and that providing interesting, culturally relevant texts aligned with these preferences increases motivation, time spent reading, and key literacy skills (Ives et al., 2020; Dawkins, 2017). Educators and leaders may benefit from professional learning focused on strategies for providing instruction using student-selected, high-interest, culturally-relevant texts to provide literacy instruction.

PILOT STUDY FOR FOUNDATIONS COURSES

The research team worked with Dr. Carolyn Carlson at Washburn University to collect and analyze data from the Foundations Pilot Courses. The courses occurred in the Spring 2025 and Summer 2025 academic term and included 35 educators with experience in the field ranging from one to 32 years. Specific roles varied, with the majority of enrollees being PreK-6 classroom teachers. Other roles and numbers of enrollees in those roles are shown in Table 6. All educators were employed with Topeka Public Schools USD 501 in Topeka, KS.

Table 6

Foundations Pilot Educator Roles

Teaching Assignment	*No. of Teachers*
PK-6 Classroom	24
SPED	3
ESOL	2
STEM	1
Administrator	2
Reading Specialist	2
Other	1

About half of the educators coached were general education teachers, followed by teachers with other roles, special education teachers, and principals (see Figure 16).

Figure 16

Roles of Coached Educators
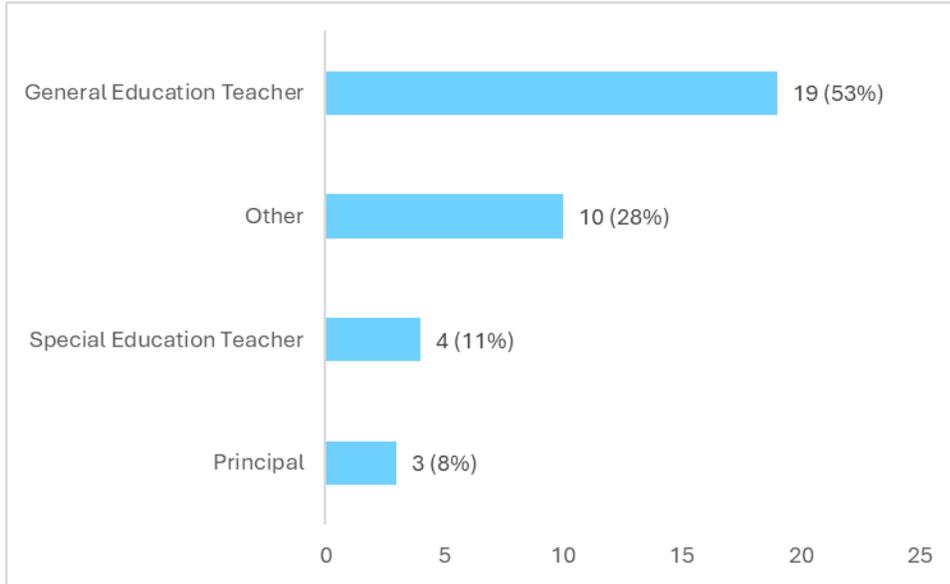
Participating educators were predominantly from elementary schools (see Figure 17). A quarter of the educators did not indicate a specific school level. A few educators were cross-grade and from middle schools.

Figure 17

School Levels of Coached Educators
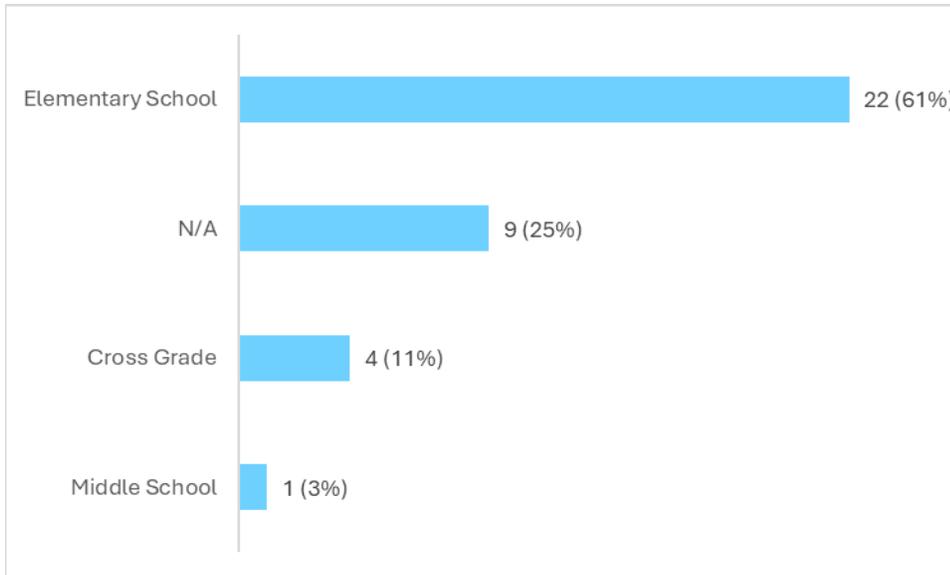
The Foundations Pilot required educators to engage in learning in three major ways:

1. **12 Online modules delivered through the D2L Learning Management System.** Educators completed these modules asynchronously on their own. Modules were developed by seven literacy experts from each of the Kansas Regent schools and Washburn University to be used by each institution. They cover content addressing the following areas: assessment, oral language, phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, morphology, comprehension, syntax, text structure, and writing. A full report on educator assessment performance was provided as part of an earlier report from Dr. Carlson to the KBOR Office of Literacy.

2. **Synchronous sessions led by instructor Dr. Carolyn Carlson.** Educators met with their instructor 14 times over the two courses. Course sessions focused on topics that emerged as areas needing further exploration and included presentations from other literacy experts on selected topics. A full report on the synchronous sessions was provided by Dr. Carlson to the KBOR Office of Literacy.

3. **One-on-One Virtual Literacy Coaching.** The Pilot Foundations courses used VECTOR© Virtual Coaching, which was created in partnership with Kansas teachers in 2018 based on principles of teacher-coach partnership, teacher-guided goal setting, data-driven instructional practices, and non-evaluative growth-focused collaborative conversations. VECTOR Virtual Coaching is a six-phase model that supports teachers through relationship-building, goal-setting, implementation, and reflection. Its phases are named and summarized in Figure 18.

