

Early Literacy Specialist (ELS) Overview

Welcome Back! We hope each of you is already off to an amazing start with much to be grateful for in the 22-23 school year!

We are extremely excited that 100% of North Carolina school districts, including over 44,000 educators, are now engaged in LETRS professional development with an aligned focus on the implementation of the science of reading. We could not be more proud of your intentional focus, dedication, and commitment to this effort!

As we took time to collect feedback from educators in the first two cohorts, they shared how valuable the professional development was, as well as how much work it involved during the early stages of deployment. Furthermore, superintendent and principal representatives emphasized the importance of ensuring there is a systematic and systemic deployment plan to support every district based on their individual needs. As a result, the NC General Assembly funded 115 Early Literacy Specialist (ELS) positions. We are wrapping up the final planning details to be communicated in the coming weeks.

In the meantime, in an attempt to answer some of the most common questions from districts, we have created the [NC Literacy Facilitator/ELS FAQ](#), which will continuously be updated with the latest and most recent information throughout this journey.

One key message we want to communicate and reiterate to districts clearly is the purpose of the ELS. These positions are being assigned to support the work that districts already have in place aligned to SoR and LETRS. It is massive work, and the sincere intent is to provide an additional resource to support districts and at-risk/low-performing schools. Although the positions will be assigned, this will not happen in isolation without your input. You know your district best, and we value your input.

North Carolina is beginning 2022-23 implementation in Phase One, with a focus on core instruction, while educators continue professional development. Districts will determine how to best utilize the assigned ELS, alongside the early literacy work you have started as it relates to coaching and supporting implementation, the deployment of early literacy instructional practices based on the science of reading, and leader and educator support. The ELS will divide their time between supporting the district up to three days per week and supporting two (to four) at-risk/priority schools two days per week. As we improve core, the long-term goal is to shift to a more equitable model where the ELS is primarily supporting the at-risk/low-performing schools. For more specifics, the [ELS Job Description](#) can be found linked in the [NC Literacy Facilitator/ELS FAQ](#).

Our goal is to serve as a collaborative partner in this work. In order to help districts determine how to utilize the ELS best, we have developed a standard process that can be used at each system in your district. The [NC Partnership Approach](#) process is to help guide district discussions and identify strong, supportive processes, as well as where additional support is needed. Several examples of district support may include, but not be limited to, supporting the organization of LETRS implementation and processes, supporting the implementation of Literacy Intervention Plans, and providing aligned literacy professional development or coaching to school-level administrators/coaches. At the school level, several examples may include but

not be limited to helping lead PLCs related to literacy and science of reading strategies, supporting the leadership team, mentoring coaches, and modeling lessons for school coaches.

Two times per month, the ELS will collaborate virtually with other OEL colleagues to continue to expand their own professional content knowledge. Since we are still in the early stages of implementation and learning statewide, this time together is essential. These meetings are scheduled for no more than two hours, providing time to share best practices happening across the state. This will help us all work smarter, not harder.

While the timing is a concern, we recognize that ideal timing may never come. As we begin the next steps and to expedite the hiring process, we have worked with our Regional Directors to ask one district per region to serve as the fiscal agent for operational HR processes. These districts were selected in collaboration, based on specific criteria.

Once we have met with these specific districts, we plan to move forward with communicating the next steps regarding hiring process details. Interviews will be scheduled virtually by region. One representative per district will be invited to attend each interview. Based on HR requirements, interviews must have the same raters and the same questions. For this reason, the district representative will observe the interview but not contribute to the rating. However, they will have access to a google form to share their top candidates and any potential risks/threats the rating team needs to be aware of in our final ratings.

Applicants interested in more than one district in the same region will select the districts they are interested in on the application. This will only require one submission in that specific region. However, if applicants are interested in more than one region, they will be required to complete one application in each region of interest.

We have included a general **Hiring Process Overview** which involves the following four steps: application pre-screening, phone interview, completion of a task, and the final OEL virtual panel interview with district observers. A detailed plan will be shared with those that participate in the interview panel. It is essential that we only hire highly qualified individuals. We realize we may not find 115 highly qualified individuals quickly. However, we will continue to offer ongoing interviews throughout the year based on vacancies.

We are extremely proud of the progress we have made as a state in such a short amount of time. This would not be possible if it were not for educators in districts, schools, and classrooms serving children! As we begin this new step in our journey together, we look forward to continued highlights of the amazing things taking place in your districts. We are always looking for success stories to share. Feel free to reach out anytime to share the great things taking place across NC!