



Ohio's Part B
State Systemic Improvement
Plan

Phase III Year 2 Report

April 2, 2018

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Introduction.....	7
Measurable Improvements in the SIMRs in Relation to Targets.....	7
State-Identified Measurable Result 1	7
State-Identified Measurable Result 2	10
Alignment to Existing Current State Initiatives.....	13
Progress in Implementing the SSIP	15
Research-Based Early Literacy Instruction	15
Ongoing Support and Professional learning	16
Implementation Data, Outcomes and Data Quality Issues.....	19
Planned Analyses	19
Data Dashboard	19
Evaluation Questions, Data Sources, Data Collection and Associated Timelines.....	20
Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS)	23
Cohort 1	24
Cohort 2	25
LETRS Professional Learning Data.....	25
LETRS Professional Learning Data Quality Issues.....	27
Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory (R-TFI)	27
Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory Data	29
R-TFI Data Quality Issues.....	30
Coaching.....	30
Coaching Data	31
Coaching Data Quality Issues.....	33
Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM)	33
Curriculum-Based Measurement Data.....	34
CBM Data Quality Issues	37
Surveys and Focus Groups	37
Annual Surveys	37
Focus Groups	38

Focus Group and Survey Data Quality Issues.....	39
Demonstrated Progress and Modifications.....	39
Intended Outputs.....	39
Stakeholder Involvement.....	40
Plans for Year 3.....	44
Building Coaching Capacity	46
Supporting Instruction.....	46
Family and Community Engagement.....	46
Sustainability and Scaling up	47
Ohio LETRS Facilitators	47
State Scale-Up	47
Updating Evaluation Questions.....	48
Barriers and Limitations to Implementing the SSIP	48
Technical Assistance and Support.....	50
Technical Assistance Accessed.....	51
Technical Assistance Needed	53
Conclusion	53
References.....	54

List of Figures

- Figure 1. Percentage of students with disabilities scoring proficient or above on Ohio's Third Grade English Language Arts Achievement Test (SIMR 1).....8
- Figure 2. Percentage of students scoring proficient or above on the Grade 3 Ohio’s State Tests in English Language Arts by test type, student subgroup and cohort (SIMR 1).9
- Figure 3. Percentage of students with disabilities scoring proficient or above on the Grade 3 Ohio’s State Tests in English Language Arts by building (SIMR 1).10
- Figure 4. Percentage of all kindergarten through third grade students who are on track for reading proficiency, as measured by state-approved reading diagnostic assessments (SIMR 2). .11
- Figure 5. Percentage of all kindergarten through third grade students who are on track for reading proficiency, as measured by state-approved reading diagnostic assessments (SIMR 2), by building.12
- Figure 6. Percentage of all kindergarten through third grade students who are on track for reading proficiency, as measured by state-approved reading diagnostic assessments (SIMR 2), by grade level.12
- Figure 7. Percentage correct on LETRS Units 1-4 pre- and post-tests for kindergarten through grade 3 educators.26
- Figure 8. Total number of questions answered correctly on LETRS Units 1-4 pre- and post-tests for kindergarten through grade 3 educators by subgroup.26
- Figure 9. Summary of each tier measured by the Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory (R-TFI).28
- Figure 10. R-TFI Tier 1 total and subscale scores for Cohort 1.29
- Figure 11. Number of coaching sessions by role and type of coaching for Cohort 1 educators.32
- Figure 12. Most frequent topics selected for instructional and systems coaching sessions for Cohort 1 (2016-2017).33
- Figure 13. Percentage of students at or above benchmarking goals by grade and assessment across schools.....35
- Figure 14. Percentage of students relative to benchmarking goals by grade and assessment across schools.....36
- Figure 15. Practice-to-policy feedback loops. Active Implementation Hub Module 5. (n.d.).....45

List of Tables

Table 1. Evaluation Data Collection Plan	21
Table 2. LETRS professional learning implementation by cohort.....	25
Table 3. R-TFI facilitation timeline for project years 2 through 5.....	28
Table 4. Definitions of student subgroups identified for comparison across schools.....	36
Table 5. 2016-2017 SSIP Stakeholder Involvement.....	43

Executive Summary

Ohio's Part B State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) describes the results-driven accountability work implemented during 2016-2017 by staff members of the Ohio Department of Education, Ohio's 16 regional state support teams, local education agencies and stakeholders. It also provides an overview of the information already submitted in Ohio's SSIP [Phase I](#), [Phase II](#) and [Phase III](#) reports. Ohio identified improving early literacy outcomes for all children, including those with disabilities, as its priority.

- In Phase I of the SSIP, the Department and its stakeholders reviewed various data sources and found there is a significant gap between performance targets and performance on reading and math state tests for all Ohio students, including those with disabilities. This information, existing state early literacy initiatives such as the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, and the knowledge that early literacy predicts future academic success led Ohio to identify early literacy as the basis for its state-identified measurable results (SIMR).
- Phase II of the SSIP gave a detailed overview of how Ohio focused on building teachers' capacities to provide high-quality, evidence-based early literacy instruction and intervention using and sometimes modifying state infrastructure, supporting local school districts in implementing evidence-based practices and evaluating implementation activities. The Phase II report discussed five components of the Early Literacy Pilot—Leadership, Multi-Tier System of Supports, Teacher Capacity, Family Engagement and Community Collaboration—and the importance of the connections between them. The report also presented a Theory of Action (see Appendix A) and a comprehensive logic model (see Appendix B) developed by the Department and its stakeholders. Ohio designed the logic model to define, guide and evaluate the key components of this plan. The Department continually reviews and, when necessary, updates the logic model to reflect work completed and modifications made based on evaluation data. The Department recently updated the Theory of Action to emphasize leadership as the primary driver for improving literacy.
- Phase III, Year 1 of the SSIP focused on information about the Early Literacy Pilot implementation, including many professional learning opportunities provided at the local and regional levels; changes to the state and regional infrastructures; and the creation of a real-time data system for use at the local, regional and state levels. The report also included a detailed description of the evaluation plan, including the data sources, how Ohio collected and analyzed data and how this information was reported to the many stakeholders critical to the plan's success. Finally, the report included a description of the diverse technical support and guidance the Department received during 2016-2017.

Ohio is using its existing Ohio Improvement Process (OIP) to implement evidence-based early literacy instruction. This includes adding to or redesigning early literacy goals, strategies, adult implementation indicators and student outcomes in existing district plans. Leveraging the OIP to

implement evidence-based early literacy instruction allows districts to utilize existing district leadership teams, building leadership teams, teacher-based teams and the OIP's five-step process to plan, implement and evaluate evidence-based practices. Districts also can access support in implementing the OIP. State support team staff were trained to facilitate the Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory Tier 1. This training increased each state support team's capacity to help districts assess their infrastructure supports for implementing literacy instruction. Literacy is an embedded goal in district improvement plans.

