

June 3, 2021

To: Superintendents  
Chief Academic Officers  
Read to Achieve Contacts

From: Superintendent of Public Instruction Catherine Truitt

**RE: Science of Reading Professional Learning and K-3 Formative/Diagnostic Assessment**

North Carolina continues to acknowledge that reading is the foundation for student success and maintains that a student's ability to read proficiently by third grade is a critical milestone. As reading is the gateway to lifelong achievement, North Carolina students deserve a strong start on their path to success. The renewed focus on reading comprehension and desire to empower students with this lifelong skill began in 2012, with passage of Read to Achieve legislation which recognized a need to improve literacy proficiency outcomes for students in North Carolina.

Since then, literacy has been identified as a focus within the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, with an emphasis placed on understanding the research and importance of building proficient readers in our schools. The department's vision is anchored in the science of reading as a means for transforming literacy education for North Carolina's students.

During the April 2021 legislative session, North Carolina legislators passed an act to modify the implementation of the Read to Achieve legislation in order to attain statewide reading proficiency by the third grade. [SESSION LAW 2021-8 SENATE BILL 387](#) identifies educators as pivotal in the role of reading instruction and requires every PreK-fifth grade teacher to be highly equipped with the knowledge and skills to apply the science of reading. This legislation prioritizes the need for systemic and explicit reading instruction in the early grades and reinforcement of these practices in the higher grades. It also reiterates the need to provide additional support and offer intervention techniques for struggling students.

This student-centered legislation will ensure children develop the skills and techniques needed to become successful readers, through proven, evidence-based practices. North Carolina will write a new chapter, with a renewed focus on instruction, to create a new future for our state and improve outcomes for all students.

**Science of Reading Professional Learning Cohort Information**

LETRS® (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) will be leading the professional learning that will provide PreK–5 teachers with deep knowledge in literacy and language. LETRS is being used as directed by [S.L 2021-8](#), Section 3c and [S.L 2021-3](#), Section 11, and in alignment with G.S. 115C-83.4B.

LETRS provides teachers with the skills they need to master the fundamentals of reading instruction- phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, writing, and language.

Professional learning that comes from LETRS is relevant and applicable regardless of the literacy programs already in use within your district or school. LETRS is authored by literacy experts Dr. Louisa Moats and Dr. Carol Tolman, backed by more than 30 years of research and more than a decade of proven success.

Professional learning cohorts have been identified based on the interest survey provided for all districts

this spring. The cohort timeline is listed in the table below, along with districts that will participate in each cohort.

**\*District Cohort Assignments\***

<b>Cohort 1</b>	<b>Cohort 2</b>	<b>Cohort 3</b>
<b>Summer 2021 – Spring 2023</b>	<b>Winter 2021 – Winter 2023</b>	<b>Summer 2022 – Spring 2024</b>

We have provided the vendor with the district contact information you shared recently. They will reach out to begin conversations and planning with the district representative in the near future.

**K-3 Formative/Diagnostic Assessment**

Kindergarten, first, second, and third grade students shall be assessed with valid, reliable, formative, and diagnostic reading assessments made available to local school administrative units by the State Board of Education pursuant to G.S. 115C-174.11. Formative and diagnostic assessments and resultant instructional supports and services shall address oral language, phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension using developmentally appropriate practices. These assessments may be administered by computer or other electronic device.

Recently the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction conducted a Request for Proposal (RFP) for identifying a K-3 Literacy Assessment tool that fulfills the updated legislative requirements. The RFP Team consists of a diverse group of external and internal stakeholders representing every region across NC. There were nine voting members who also were joined by 18 non-voting content experts. The voting team consisted of six representatives nominated by external organizations such as North Carolina Association of School Administrators (NCASA), North Carolina Principals and Assistant Principals Association (NCPAPA), North Carolina Teacher of the Year (NCTOY), Chief Academic Officer (CAO) Advisory Board and the department’s Exceptional Children (EC) Division. The nominees were contacted with the option to accept or decline.

The department intentionally built a team where staff members currently working inside districts exceeded the voting members within the department to ensure practitioners’ voices were prominent. On May 26, 2021 the [State Board of Education](#) approved the recommendation of the RFP Team and awarded Amplify Education Incorporated; mCLASS (DIBELS 8th Edition and Text Reading Comprehension) as the state approved K-3 Formative/Diagnostic Assessment.

Amplify Education Incorporated will provide all educators -- PSU representatives, teachers and leaders -- with access to the self-paced online course in May, which will maximize the time that educators have to develop the general knowledge they need to effectively implement mCLASS (DIBELS 8th Edition and Text Reading Comprehension). Districts will receive a survey within the next 48 hours asking for the name and contact information of a district PSU representative.

After providing all educators with access to the online course, Amplify Education Incorporated will deliver an option of 27 one- day, remote initial training throughout the months of June and July to a total of 400 PSU representatives. PSU representatives will be able to effectively and efficiently train all North Carolina educators prior to the start of the school year with the support of the Amplify and department regional consultants as needed.

Beginning in the 2021-2022 school year, all K-3 students will be assessed three times a year using the state-approved formative/diagnostic assessment, Amplify Education Incorporated; mCLASS (DIBELS 8th Edition and Text Reading Comprehension). Benchmark windows and other vendor specific guidance will be shared in June.

The department is committed to supporting its teachers, literacy specialists, administrators, and other educators by providing research-based, instructional strategies grounded in the science of reading and in alignment with Senate Bill 387. While this process begins now, the department realizes this is a journey that continues beyond elementary-aged students. This is not a sprint. It's a marathon. There will be hills to climb and lessons to learn along the way. Yet, we are committed to traveling alongside you as we focus on continuously improving and establishing a brighter future for our students and our state!

Together we can make a difference!

c: Dr. David Stegall, Deputy Superintendent of Innovation  
Amy Rhyne, Ed.S, Office of Early Learning