Figure 18

VECTOR Virtual Coaching Phases
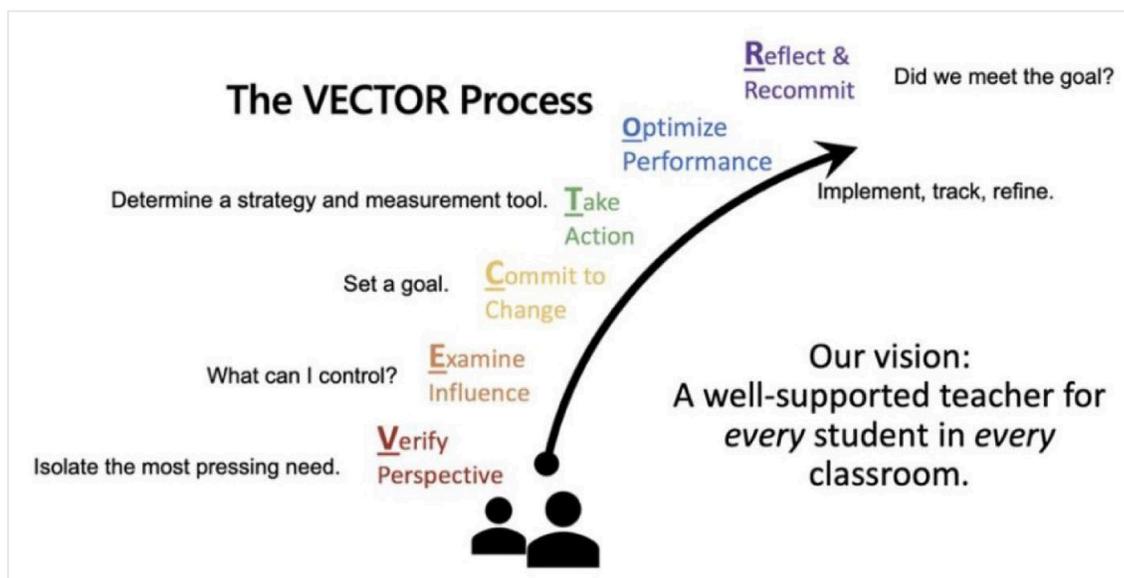
Because reporting for the course modules and the synchronous sessions was provided already through Dr. Carlson's Foundations course report to the KBOR Office of Literacy, our focus in this report will be primarily on the Virtual Coaching component of the pilot course. Our analysis of 350 coaching session logs may reveal critical information about improvements and next steps for the Foundations courses and their required coaching component.

Procedures

Educators participating in Washburn University's Foundations courses responded to a survey about their role, goals for participating in the course, and date and time preferences for meeting with their coach. Those responses were then used to partner each educator with a virtual coach who would work for them throughout both courses. Between course I and course II, educators were provided with the opportunity to switch coaches if they wished. No educators requested a coaching change, so all were paired with their same coach for the entirety of both courses.

Coaches were selected based on three main criteria: 1) expertise in science-based literacy instructional practices, 2) some experience coaching, 3) availability and willingness to participate in professional learning and ongoing support for implementing VECTOR virtual coaching. They were trained virtually in the use of the VECTOR coaching model and were provided coaching log spreadsheets to track educator goals, goal progress, and pertinent notes about their sessions. Coaches were provided with model goals and guidance for goal attainment scaling to help track educators' goal progress. Goal attainment scaling makes it possible to track goal progress rather than only goal completion, by engaging educators in the process of defining target metrics for partial goal completion, in addition to the metrics defined in the larger goal. Seven coaches provided coaching for all 35 educators in the pilot.

Coaches participated in regular check-ins with a project leader and had access to the Foundations Course content through the D2L LMS. They scheduled sessions with educators at mutually convenient times and were asked to meet with educators six times per course for a total of 12 coaching sessions. All sessions occurred on the Zoom virtual meeting platform. Coaches were compensated at the rate of $60/coaching session. Compensation for providing 12 one-on-one coaching sessions for 35 educators totaled a little over $25K. For the pilot courses, technical support, coach training, and ongoing coach professional learning and support were provided without charge as part of a collaborative agreement.

Data Collection

Coaches recorded details from their coaching sessions on an online coaching log. The log included space for recording the educator's goal (which was to be focused on implementation of key content from the Foundations courses), the date and length of the coaching session in minutes, the primary purpose of the coaching session (e.g., goal setting, data review), and notes about the content of the coaching session. The coach log was the primary source of data for analysis.

Data Analysis

Researchers analyzed coaching logs by coding coaches' notes by topic/focus of the coaching session and recording the frequency of literacy focus area(s) of the educators' goals and when or if goals were accomplished. Analysis focused on answering the following primary research questions:

- What types of goals are teachers setting for coaching, and how well do their goals align to the course content?
- With what frequency do topics from the course content appear in the coaching session notes?

Key Findings

The Foundations courses used 7 coaches, who coached 35 teachers in total, scheduled 380 coaching sessions, and finished 350 sessions. The discrepancy between scheduled and completed sessions exists due to educators' unforeseen scheduling conflicts, illnesses, and various personal matters. Coaches were instructed to provide appropriate due diligence to rescheduling, following up their assigned educators, and adjusting to educators' needs.

Table 7

Coaching Data

Coach Name	Coach ID	# Educators Assigned	Sessions Planned	Sessions Completed
RT	1	6	64	57
GL	2	4	32	31
MH	3	4	43	37
LW	4	4	39	34
HBW	5	5	57	47
MG	6	5	54	53
IC	7	8	91	91
Total	7	36	380	350

Figure 19 displays the frequency of course topics in the coached educators' goals to answer the research question about the types of goal teachers set with their coach and how well their goals aligned to the course content. Among all topics discussed in the coaching goals, phonics: encoding and decoding occurred most frequently, followed by comprehension, vocabulary, and morphology. During an initial coaching session, coaches shared the following goal template with educators, example goals, and the DREAM criteria for writing an effective goal.

Goal Template: By [Date], [target group] will be able to [focus to achieve/attain], as evidenced by [measure of achievement/attainment].

- · Data-responsive
- · Relevant
- · Environment-aware
- · Attainable
- · Measurable

Example Goal: By May 15, students who are currently not at benchmark in phonemic awareness will be able to accurately say each sound in at least 9 of 10 CVC words, as evidenced by a classroom assessment.

Example Goal: By July 1, the student I am tutoring for the summer will be able to accurately answer 9 of 10 comprehension questions about a grade-level text as evidenced by the student's score on a teacher-and-coach-developed assessment of reading comprehension for the focus text.