The SSIP Core Team includes staff members from the Department's Office for Exceptional Children, Office of Early Learning and School Readiness and Center for Curriculum and Assessment, as well as district leaders and an external evaluator who help identify changes and additions to Ohio's current educational infrastructure that will, in turn, help local school districts more thoroughly implement pilot activities.

The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act – the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) – emphasizes the use of evidence-based practices. The Department is committed to supporting implementation of these practices by Ohio's educational entities. Under the SSIP: Early Literacy Pilot, Ohio improved its infrastructure to support implementation of evidence-based language and literacy practices. This infrastructure improvement included hiring a state early literacy administrator and regional early literacy specialists for all 16 state support teams, as well as realigning the scope of work for specific Department staff. The Department also hired two early literacy specialists who report to the early literacy administrator and help the SSIP team oversee the 18 regional early literacy specialists. The early literacy administrator coordinates and collaborate efforts among Department offices and external stakeholders as they design, develop and implement early language and literacy supports for Ohio learners. The Department continued to work with a project manager who helped with coordination, planning, organization, facilitation, research, communication and stakeholder engagement efforts. The project manager continues to guide the team in setting and adhering to planning and implementation timelines. These infrastructure changes allowed the Department to support Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot in 16 districts and across internal offices. For the Department to meet the needs of all of Ohio's districts, schools and early childhood providers, it must continue to build infrastructure that supports literacy improvement throughout the state. Infrastructure improvement includes enhancing state, regional and local supports for literacy improvement.

The Early Literacy Pilot relies heavily on the state's 18 regional early literacy specialists who support implementation in both cohorts of districts. These specialists supported 16 districts with two types of coaching. They provided Systems Coaching to support building leadership teams, principals and district coaches, using effective support strategies to ensure that districts implement evidence-based literacy strategies. They delivered Instructional Coaching to classroom teachers, intervention specialists and small groups of educators to support classroom implementation based on student data.

All preschool through grade 3 educators attended professional learning sessions on research-based language and literacy practices, delivered through the Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) series; Cohort 1 trained in units 4 through 8 and Cohort 2 trained in units 1 through 4. Regional early literacy specialists and district literacy coaches facilitated the Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory Assessment (Tiers 1, 2 and 3 for Cohort 1 and Tier 1 with Cohort 2). Additionally, regional early literacy specialists and district coaches supported teachers using curriculum-based measures to inform their instruction and measure student growth over time.

Improving early language and literacy instruction and outcomes across the state requires planning for and implementing a host of well-defined system and instructional-level activities that have the potential to improve all students' reading abilities. This Phase III, Year 2 report gives details on an extensive list of activities implemented during the past year. Highlights for the 2016-2017 school year include:

- 1) Selecting eight districts to participate in Cohort 2, based on a thorough review of district-readiness. The Department completed partnership agreements with Cohort 2 districts that outlined the incentives, expectations, roles and responsibilities of participation (see Appendix P).
- 2) Providing professional learning to regional early literacy specialists from 16 regional state support teams. These specialists serve as coaches for participating districts while building the capacity of internal district coaches to sustain and scale-up evidence-based practices;
- 3) Providing in-person Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) professional learning sessions for K-3 educators, preschool educators, administrators and the 18 regional early literacy specialists;
- 4) Collaborating with Voyager Sopris Learning to design and provide online LETRS professional learning and virtual coaching webinars;
- 5) Collaborating with Voyager Sopris Learning and Mount St. Joseph University to allow earned college credit for educators completing LETRS professional learning;
- 6) Providing in-person professional learning to district administrators and regional early literacy specialists, led by Tim Shanahan, Ph.D., on what constitutes and how to implement high-quality, evidence-based early language and literacy instruction;
- 7) Designing, creating and implementing the Jim Knight Instructional Coaching professional learning as both an implementation support and a clearly defined coaching activity (Knight, 2017);
- 8) Providing professional learning on facilitating, implementing and gathering data using the Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory (R-TFI Tiers 1,2 and 3), a tool used by teams to measure the extent to which a school's Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) for language and literacy is being implemented as intended, led by Dr. Kim St. Martin. (St. Martin, Nantais, Harms, & Huth, 2015);
- 9) Partnering and investing effort across Department offices to ensure high-quality professional learning to support the educational cascade (classroom, grade-level, building, district, regional and state) those implementing language and literacy professional learning and coaching for building administrators, district coaches,

- teachers, state support team staff, regional early literacy specialists and Department staff;
- 10) Working closely with Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence and The Outreach Center for Deafness and Blindness to ensure all learners are represented in the work. Specialists from each center work together to provide professional learning, technical assistance and coaching for the regional early literacy specialists. Both specialists are members of the two cohorts, taking part in meetings and professional learning with the regional early literacy specialists;
 - 11) Continuing collaboration with J. Averitt Consulting to create and implement a data dashboard. The dashboard allows state, regional and local staff members opportunities to upload data, view data in real time and access reports;
 - 12) Hiring and collaborating with external evaluators at the University of Cincinnati Evaluation Services Center to develop a high-quality evaluation plan, including multiple methods for data collection, analysis and reporting to the state and its stakeholders;
 - 13) Developing the online early literacy tool kit for scaling up evidence-based practices in additional districts, based on implementation science;
 - 14) Providing the SSIP needs assessments, Theory of Action and Logic Model as the foundation for Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement. The Early Literacy Pilot's focus is on preschool through grade 3, and Ohio's newly developed literacy plan extends that focus from birth through grade 12. All the literacy work is closely aligned to Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement;
 - 15) Aligning the current State Personnel Development Grant award to language and literacy and focusing on English Learners and administrators, grounded in the ongoing Early Literacy Pilot work; and
 - 16) Identifying and implementing various ways to partner with and communicate these efforts to stakeholders throughout the state.

Ohio can determine the effectiveness of its infrastructure changes and the evidence-based early language and literacy practices only through high-quality formative and summative evaluation. In November 2016, the Department contracted with the University of Cincinnati Evaluation Services Center to serve as the external evaluator for the SSIP. The Department has been working closely with the center to determine what, when and how data are collected, analyzed, reported and used for evaluating processes and results, as well as for making mid-course modifications. The plan addresses professional learning, language and literacy coaching, student outcomes and family and community engagement. The evaluation plan will use both quantitative and qualitative methods, which will give the state several sources of data from which to make decisions. The complete evaluation plan is described in detail in the *Implementation Data, Outcomes and Data Quality Issues* section of this report.

Ohio has been collecting evaluation data since the onset of the Early Literacy Pilot. These data are an integral part of the practice-to-policy feedback loops built into this work, serving to inform timely adjustments as implementation unfolds. Data highlights from the first year of pilot implementation include:

- A slight decrease in SIMR 1, the percentage of students with disabilities scoring proficient or higher on Ohio’s Third Grade English Language Arts Achievement Test, was apparent from the 2015-2016 baseline (18.2 percent) to year 1 (17.8 percent). However, further analyses revealed that when alternate assessments are removed from the calculation, students with disabilities who took the same assessments as their peers increased from a proficiency rate of 10.6 percent at baseline (2015-2016) to 15.5 percent in year 1 (2016-2017).
- Ohio also saw a slight decrease in SIMR 2, the percentage of all kindergarten through grade 3 students who are on track for reading proficiency, as measured by state-approved reading assessments. Fifty-six percent of K-3 students were on track for reading proficiency in the baseline year (2015-2016), decreasing to just under 55 percent in year 1 (2016-2017).
- Cohort 1 educator knowledge increased 30 percent from pre-test to post-test for LETRS units 1-4; a statistically significant change. The state saw increases in knowledge by educators across grade levels and specializations, for example Title I specialists and intervention specialists.
- Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory (R-TFI) scores increased significantly across Cohort 1 schools for Tier 1 across the full assessment, as well as for the *Resources* and *Evaluation* subscales. While the state saw positive change in the *Team* and *Implementation* subscales, these changes were not statistically significant.
- More than 700 instructional coaching sessions took place with more than 250 educators. The most frequent instructional coaching session topics included phonological awareness, teaching beginning phonics and spelling and use of assessments.
- Specialists conducted nearly 400 systems coaching sessions with 138 coaches, 84 principals, 114 leadership and 42 teachers. The most frequent systems coaching topics included multi-grade level planning, building data analysis and Multi-Tier System of Supports.
- Across Cohort 1 schools, curriculum-based language and literacy measures showed:
 - Positive increases in phoneme segmentation fluency and nonsense word fluency for kindergarten students;
 - Positive increases in nonsense word fluency and oral reading fluency for first grade students;
 - A slight decrease in grade 2 oral reading fluency from first to second benchmarking periods, with a slightly larger increase from the second to third benchmarking periods; and
 - An overall decrease in oral reading fluency and comprehension for third-grade students.
- Annual surveys disseminated by the external evaluator revealed that self-reported implementation of LETRS-related strategies in the classroom increased throughout the year and that LETRS professional learning was most responsible for contributing to teacher learning.
- Focus groups facilitated by the external evaluator revealed high levels of buy-in by educators, as well as an appreciation for coaching.

These data have aided Department staff in enhancing several parts of the Early Literacy Pilot, including: 1) updating the District Partnership Agreements for Cohort 2 to more accurately reflect the expectations and timelines; 2) amending professional learning timelines so district administrative staff have access to the content earlier in the school year; 3) recognizing the need to have additional professional learning on instructional coaching; and 4) identifying the impact of differences in implementation among districts and differentiating support to meet all districts' needs.

The *Implementation Data, Outcomes and Data Quality Issues* section of this report contains detailed descriptions of more complete data analyses. As Ohio further executes the evaluation plan, it will use new sources of data to make additional decisions for implementing this comprehensive early language and literacy pilot.

The Department will continue to describe Ohio's progress toward meeting short-, medium- and long-term early literacy outcomes in SSIP Phase III reports due in April 2019 and 2020. The logic model outlines these outcomes as well as modifications, based on the evaluation data, that Ohio made to infrastructure and evidence-based practices. The reports also will describe efforts to scale up this initiative in additional districts, while planning for sustainability in pilot districts.

Introduction

Over the past four years, the Ohio Department of Education and various stakeholders have been developing a State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP). As part of the SSIP Phase I, Department staff and stakeholders reviewed multiple years of data for children ages 3 to 21 who have disabilities. Members of the SSIP Stakeholder Team (see Appendix C) agreed there is a need to focus on college and career readiness for students with disabilities. The state-level data revealed a gap between performance targets and performance that was largest for reading and math state assessments. Citing research and additional data sources, such as Ohio’s current legislated priorities and results of discussions with stakeholders about existing infrastructure, Department staff and stakeholders opted to focus on and leverage existing resources for improving early literacy outcomes for all children in preschool through grade 3, including children with disabilities. For a comprehensive description of this decision-making process and the data used to make this decision, see the SSIP [Phase I report](#).

The intent of this results-driven accountability initiative is to measure progress in early literacy outcomes in districts selected for strategic assistance. Designated performance measures for the SSIP are the “state-identified measurable results (SIMR).” These two measurable results reflect an agency-wide focus on early language and literacy development and are based on subsets of measures developed for Ohio’s Elementary and Secondary Education Act Flexibility Waiver.

Measurable Improvements in the SIMRs in Relation to Targets

The Department and various stakeholders identified and agreed on two SIMRs; associated baselines and targets were originally presented in the SSIP [Phase III, Year 1 report](#). Ohio’s SSIP team, along with stakeholders, selected targets for each SIMR intending to measure progress for Cohort 1 schools. In this and subsequent SSIP reports, the Department also will describe the progress of Cohort 2 schools using the same targets. Cohort 2 began pilot implementation in the 2017-2018 school year, one year after Cohort 1. For both SIMRs, the baseline for Cohort 1 schools reflects data from the 2015-2016 school year; the baseline for Cohort 2 schools reflects data from the 2016-2017 school year.

State-Identified Measurable Result 1

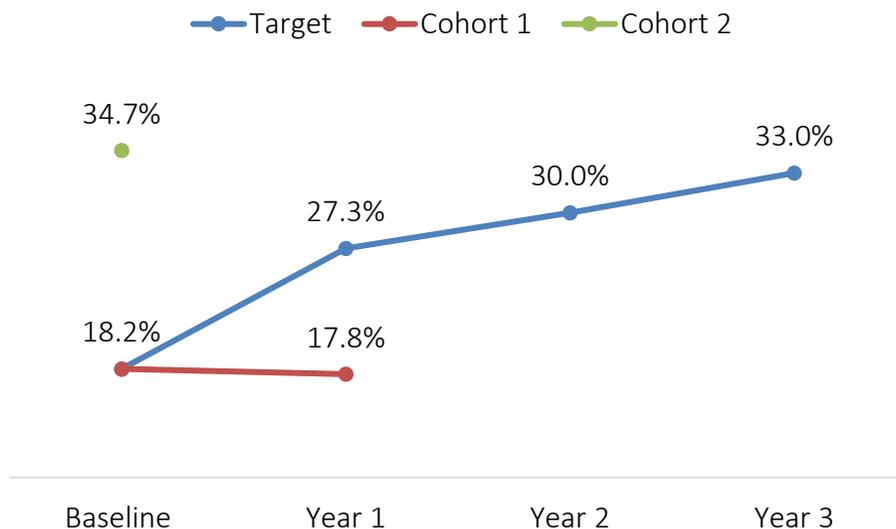
SIMR 1: The percentage of students with disabilities scoring proficient or higher on Ohio’s Third Grade English Language Arts Achievement Test