Figure 19

Frequency of the Course Topics of the Coaching Goals
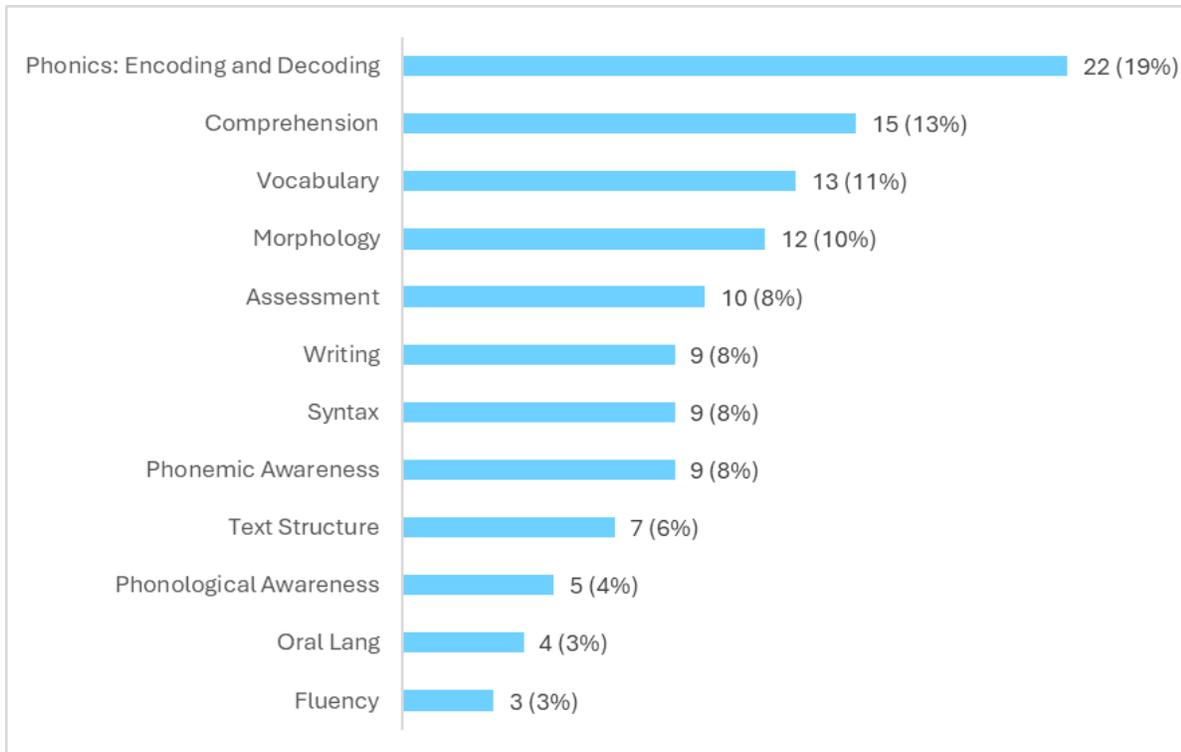
To support answering another research question, Figure 20 provides a display of the frequency of course topics mentioned in the coaching logs. Among all topics mentioned in the coaching logs, assessment occurred the most frequently. There were many other topics discussed in coaching sessions, such as module progress, access to resources (e.g., funds to purchase evidence-based materials), explicit instruction practices, course application assignments, and work-life balance.

Figure 20

Frequency of the Course Topics Mentioned in the Coaching Logs
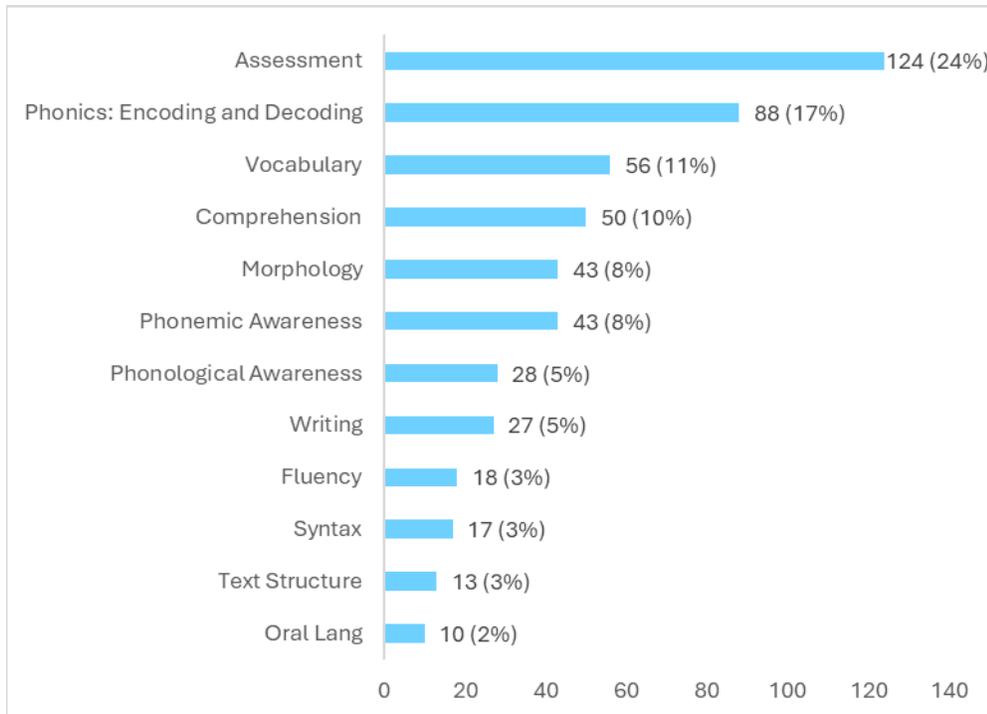
Qualitative Teacher Feedback About Coaching

During a Foundations class led by the instructor, teachers shared their thoughts about their experiences with their assigned coach. The instructor recorded and shared the teacher statements with the project team:

- "I know my coach cares about me. She blew up my email when I missed a Zoom call (forgot to put it in my calendar). She was worried something happened to me. Her messages reminded me of a worried mom. This made me feel like I wasn't something on her to-do list for the week. It showed she truly cares."
- "My coach is very knowledgeable and accommodating. We have set goals and with her support I believe I can get them done during this busy time."
- "I appreciate how my coach can tailor her support to my position outside the classroom."
- "Meeting with my coach is the highlight of my week."
- "I feel like my coach and I were made for each other."