Baseline, Targets and Results

School Year	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
Target	18.2%	27.3%	30.0%	33.0%
Cohort 1	18.2% (Baseline)	17.8%		
Cohort 2	n/a	34.7% (Baseline)		

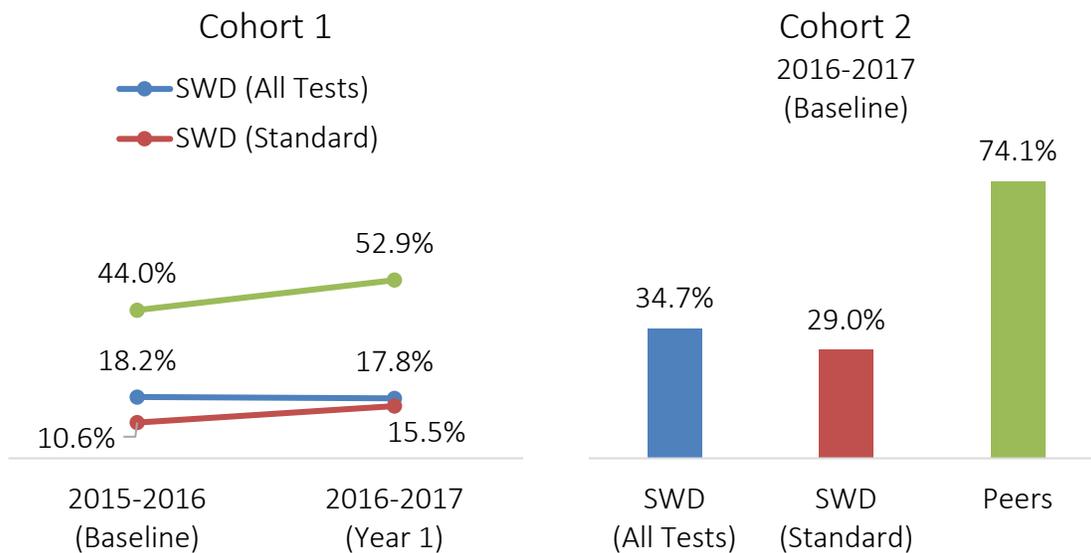
Figure 1 displays results for SIMR 1. The baseline for Cohort 1 schools reflects data from the 2015-2016 school year and the baseline for Cohort 2 schools reflects data from the 2016-2017 school year.

Figure 1. Percentage of students with disabilities scoring proficient or above on Ohio's Third Grade English Language Arts Achievement Test (SIMR 1).



This year, the Department took a closer look at SIMR data from baseline to implementation year 1. The initial baseline for Cohort 1 (18.2 percent) included alternate assessments, which are to be administered only to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Ohio's Alternate Assessment for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities is aligned to Ohio's Learning Standards—Extended and designed to allow students with significant cognitive disabilities to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in an appropriately rigorous assessment. Thus, the Department further examined scores of students with disabilities taking the same assessments as their peers and learned that only 10.6 percent of those students were proficient in the baseline year (an 8.4 percent difference). Therefore, in year 1 of implementation, students with disabilities who took the same assessment as their peers had an overall increase in proficiency across the Cohort 1 schools (see Figure 2). Similarly, typically developing students had an overall increase in proficiency across Cohort 1 schools.

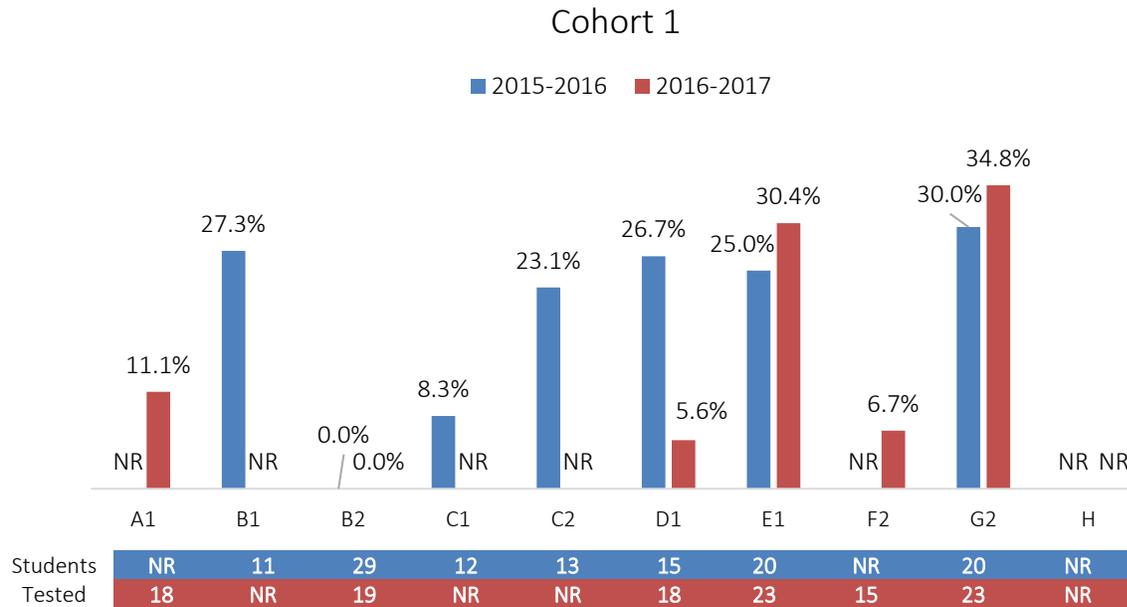
Figure 2. Percentage of students scoring proficient or above on the Grade 3 Ohio’s State Tests in English Language Arts by test type, student subgroup and cohort (SIMR 1).



The Department will continue to disaggregate SIMR 1 by test type in all future analyses to more effectively and accurately track the progress of students with disabilities. The Department will also further analyze the results of SIMR 1 by replicating this measure for typically developing peers of those students with disabilities.

Ten buildings in Cohort 1 serve third-grade students. The change in percentage of students with disabilities scoring proficient or above on Ohio’s grade 3 English language arts assessment in these 10 buildings from baseline to year one is displayed in Figure 3. Use of the same letter indicates the buildings are part of the same district. Collectively, the percentage of students proficient in reading decreased across Cohort 1 buildings, though three schools (C1, E1, G2) increased.

Figure 3. Percentage of students with disabilities scoring proficient or above on the Grade 3 Ohio’s State Tests in English Language Arts by building (SIMR 1).



Note: “NR” indicates a calculation for fewer than 10 students.

State-Identified Measurable Result 2

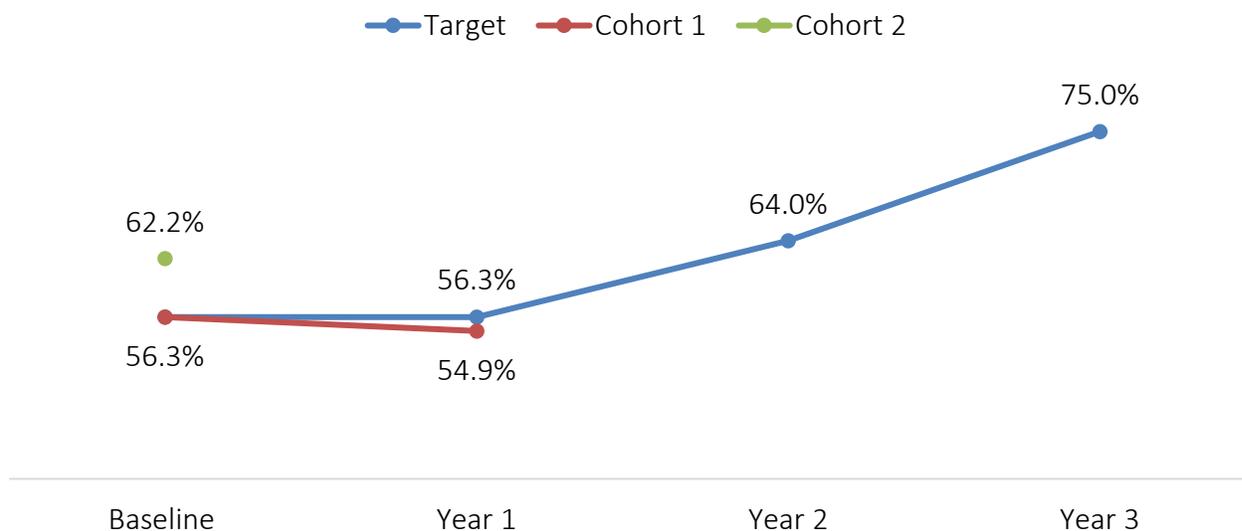
SIMR 2: The percentage of all kindergarten through third-grade students who are on track for reading proficiency, as measured by state-approved diagnostic reading assessments

Baseline, Targets and Results

School Year	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
Target	56.3%	56.3%	64.0%	75.0%
Cohort 1	56.3% (Baseline)	54.9%		
Cohort 2	n/a	62.2% (Baseline)		

Figure 4 displays results for SIMR 2. As with SIMR 1, the baseline for Cohort 1 schools reflects data from the 2015-2016 school year and the baseline for Cohort 2 schools reflects data from the 2016-2017 school year.

Figure 4. Percentage of all kindergarten through third-grade students who are on track for reading proficiency, as measured by state-approved reading diagnostic assessments (SIMR 2).



The results for Year 1 show an overall decrease in the percentage of kindergarten through grade 3 students who were on track for reading proficiency. The Department recognizes that the state-approved reading diagnostic districts use to assess whether students are on track for reading proficiency varies from district to district. It also is notable that SIMR 1 includes the results of students taking alternate assessments, whereas SIMR 2 does not include any student placed on an alternate assessment because these students are excused from the reading diagnostic.

The change in percentage of students on track for reading proficiency in Cohort 1 buildings from baseline to year one is displayed in Figure 5. Use of the same letter indicates the buildings are part of the same district. Similar to SIMR 1, many Cohort 1 buildings decreased in terms of percentage of students on track for reading proficiency, though five schools (C1, E2, F1, F2, H) increased. The improvement in E2 and F1 is particularly noteworthy given the size of these schools. Overall, more students are on track from baseline to year 1 in second and third grades, but the decrease for kindergarten and first grade students results in an overall decline for the cohort (see Figure 6).

Figure 5. Percentage of all kindergarten through third-grade students who are on track for reading proficiency, as measured by state-approved reading diagnostic assessments (SIMR 2), by building.

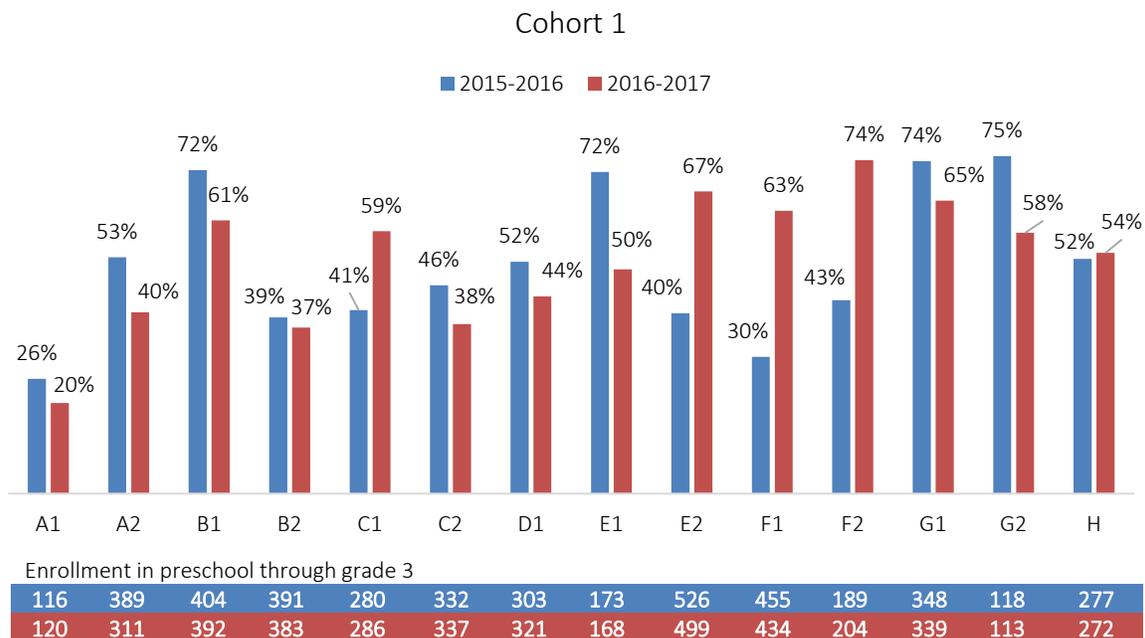
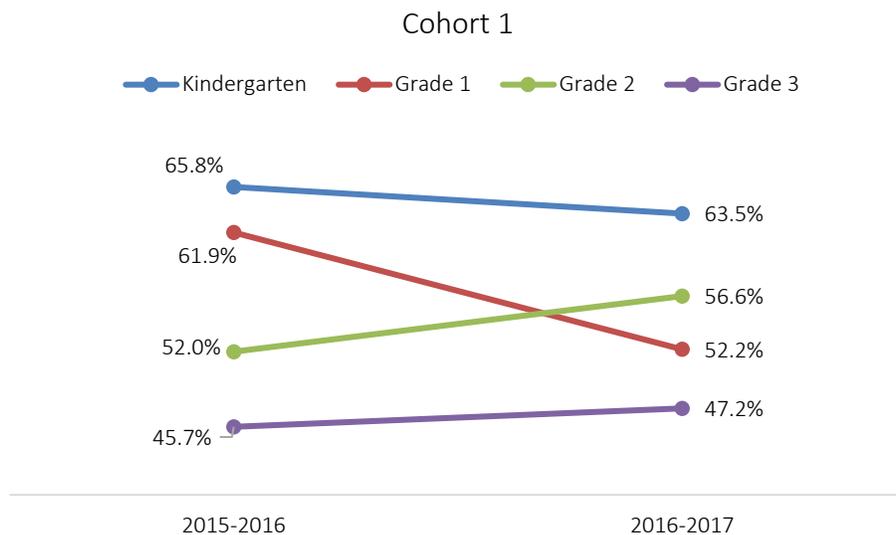