Recommendations

Findings should be shared with Foundations Pilot Coaches and Foundations Coaches throughout the state. With coaches only working with a select group of educators, they are not always privy to information about what other educators are working on with their coaches. Sharing these findings with other Foundations coaches could generate a healthy discussion about potential reasons for the frequency and infrequency of certain topics and goal areas (Ojeda et al., 2024). For example, oral language appeared less frequently as a focus of discussion and goals, yet many would argue it is the foundation of all literacy learning and should therefore warrant more attention during coaching sessions.

Teachers should have regular access to guidance and support for analyzing and using data to inform their literacy instruction. Research shows that, although teachers increasingly have student data, many lack the skills to interpret it and determine appropriate instructional responses, and that structured support from coaches and collaborative teams is crucial for translating data into meaningful changes in teaching practice (Marsh et al., 2015). Data from coaching logs indicates an overwhelming focus across teacher participants on using data from assessments to inform literacy instruction. This finding confirms the focus group finding and the infrastructure survey finding that teachers want and need 1) support to view and interpret data, 2) protected and adequate time to collaborate with peers and/or a coach to determine how to respond appropriately to data.

The Foundations Course and coaching should provide comprehensive and interconnected literacy instruction. Although coaching goals were aligned directly with the Foundations Course module content, analysis of coaching logs indicated that coaching conversations routinely addressed a broad spectrum of literacy components, instructional practices, and contextual factors influencing literacy instruction. This nuance is significant because it offers a more holistic view of classroom literacy needs and underscores the importance of coaching that supports teachers to integrate and apply course concepts within authentic instructional settings. Prior research has consistently demonstrated that literacy skills are most effectively developed when taught in an interconnected manner rather than in isolation (e.g., Kim & Zagata, 2024; Gersten et al., 2020). Building on this evidence, the Foundations Course could further strengthen its curriculum by explicitly emphasizing the importance of skill integration within instructional practice and by continuing to provide coaching support that helps participating teachers reach more comprehensive and interconnected implementation of course content in their classrooms.

Coaching Supports Teacher Accountability, Retention, and Expanded Reach. Analysis of coaching logs indicated that coaches played a multifaceted role in supporting teacher

success within the Foundations Course. In addition to facilitating progress toward their instructional goal, coaches helped teachers maintain momentum in completing course modules, balance competing professional responsibilities, problem-solve classroom challenges, and identify practical opportunities to complete course assignments and meet expectations. In this capacity, coaches functioned as essential accountability partners throughout the learning process (Kraft et al., 2018). Aligned with the VECTOR phases, coaches also established trust and rapport by engaging with teachers beyond the immediate literacy content, demonstrating care for their well-being as educators who consistently invest in students. Teachers frequently shared with their coaches updates about presenting course content to colleagues not enrolled in the program, as well as information about job transitions and professional advancement. These interactions illustrate how coaching not only deepens teacher engagement with course material but also extends the course's reach into broader school communities. The ongoing encouragement, problem-solving support, and recognition provided by coaches appear to contribute to teacher persistence and professional growth. This pattern suggests that coaching may play a meaningful role in supporting teacher retention while also facilitating the wider dissemination of course-aligned instructional practices within schools (Lindsay et al., 2021).

Foundations courses are best implemented with experienced educators participating during a regular school term. The emphasis of the Foundations of Science of Reading courses is application of evidence-based literacy practices. Coaches in the Foundations Pilot indicated that teachers very early in their careers (first or second year) are met with an abundance of new information, procedures, processes, curricula, resources, materials, and general knowledge about their new professional role in their initial years of teaching. Coaches noted that teachers in their initial years of teaching were more overwhelmed with course requirements than more veteran educators and may have benefitted from coaching that could have a more comprehensive focus on the unique needs of an early career professional educator. Of course, with the newly revised undergraduate courses qualifying new teachers for the Seal of Literacy, brand new teachers will soon not need to enroll in the Foundations courses at all. For all educators, however, we recommend the Foundations courses be offered only during a regular school term. The Pilot courses were taught during the Spring 2025 and Summer 2025 academic terms, and while coaches and teachers made the most of their summer term coaching time and teachers found the required students or groups of students with whom they could work, the implementation practice and support was more robust in the Spring term, when teachers were able to use new practices with their students, reflect with their coaches, and adjust practices to address data-indicated student needs.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Research and development work related to the Blueprint for Literacy is ongoing and will continue in partnership with the KBOR Office of Literacy. Work will primarily center on **translating key findings and recommendations** from year one data and analysis into resources and implementation support for partners in PreK-12, Higher Education, and other organizations with an interest in impacting literacy in Kansas. Additionally, the research team will continue work to validate survey and assessment tools that began in year one, with an intent to have a fully validated set of tools by the end of the three-year contract term. The following action items represent our team's intended next steps:

- Produce and disseminate publications of year 1 findings to **support future funding and programming requests** by the KBOR Office of Literacy, and to inform literacy support services provided by Regent universities, school districts, and other organizations with literacy initiatives.
- Work with the L7 team of higher education literacy experts to inform changes to the lesson plan/performance assessment.
- Continue gathering, analyzing, and ultimately disseminate evidence of validity and reliability for the **Structured Literacy Infrastructure Readiness Tool** to advance the science of reading in schools and districts.
- Continue gathering, analyzing, and ultimately disseminate evidence of validity and reliability for the **structured literacy performance assessment** for pre-service educators.
- In partnership with the KBOR Office of Literacy, create publications focused on how to **meet the specific and varied needs of schools** that differ by geographic region, type, size, and socioeconomic status.
- In partnership with the KBOR Office of Literacy, **disseminate and provide professional learning** for use of validated tools to support implementation of structured literacy in PreK-16 systems.

The research team has also identified additional areas of study that the KBOR Office of Literacy and other interested parties could benefit from learning more about. These include:

- A study of the revised lesson plan/performance assessment in partnership with undergraduate students and their instructors, to include a survey about the assessment administered to undergraduate students.

- Additional studies of coaching models used in Foundations courses across the state.
- Research and development work focused on adolescent literacy.
- Cost effectiveness analysis of Foundations coaching, or broader literacy coaching, including analysis of coaching sessions required to meet an instructional goal and/or to improve student learning.
- Studies of coaching work to support building administrators with supporting evidence-based literacy practices.