Figure 6. Percentage of all kindergarten through third-grade students who are on track for reading proficiency, as measured by state-approved reading diagnostic assessments (SIMR 2), by grade level.



The rest of this Phase III report describes the activities completed during the past year and the progress toward the improvements intended by Ohio’s Early Literacy Pilot. Some of the activities include making changes to systems and infrastructure development, planning and implementing selected evidence-based practices in local school districts and preparing a comprehensive

evaluation plan. These activities will guide current and future systemic improvement efforts regarding early literacy. Ohio's SSIP Core Team continues to lead the development of every component of the SSIP, with ongoing support and guidance from stakeholders and technical assistance providers. Staff members of the Department's Office for Exceptional Children, Office of Early Learning and School Readiness, and the Center for Curriculum and Assessment form the SSIP Core Team (see Appendix D for list of Department staff and regional early literacy specialists). This team partners with the external evaluation team at the University of Cincinnati Evaluation Services Center to develop data collection procedures, ensure data quality and plan strategies for data analysis. This report describes procedures for using evaluation data to make decisions, as well as all modifications to the plan. The report covers technical assistance and other supports that the Department accessed during the last year, as well as plans to sustain and scale up this initiative over time.

Alignment to Existing Current State Initiatives

The Department's aim is to give all learners effective, evidence-based instruction to acquire language and literacy knowledge, skills and strategies so they can enjoy full lives of learning and success. Ohio maintains a portfolio of aligned policies and practices to ensure all students acquire these critical literacy skills. The goal is to align all school improvement efforts in one comprehensive plan that includes language and literacy development goals. Clear alignment of state, regional and local efforts to other improvement activities is critical and the Early Literacy Pilot is the foundation for literacy improvement activities at all levels. Ohio's portfolio includes a variety of funding sources, legislation and other policy drivers.

The Department is using existing structures to continuously refine Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot. These include Ohio's Learning Standards for English Language Arts, a standards-based system of assessments, data collection systems, accountability systems and report cards, the Ohio Improvement Process, quality preschools, Third Grade Reading Guarantee, the Dyslexia Pilot Project and a strong system of regional supports.

The hiring of an Early Literacy Administrator in 2016 and the formation of a Literacy Unit in 2017 further illustrate the Department's commitment to a strong literacy foundation in Ohio. The Literacy Unit includes two early literacy specialists and a Third Grade Reading Guarantee administrator, who are housed at the Department, and two adolescent literacy specialists housed in regional offices. Under the guidance of the early literacy administrator, the Literacy Unit's role is to build capacity to support language and literacy development across state, regional and local systems and align language and literacy initiatives throughout the Department and with other Ohio agencies.

Educational service centers and state support teams are two examples of the strong regional support systems. Ohio developed state support teams to provide targeted support for evidence-based practices that improve outcomes for Ohio's students with disabilities. Included are professional learning opportunities targeted not only at increasing the achievement of students with disabilities but also at promoting strong core instruction so fewer students are identified as

having disabilities. In collaboration with the Department, 18 regional early literacy specialists housed in the state support team offices have helped develop professional learning opportunities, resources and support systems that promote evidence-based language and literacy practices and intervention. Many nonpilot districts and early childcare programs, as well as SSIP pilot districts, have benefited from these resources.

In addition to providing local professional learning opportunities for districts, the Department has invested in the professional learning of state support team staff. This work has helped increase literacy capacity throughout Ohio's education system, including among administrators, teachers, intervention specialists, speech and language pathologists and parents. Department staff members, working with national experts, developed a library of research-based professional learning webinars, voiceover PowerPoints and resources as part of Ohio's first [Literacy Academy](#) held in January 2018. These resources build on the online [literacy toolkits](#) to support implementation of evidence-based language and literacy practices.

Ohio updated its [Third Grade Reading Guarantee Manual](#) in August 2017. The manual now includes clear connections to evidence-based language and literacy practices so districts can better support their language and literacy learning systems, instruction and intervention. The information on the Department's website and in the toolkits takes the evidence-based early language and literacy instruction well beyond the Early Literacy Pilot schools and disseminates the information to interested stakeholders such as parents, school personnel, community businesses and other state agencies. The Department is working to create a clearinghouse that will include evidence-based practices and interventions aligned with the ESSA definitions of Strong, Moderate, Promising and Demonstrating. The clearinghouse will provide support for districts to identify evidence-based practices and interventions that align to their students' needs.

Senate Bill 21, Ohio's 2013 Third Grade Reading Guarantee law, requires traditional districts and community schools (charter schools) to submit Reading Achievement Plans if they meet the following criteria, as reported on the past two consecutive district or school report cards under section 3302.03 of the Revised Code: (1) The district or school received a grade of "D" or "F" on the kindergarten through third-grade literacy progress measure under division (C)(3)(e) of section 3302.03 of the Revised Code; and (2) Less than 60 percent of the district's students who took the third grade English language arts assessment prescribed under section 3301.0710 of the Revised Code during the most recent fall and spring administrations attained at least a proficient score on that assessment. In 2016-2017, 97 traditional districts and community schools met this requirement. The Department worked with the state support teams to help districts develop evidence-based Reading Achievement Plans by providing professional learning. These learning opportunities ranged from conducting deep data analysis, to goal setting, to identifying and monitoring evidence-based strategies to increasing outcomes for all students.

Ohio received its third State Personnel Development Grant in August 2017. With each new set of grant funding, the Department built on the prior professional learning programming, intending to establish a comprehensive, evidence-based, sustainable professional learning system for

those who work with all learners. Through previous grant funding, the Department had developed the Ohio Improvement Process. The Department also made efforts to improve educational leadership, remove silos between general education and special education, improve communication between district teacher-based teams, building-level teams and leaders and extend the use of data to inform decision-making. Ohio's current round of the [State Personnel Development Grant](#) merges (a) recent research on language and literacy core instruction and interventions; (b) advances in understanding of implementation research to further develop educators' competencies; and (c) a systemic approach to building capacity.

A final example of how Ohio aligned the Early Literacy Pilot to state literacy efforts was the use of the Theory of Action and Logic Model as the foundation for a Federally Funded Literacy Grant (Striving Readers) application (Ohio Department of Education, 2017). Ohio received a \$35 million grant in October 2017 to increase literacy achievement for disadvantaged students, including those living in poverty, those with disabilities, English learners and those identified as having a reading difficulty. The Department also was required to update its State Literacy Plan as part of the grant award process. The revised plan used the core components and activities of the Early Literacy Pilot, which served as the foundation for [Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement: Birth through Grade 12](#) (Ohio Department of Education, 2018). This plan relied heavily on implementation and lessons learned from Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot for preschool through grade 3.

Together, this collection of policies and practices drives Ohio's work to improve literacy outcomes for all learners. State leaders will continue to ensure that these efforts align with the goals and objectives of Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement, as well as other school improvement efforts. The portfolio will continue to expand as the Department annually examines data and identifies targets for improvement.

Progress in Implementing the SSIP

Research-Based Early Literacy Instruction

To improve early language and literacy outcomes for all students in preschool through grade three, including students with disabilities, the Department created an Early Literacy Pilot Theory of Action (Appendix A) and Logic Model (Appendix B) that describes many activities. Within the overall Early Literacy Pilot, the Department identified evidence- and research-based practices to implement at the district level. Odom, Brantlinger, Gersten, Horner, Thompson and Harris, 2005, define evidence-based practices as procedures based on rigorous, systematic scientific research and have shown evidence of effectiveness. Research-based practices are those that are based on research but that have not been empirically tested. The primary research-based practice selected for Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot is the Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) professional learning series. LETRS is based on decades of research on how children learn to read, including the neurobiological basis of reading development. LETRS includes many evidence-based language and literacy instructional practices (Voyager Sopris Learning, Inc., 2016).

The second research-based activity is coaching for district and regional staff. Coaching serves as both an adult intervention and a part of pilot implementation. Research supports literacy coaching as an effective way to improve instructional skills of teachers and student outcomes (Cantrell & Hughes, 2008; Carlisle & Berebitsky, 2011; Shidler, 2009). The Early Literacy Pilot outlined by the Department and its stakeholders relies heavily on implementing both research-based practices (content-specific professional learning and language and literacy coaching) to improve outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities.

Ohio's focus on building teachers' capacities to provide high-quality, evidence-based early language and literacy instruction and intervention required a detailed plan that outlined expectations and incorporated key components identified in the Phase I Theory of Action. Again, Ohio has updated the Theory of Action to highlight leadership as a crucial starting point in school improvement efforts. A team of Department and state support team staff members, the regional early literacy specialists and the SSIP Stakeholder Team led the development of this Theory of Action to support Ohio's implementation of evidence-based language and literacy practices. Research on continuous improvement, Universal Design for Learning, implementation science and Multi-Tier System of Supports guided and influenced all elements of the action plan and will continue to support this work. The action plan defines the specific early language and literacy activities implemented as part of the SSIP. These activities are designed to promote gains in early language and literacy skills for all students in preschool through grade 3, with accelerated rates of improvement for students at the greatest risk of reading difficulty.

Ongoing Support and Professional learning

The 2016-2017 school year started with a plethora of professional learning activities aligned to the SSIP intended outcomes. Ohio delivered these to regional early literacy specialists, district coaches, teachers, intervention specialists, speech and language pathologists and administrators from both cohorts. Many of this year's early literacy activities continued to focus on building knowledge and implementation of high-quality, evidence-based early language and literacy instructional strategies at the state, regional, district, school and classroom local levels. These activities are described below and within the Logic Model.

- State: The Department is providing professional learning access to staff throughout the agency to align resources, language and messaging. Professional learning access looks different depending on the needs of each staff member. Staff from all involved Department offices fully engage in professional learning provided at the regional, district, school and teacher levels.
- Regional: Regional support staff, including regional early literacy specialists, have access to all district and teacher-level professional learning supports, as well as monthly literacy sessions to build capacity to serve districts throughout the state. These ongoing sessions provide information on a myriad of topics that support the Early Literacy Pilot goals, ranging from system-level support to instructional support. National experts, Department staff and regional early literacy specialists conduct the sessions. Examples of professional learning include support for implementing various curriculum-based measures, the Multi-

Tiered System of Supports, needs assessments, coaching topics, diverse learner supports and specific program tools pilot districts have chosen to implement based on needs identified through data. The Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence and the Outreach Center for Deafness and Blindness are members of both cohorts, taking part with regional early literacy specialists in meetings, providing professional learning, providing technical assistance and coaching district coaches in the pilot schools.

The Department conducts monthly face-to-face professional learning for the regional early literacy specialists to increase their knowledge, get feedback on district and program progress and needs, share ideas and give guidance on program implementation. The monthly meetings also promote networking between Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 specialists and provide opportunities to expand learning and strengthen knowledge of effective coaching practices. To build capacity and encourage collaboration within and across regions, part of these monthly meetings is open to regional and district staff members. See the *Technical Assistance and Support* section of this report for descriptions of topics and names of national expert presenters.

- District and school: District and school leaders participating in Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot will engage in an administrator's version of Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS), consisting of both online units and a face-to-face session with a national expert. Regional early literacy specialists support district and school leaders through systems-level coaching. Systems-level coaching is coaching that supports administrators and the systems in districts that promote and support evidence-based language and literacy practices. Administrators also enjoy access to workshops with national literacy experts, webinar forums led by the Department and monthly professional learning opportunities.