APPENDIX A: Infrastructure Readiness Scale Validation

Expert Review Guide Sample Questions

1. Which aspects of professional development does this question cover?
2. Based on 0-100%, please provide a rating to show to what extent this question inform this aspect of professional development. If the rating you provided is not 100%, please explain why.
3. Do all the questions inform a K-12 school's readiness for implementing a new practice in classrooms?
4. Please share any additional feedback or suggestions you may have for improving this questions.

Expert Ratings

	M	SD
All Three Parts	**95.84%**	**13.73%**
Part I Professional Development	95.38%	14.20%
Part II Coaching	96.84%	10.16%
Part III Classroom Implementation	95.93%	14.46%

Cognitive Interview Sample Questions

1. What was the first thing that came to your mind when you read this statement/question (Q2)?
2. Can you tell me what this statement/question means to you (Q3)?
3. How did you distinguish between different levels of influence described in the responses (Q3)? Slight/general?
4. What information were you using when you were selecting this response (Q3, 4)?
5. Was it easy or difficult for you to select this response? Why? (Q7)

Some Feedback from Expert Reviews and Cognitive Interviews

Original Questions	Expert Review Summary	Cognitive Interview Summary
Q2: When our school implements a new program or process...	1) may need to provide a question about why for lack of staff support in implementation; 2) clarify the focus of the question: "work hard" or "everyone"; 3) is the implementation at individual or being a part of the school-wide effort? 4) "work hard" is hard to measure add a response option for new teachers; 5) change response options to "All teachers", "Almost all teacher", "Some teacher", ""None of the teachers"	
Q3: How do whole school PD sessions influence classroom instruction in your school?	1) if PD contents matter, need to specify contents; 2) response options can focus on frequency 1. I frequently return to my classroom and implement the content of the PD session. 2. I often return to my classroom . . . 3. I sometimes return .. . . 4. I rarely. . . 5. I never	1) add an option between "significant" and "slight", e.g., "moderate positive influence"; the word "slight" is confusing; 2) may need to specify what type of PD because the answer may be different depending on the type of PD. (consider changing the wording "whole school PD sessions)
Q4: How do teacher professional learning communities influence classroom instruction in your school?	1) clarify what PLC exactly refers to; 2) response options may focus on frequency as Q3; 3) add a response option "I do not or have not engaged in PLCs at my school"	1) the same comments as above for the response option; 2) clarify which community we are referring to (consider changing the wording "teacher professional learning communities")
Q5: How does teacher-to-teacher peer observation influence classroom instruction in your school?	1) it's hard to measure "positive influence"; 2) response options focus on frequency; 3) change the option to "I do not or have not engaged in peer-to-peer observations at my school"	"teacher-to-teacher peer observation" is confusing, may consider changing to "observations of other teachers"
Q9: The way we communicate within our school (e.g., standing meetings, agendas) is...	the question needs to specify what kind of communication, or communication focusing on PD	1) clarify if this is interviewee's personal experience or speak for whole school experience (can clarify this in the instructions); 2) in the response options, add "somewhat, slightly" effective; 3) "Highly effective" looks absolute.
Q10: The number of new practices teachers are expected to implement each year seems...	this one is good to go.	

APPENDIX B: Performance Tool Assessment Validation

Expert Review Guide Sample Questions

1. Based on 0-100%, please provide a rating to show to what extent this evidence estimates pre-service educator's knowledge in structured literacy. If the rating you provided is not 100%, please explain why.
2. Based on 0-100%, please provide a rating to show to what extent this lesson plan accurately reflects the structural literacy performance of pre-service educators at PK-6 levels. If the rating you provided is not 100%, please explain why.
3. Based on 0-100%, please provide a rating to show to what extent this rubric component is easily applied to evaluators who will use this rubric. If the rating you provided is not 100%, please explain why.
4. Does using the pre-service teachers' lesson plan accurately assess their performance in structured literacy? If not, what else should be considered?

Performance Tool Assessment Expert Ratings

	M	SD
Overall Focus Area of Word Study/Decoding	65.56%	9.56%
Overall Focus Area of Spelling	76.11%	6.71%
Overall Focus Area of Written Expression	56.66%	2.5%
Overall Focus Area of Fluency	67.77%	12.91%
Overall Focus Area of Vocabulary	56.67%	8.16%
Overall Focus Area of Comprehension	67.78%	12.91%
Overall Average	76.12%	20.14%

Performance Tool Rubric Expert Ratings

	M	SD
Objectives	66.66%	17.08%
Assessment - Checks for Understanding/ Immediate Corrective Feedback	84%	10.21%
Lesson Materials	79.67%	25.96%
Review when Appropriate	60%	19.44%
Modeling of New Concepts (I Do)	62%	12.90%
Guided Practice (We Do)	63.33%	7.97%
Independent Practice (You Do)	69.33%	3.10%
Demonstrate Understanding of Structured Literacy Components	57.33%	4.71%
Overall Average	67.79%	12.67%

Cognitive Interview Sample Questions

1. Could you please introduce your background related to structured literacy instruction?
2. How would you describe characteristics of the students in your literacy classes that you used with the structured literacy lesson plan?
3. What instructions do you typically provide for students to create a lesson plan? What materials do you typically provide for students?
4. What changes would you want to make to this lesson plan?
5. When you use the rubric of the lesson plan provided to you in scoring, what aspects in students' lesson plan did you consider?
6. What changes do you want to make to this rubric?

Structured Literacy Lesson Plan

Name:	Grade Level:

Objectives:

Materials Needed:

Focus Area	Lesson Instruction		Time
Word Study/Decoding Morphology for older	*Phonological awareness*		
	Phonics Instruction		
	Syllable Tasks		
	Decoding + irregular (learned) words		

Word Study/Decoding Standard(s):

Word Study/Decoding Objective(s):

Word Study/Decoding Formative Assessment of the Objective:

Spelling	*Spelling*	
	Dictation (syntax + handwriting)	

Spelling Standard(s):

Spelling Objective(s):

Spelling Formative Assessment:

| Written Expression | *Syntax Tasks***:** | |
| | *Writing Instruction:* | |

Written Expression Standard(s):

Written Expression Objective(s):

Written Expression Formative Assessment:

Fluency	*Controlled sentence or passage reading (decodable text)/fluency*	
Vocabulary	*Vocabulary Tasks:*	
Comprehension	**Listening comprehension (grade-level text)** **Vocabulary & Comprehension:** **Silent Reading (Optional):**	

Fluency Standard(s):

Fluency Objective(s):

Fluency Formative Assessment:

Vocabulary Standard(s):

Vocabulary Objective(s):

Vocabulary Formative Assessment:

Comprehension Standard(s):

Comprehensive Objective(s):

Comprehension Formative Assessment:

*Use specific terms of Model, Guided, and Independent work.

Rubric for Structured Literacy Lesson Plan

	Meets Expectations (3)	Approaches Expectations (2)	Below Expectations (1)	Missing (0)	Points
Objective(s)	Used a verb that is specific to an observable behavior: TSWBAT ...;	Used a verb that is specific to an observable behavior: TSWBAT ...;	Used a verb that is not specific to an observable behavior	No verb	
Assessment - Checks for Understanding/ Immediate Corrective Feedback	Includes how the student will show or demonstrate that they have met the objective, how it will be scored, and a mastery score or criteria for success. Checks for understanding: *occurs throughout the lesson (not in independent practice) *includes how immediate corrective feedback will be provided	Includes two of the following: how the student will show or demonstrate that they have met the objective, how it will be scored, and/or a mastery score. Checks for understanding includes one of the following: *occurs throughout the lesson (not in independent practice) *includes how immediate corrective feedback will be provided	Includes one or none of the following: how the student will show or demonstrate that they have met the objective, how it will be scored, and/or a mastery score.	Not clear or missing	
Lesson Materials	Includes a list of physical lesson plan materials for teacher and students. Sources for lesson materials are high-quality and evidence-based written in APA format.	Includes most of the following: physical lesson plan materials for teacher and students, or course-approved resources referenced in APA format.	Missing most of the following: physical lesson plan materials for teacher and students, course-approved resources, and/or not referenced in APA format.	Lesson Materials not included	
Review when appropriate	Includes a phonological/phonemic awareness practice or review of previously taught concept.	Includes a review but it may not be phonological/ phonemic awareness practice or review of previously taught concept	Minimal review with limited opportunities for feedback	Review is missing	

Modeling of new concepts (I do)	Modeling is: *explicit *done by the teacher *clearly explaining what the teacher will do and say *evidence-based and aligned with the objective	Modeling meets three of the following: *explicit *done by the teacher *clearly explaining what the teacher will do and say *evidence-based and aligned with the objective	Modeling missing most of the following: *explicit *done by the teacher *clearly explaining what the teacher will do and say *evidence-based and aligned with the objective	Modeling not evident	
Guided Practice (We do)	Guided practice: *includes the teacher and the student *reading the words isolation *spelling the words *reading decodable text *aligned with objective *aligned with modeling	Guided practice includes three of the following: *includes the teacher and the student *reading the words isolation *spelling the words *reading decodable text *aligned with objective *aligned with modeling	Guided practice includes 2, 1, or none of the following: *includes the teacher and the student *reading the words isolation *spelling the words *reading decodable text *aligned with objective *aligned with modeling	Guided practice not evident.	
Independent Practice (You do)	Independent practice includes: *what the student will show/do *work done by the student only *aligned with objective *aligned with what was modeled and practiced	Independent practice includes three of the following: *what the student will show/do *work done by the student only *aligned with objective *aligned with what was modeled and practiced	Independent practice includes 2, 1, or none of the following: *what the student will show/do *work done by the student only *aligned with objective *aligned with what was modeled and practiced	Independent practice not evident.	
Demonstrates Understanding of Structured Literacy Components	Content provided demonstrates **accurate** knowledge of all 9 components of structured literacy while using **evidence-based practices** including:	Content provided demonstrates **accurate** knowledge of 6-8 components of structured literacy while using **evidence-based practices** including:	Content provided demonstrates 4 or 5 **accurate** knowledge of the components of literacy including:	Content provided demonstrates minimal knowledge of the components of literacy including:	

	Check the box for each component representing the teacher candidate's demonstration of understanding. Each component is worth up to 3 points.				
	● phonemic awareness	● phonemic awareness	● phonemic awareness		
	● phonics	● phonics	● phonics		
	● spelling	● spelling	● spelling		
	● dictation	● dictation	● dictation		
	● syntax	● syntax	● syntax		
	● vocabulary	● vocabulary	● vocabulary		
	● fluency	● ~~fluency~~	● fluency		
	● comprehension	● comprehension	● comprehension		
	● writing	● writing	● writing		
			Total points		**/48**

Example Structured Literacy Lesson Plan

Name:	Grade Level: 3rd

Materials Needed:
Physical Materials:
Elkonin box sheet
Letter tiles
Student whiteboards
Magnetic Letters
Syllable Types Poster
FANBOY Poster
5Ws & How Poster
Texts Used - Using APA References (core curriculum, print, digital, video, or audio texts):
Charles, R. (n.d.). *Jake and Gail go to Spain* (Decodable 26). Learning A-Z. https://www.readinga-z.com/phonics/lessons/lesson/?id=4972&langId=1
Baum, L. F. (n.d.). T*he Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (Part 1). Learning A-Z. https://www.readinga-z.com/books/leveled-books/book/?id=3740&langId=1

Focus Area	Lesson Instruction	Time
Word Study/Decoding	***Phonological awareness*** *Syllable segmenting, syllable blending* "Say 'greener' without 'er'" (green); repeat with "dismay" without "'dis" (may), "cyclone" without "cy" (clone) "pa-per" (paper), "bas-ket" (basket), "cy-cle" (cycle) [can use hand gestures to put together, break apart syllable parts] *Phonemic: sound substitution* "Say "tap", replace the first sound with /s/ (sap)"; repeat with "hope" (soap) and "deer" (seer). "Say "night", replace the last sound with /s/ (nice)"; repeat with "slide" (slice) and "ride"(rice). "Say "mode", replace the middle sound with /a-e/ (made); repeat with "rise"(raise) and "cone" (cane). *Possible Misconceptions and Corrective Feedback:* Student can use fingers to tap out sounds or Elkonin boxes with sound tiles, if they have trouble.	

Phonics Instruction *Teach the new concept:* Model: Vowel teams ai and ay in multisyllabic words: Say the word "main" and tap out the sounds (3 sounds). Write three lines on the board. Segment the word and write the graphemes for each sound. Blend to read the word. Say the word "play" and tap out the sounds (3 sounds). Write three lines on the board. Segment the word and write the graphemes for each sound. Blend to read the word. Circle the ai in the middle of the word "main" in yellow and the ay in "play" in red. Explicitly state that both make the /a-e/ sound but are spelled differently depending on where they appear in the word—ai typically in the middle, and ay typically in the end. Guided: Make words with Elkonin boxes and letter tiles--gain, train, rain; gray, stay, may *Possible Misconceptions and Corrective Feedback:* cross out the i or y in the pattern and explain that only the long a sound is read in the ai and ay pattern.	
Syllable Tasks Model: Ai and ay will stay together in a multisyllabic word because they make one sound; divide words into syllables on white boards: Rain/y Guided: Pain/ful Play/ful Lay/er *Possible Misconceptions and Corrective Feedback:* Refer to syllable types poster; utilize manipulatives with students.	
Decoding + irregular (learned) words Guided: Read words- sail, sailing, faint, fainted, say, saying, day, daily Review 'heart words' (irregularly spelled): Match sounds and letters, read and spell the word aloud, air-write the word (from memory): Model: said, Guided: done	

Word Study/Decoding Standard(s):		
RF.3.3 Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding and encoding words. RF.3.3.c Decode multisyllabic words (e.g., six syllable types, compound words, inflectional endings, etc.).		
Word Study/Decoding Objective(s):		
• TSWBAT read words with vowel teams ai and ay in multisyllabic words with 100% accuracy.		
Word Study/Decoding Formative Assessment (Independent):		
ling list (5 ai and 5 ay multisyllabic words)		
Spelling	*Spelling* Guided: Spell the words from decoding using this is where the multisensory element can be highlighted]: white board and markers, paper pencil, sand, latch hook paper and crayon, shaving cream, paint/finger paint magnetic letters, etc.]	
	Dictation (syntax + handwriting) Guided: Dictate the words: sail, mail, ray, relay Dictate the sentence: The letter is in the mailbox by the playground.	
Spelling Standard(s):		
W.3.11.f Use spelling patterns and generalizations when writing words.		
• TSWBAT spell words with *ai* and *ay* print patterns with 100% accuracy.		
Spelling Formative Assessment (Independent):		
Spelling test (5 ai and 5 ay words)		

Written Expression	***Syntax Tasks:***	15
	Model: Sentence combining using conjunctions. Review that a complete sentence includes. For example, a simple sentence is a sentence that contains just one independent clause. This means it has a subject (who or what the sentence is about) and a predicate (what the subject does or is). It expresses a complete thought. For example, "The cat sleeps." In this sentence, "The cat" is the subject and "sleeps" is the predicate. Simple sentences are straightforward and can stand alone as complete ideas.	
	A compound sentence is a sentence that combines two or more independent clauses. An independent clause is a group of words that can stand alone as a complete sentence because it has both a subject and a verb. In a compound sentence, these independent clauses are usually connected by a coordinating conjunction such as "and," "but," or "or," or by a semicolon.	
	For example:	
	- "I went to the store, and I bought some apples."	
	- "She likes to read books, but she doesn't like to write."	
	Each part of the compound sentence could be a sentence on its own, but they are joined to show a relationship between the ideas.	
	Writing Instruction:	
	Model: writing a compound sentence. A compound sentence is a sentence that combines two or more independent clauses. Each clause could stand alone as a complete sentence, but they are joined together using a conjunction like "and," "but," or "or." Refer to the FANBOY chart with a list of conjunctions.	
	Write the example:	
	1. The train arrived late, but we still made it to the fair."**	
	- Here, "The train arrived late" and "we still made it to the fair" are two independent clauses joined by the conjunction "but."	
	Guided:	
	Present the following sentences and work with the students to create a compound sentence:	

I will wait for the mail. You can stay inside."
(I will wait for the mail, and you can stay inside.)

The rain poured down heavily. We still decided to go for a walk.
(The rain poured down heavily, but we still decided to go for a walk.)

The children played in the park. They enjoyed the sunny day.
(The children played in the park, and they enjoyed the sunny day.)

Possible Misconceptions and Corrective Feedback: Have students explain how the two sentences are joined. For example, further explain that "I will wait for the mail" and "you can stay inside" are joined by "and."

Written Expression Standard(s):		
W.3.10.h Produce simple, compound and complex sentences.		

Written Expression Objective(s):		
TSWBAT produce simple and compound sentences.		

Written Expression Formative Assessment (Independent):		
Students write two simple sentences to produce one compound sentence using a conjunction.		

Fluency	***Controlled sentence or passage reading (decodable text)/fluency*** Read together, reread with a partner *Jake and Gail go to Spain* (Decodable 26)	5
Vocabulary	Vocabulary Four Square: dismay, straightaway, cyclone, gaunt Model with "dismay" Guided (students can work in pairs): straightaway, cyclone, gaunt	5
Comprehension	***Listening comprehension (grade-level text)*** *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (Part 1) Comprehension strategies: Graphic organizers for 5Ws and How? Model asking questions while reading. Stop and utilize the 5Ws+How chart to ask questions. Think aloud to model how asking questions helps to gain a better understanding of what is happening in the story, make connections, and to make predictions and inferences about what will happen or what the author is not explicitly stating. Guided: Stop and allow students the opportunity to formulate questions. Refer them to the chart if misconceptions or misunderstandings occur.	0

Fluency Standard(s):		
Fluency: RF.3.4.b Read complex prose and poetry orally with accuracy, prosody and appropriate rate.		

Fluency Objective(s):		
TSWBAT read words with vowel teams ai and ay in multisyllabic words with accuracy, prosody and appropriate rate.		

Fluency Formative Assessment (Independent):		
Student reads decodable text aloud.		

Vocabulary Standard(s):		
Vocabulary: RL.3.11 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases to expand language comprehension.		

Vocabulary Objective(s):
TSWBAT define the meaning of unknown words.
Vocabulary Formative Assessment (Independent):
Google form quiz on vocabulary including definitions for each word and writing one of them in a sentence.
Comprehension Standard(s):
Comprehension: RL.3.1 Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.
Comprehensive Objective(s):
TSWBAT ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text and refer to the text as the basis for the answers.
Comprehension Formative Assessment (Independent):
Student-generated question and answer from the reading, including an explanation of where the answer was found in the text. Students can include an illustration of their answer.

APPENDIX C: Needs Assessment Tools

Focus Group Questions for Families

1. What has been your child's overall experience with learning to read and write?
    - Can you share any specific moments or milestones that stood out to you?
2. What methods or resources have you found most effective in supporting your child's literacy development?
    - Are there any particular books, programs, or activities that your child enjoys?
    - What do you not currently have access to that you think would be effective in supporting your child's literacy development? (e.g., resources, activities, methods)
    - What additional resources outside of school or your district are effective – or could be effective – in supporting your child's literacy development?
3. How does your child feel about reading and writing?
    - Do they show enthusiasm, reluctance, or a mix of both? How do you address their feelings?
4. What challenges has your child faced while learning to read and write?
    - How have you and their teachers worked to overcome these challenges?
5. Do you incorporate reading and writing into your daily routine at home?
    - If so, are there any specific practices or habits that have been particularly beneficial?
6. What role do you believe technology plays in your child's literacy development?
    - Have digital tools or apps been helpful, and if so, how?

Focus Group Questions for Students

1. Can you describe your experience with learning to read and write?
    - What do you enjoy most about reading and writing?
2. What kinds of books or stories do you like to read?
    - Are there any favorite authors or genres you prefer?
3. How do you feel when you are asked to write something, like a story or an essay?
    - What makes writing fun or challenging for you?
4. What activities or games help you learn new words and improve your reading skills?
    - Do you have any favorite apps or classroom activities?
5. How do your teachers and parents help you with reading and writing?
    - Can you share any specific examples of how they support you?
6. What do you think could make learning to read and write more enjoyable for you?
    - Are there any changes or new ideas you would like to see in your reading and writing lessons?

Focus Group Questions for School Teams of Educators in Practice and School Administrators

1. What are the unique characteristics of your learning community that will influence how to implement successful professional learning?
    -   What are the characteristics of PL initiatives that have been successful in the past, and under what conditions have they worked?
2. What does planning time for teachers look like? How long? How often?
3. What kind of timeline seems realistic for the PL activities (initial PD and follow-up coaching sessions)? What time frame would be suitable for PL activities?
4. In what ways are you using coaches to support instruction? If they have a coach:
    -   How closely are we following our coach job description in practice?
    -   What changes do we need to make to our job description and/or expectations for coaches so that their work aligns well with our goals?
    -   What roles are coaches filling that do not directly impact teaching quality or student learning?
    -   How often is the coach feasibly able to provide deep coaching?
5. How do you perceive our capacity for scheduling ongoing PL, your human capital to provide PL, and the reasonability of your instructional coach load?
6. How do you typically fund the PL sessions, activities, coaching, and materials?
7. What technology (platforms and tools) will be used for initial PD and to participate in video-based coaching? How skilled are you as a team and as individuals in using these tools?
8. Given your collective experience with adjusting instruction to meet academically diverse needs, what additional professional learning do you need?
9. Given your collective experience with implementing evidence-based practices, what additional professional learning do you need?
10. What scheduled opportunities exist for literacy instruction and targeted interventions?
11. What resources (e.g., coaching, technology, supplies, relevant student data) are necessary for success?
12. Are the students who need selected evidence-based practices taught by the teachers who will be learning to implement it?

Structured Literacy Observation Checklist

School: _____   Date: _____

Teacher Name(s): _____

Observer Names: _____

Classroom Context (Check all that apply)

- ☐ General Education (single taught)
- ☐ General Education (co-taught)
- ☐ General Education with paraeducator support
- ☐ Resource/intervention

Student Information

# of Students: _____

Form of Instructional Delivery (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Teacher delivered
- ☐ Computer-based
- ☐ Hybrid of teacher delivered and computer-based
- ☐ Whole group
- ☐ Small group instruction
- ☐ Other: _____

Literacy Instructional Focus
Check all that apply. Circle which aspects in the parentheses.

- ☐ Phonemic Awareness (Segmenting words/sentences, Rhyme, Alliteration)
- ☐ Phonics (Sound-Symbol Association, Syllable Instruction, Orthographic knowledge, Decoding, Encoding [spelling], Dictation, Syntax, Other: _____)
- ☐ Vocabulary
- ☐ Word study (Academic language, Morphology, Multisyllabic Words, Other: _____)
- ☐ Fluency (Accuracy, Rate, Prosody)
- ☐ Comprehension (Predictions, Inferences, Summarization, Recall, Other: _____)
- ☐ Writing (Letters, Words, Sentences, Paragraphs, Multi-paragraph, Process of writing, Conventions [e.g., capitalization, punctuation], Other: _____)
- ☐ Content/disciplinary literacy (Critical thinking, Literary analysis, Concepts exploration, Other: _____)
- ☐ Discussion-based (Speaking skills, Listening skills, Other: _____)

Prepared by KU's Kansas Blueprint for Literacy Needs Assessment Project

Explicit and Cumulative Instructional Principles & Practices
Content and skills are directly taught; New learning is built upon prior learning

- ☐ Advance organizer / opening of lesson
    - ☐ Provides clear goal statement and rationale for learning
    - ☐ States or elicits expectations; uses clear signals to get student attention to begin lessons
    - ☐ Review previous learning; addresses background knowledge and skills
- ☐ Modeling
    - ☐ Think aloud that includes self-instruction, problem-solving, self-monitoring, task performance
    - ☐ Uses clear and concise language, especially when introducing new concepts or skills
- ☐ Automaticity Principle (students have multiple opportunities to practice and apply skills to become automatic)
    - ☐ Guided Practice (e.g., teacher-facilitated learning, choral reading, partner reading, collaborative groups)
    - ☐ Independent Practice
    - ☐ Multisensory principle: various learning pathways are used simultaneously (visual, kinesthetic, tactile)
- ☐ Post Organizer / lesson closing
- ☐ Uses a brisk pace and limits down time

Systematic Instructional Principles & Practices
Concepts follow the scope and sequence of skills from simple to complex

- ☐ Uses clear signals throughout lesson to signal beginning of new components
- ☐ Breaks instruction into manageable steps; uses logical sequences of skills and content
- ☐ Focuses on critical content and skills
- ☐ Uses a range of examples and non-examples
- ☐ Addresses different forms of knowledge (declarative/factual, procedural/how, conditional/when & where)

Assessment Practices (Diagnostic and Responsive Principles)

- ☐ Observable Use of Data (Teacher observation, Running records, Inventories, Other: _____)
- ☐ Provides students multiple opportunities to respond
- ☐ Formative assessment / checks for understanding
- ☐ Feedback to students (positive, goal-oriented, corrective/descriptive, individualized, timely)
- ☐ Other: _____

Comments:

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