Administrator forum webinars, led by Department staff, provide implementation updates, allow districts to share experiences and include information to support implementation of evidence-based practices in classrooms. These forums provide opportunities to delve deeper into systems-level content, such as motivating adult learners and principal language and literacy walk-throughs. The Department records each forum to offer future access to participants and administrative teams not available for the live webinar.

- Classroom: Districts participating in the Early Literacy Pilot engage in professional learning through LETRS. This professional learning series uses a hybrid model; online units supported by face-to-face sessions with national experts and a bridge to practice experience to build teachers' knowledge and application of evidence-based language and literacy practices. Teachers are supported by instructional coaches in the application of concepts learned and practiced through the professional learning.

Ohio provides several other professional learning activities and ongoing support at multiple levels.

- All regional early literacy specialists had access to Voyager’s two day 2017 Virtual Summer Literacy Symposium (see Appendix E) during which many leading literacy experts presented topics. Examples include Top 10 Considerations for Quality Early Literacy; Common Problems in Implementing RTI and How to Solve Them; and Language Basis of Reading Comprehension: Development and Difficulties. The regional early learning specialists also have access to “virtual coaching sessions” hosted by Voyager Sopris Learning. These sessions take place bi-monthly to support the LETRS content for each unit. Each session is recorded for future access. Year 1 of the virtual coaching sessions focused on developing language and literacy content knowledge. Department staff are working closely with the Voyager Sopris Learning team to design a better framework for coaching and develop a plan to include more elements for coaching evidence-based language and literacy instructional practices.
- To increase regional and building capacity for supporting evidence-based language and literacy practices, literacy expert Tim Shanahan, Ph.D., discussed his Literacy Improvement Pyramid (see Appendix F). Regional Literacy Specialists and district coaches use this tool to better equip districts to create, support and sustain a strong language and literacy system.
- To develop a clear, consistent coaching model that will support language and literacy content and be thoroughly implemented, four regional early literacy specialists and Department staff attended a week-long instructional coaching institute provided by Jim Knight, Ph.D., of the Instructional Coaching Group. Participants then provided professional learning focused on instructional coaching for regional early literacy specialists via monthly meetings. Field implementation of these coaching methods began during the 2017-2018 school year, as all 18 regional early literacy specialists work with district coaches using Jim Knight’s methods to increase long-term sustainability.
- The Department held a two-day Literacy Academy in January 2018 to support districts and early childhood programs in writing evidence-based local literacy plans based on deep analysis of their literacy data. The Literacy Academy offered instruction by national experts, including Laura Justice (emergent literacy), Timothy Shanahan (early, conventional and disciplinary literacies), and Judith Irvin and Mel Riddile (adolescent literacy). All hold doctorates in their fields. State and regional presenters led sessions on Ohio’s Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement, Selection of Evidence-Based Practices and Interventions, Differentiating Instruction, Developing a Professional Development Plan and Multi-Tier System of Supports. To allow wider access, the Department recorded all sessions for posting on its [website](#).
- Three regional early literacy specialists spent a week in June 2017 with Anita Archer, Ph.D., exploring the implementation of explicit instruction. Explicit instruction is a systematic, direct, engaging and success-oriented teaching process. As a result, the Department will provide an opportunity for the remaining regional early literacy specialists, as well as district and regional staff, to participate in June 2018 to become

Ohio facilitators. Regional early literacy specialists, SSIP pilot district coaches, state support teams and educational service center staff who support literacy instruction across grades will participate in this week-long train-the-trainers professional learning opportunity.

The Department's investment in professional learning will continue with the expansion, development and implementation of statewide language and literacy professional learning plans for educators teaching children birth through age 5 as well as middle and high school students. These plans will be added to Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement as the Department finalizes them (Ohio Department of Education, 2018).

Implementation Data, Outcomes and Data Quality Issues

Department staff, state support team directors, external consultants and stakeholders from various state organizations and agencies (see Appendix C) led Ohio's evaluation planning efforts. The plan developed by this team measures both the process and impact of implementing evidence-based instructional practices to support gains in early language and literacy skills for preschool through grade 3 students, with accelerated rates of improvement for students at the greatest risk of reading difficulty. The Department used the tools described below to help develop data, infrastructure and evaluation systems.

Planned Analyses

The evaluation plan is of mixed-methods design (Creswell, Klassen, Plano Clark, & Smith, 2011), using both quantitative and qualitative data with ongoing feedback for program improvement. The external evaluation team at the University of Cincinnati Evaluation Services Center will analyze the qualitative data following several major steps. Team members will read the data to get a sense of the whole, use open coding to determine what the data mean and develop themes from the codes to identify larger patterns (Creswell, 2012). The team will analyze quantitative data using statistical packages to calculate descriptive and inferential statistics and will report all findings in aggregate. The evaluation team will obtain much of the data from the data dashboard, described below, created specifically for Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot. Evaluation staff have data policies and procedures in place, including a code book and procedures for secure storage and data accessibility to ensure that the data are managed effectively. The Department is working closely with Voyager Sopris Learning, J. Averitt Consulting and the University of Cincinnati evaluation team to determine the data are to be collected and how data will be protected, shared, analyzed and reported.

Data Dashboard

The Department contracted with an external partner to create a data dashboard to document and evaluate the Early Literacy Pilot implementation. Jennifer Averitt, developer and data manager for J. Averitt Consulting, worked with the Department to develop a functional, relevant dashboard. The dashboard contains "real-time" building-, teacher- and child-level data, including curriculum-based measure data, R-TFI data and professional learning data; a professional activities calendar; coaching logs and attendance records. Regional early literacy specialists,

Department staff, district coaches and the external evaluation staff all receive training on the data dashboard's content and use.

Building staff in both cohorts upload curriculum-based measure data and regional early literacy specialists and district coaches upload R-TFI data. Both regional early literacy specialists and district literacy coaches are uploading data regarding coaching intensity (number and length of each coaching session). The Department continues to work with Ms. Averitt to ensure that users can download data reports that meet their needs. The Department sponsored a live webinar for pilot participants on Feb. 22, 2018, and recorded it for future access. The Department developed a Guide to the SSIP Data Dashboard for quick reference as well (see Appendix G). It will be possible throughout the SSIP to modify the data dashboard to best suit the needs of the districts, regions, state and external evaluators.

Evaluation Questions, Data Sources, Data Collection and Associated Timelines

Realizing the complexity and different stakeholder levels represented in the system of supports for this initiative, Ohio has contracted with an external evaluator to conduct the evaluation based on the concept of system dynamics (Raimondo, Vaessen & Bamberger, 2016), through which the system of support for language and literacy professional learning will be documented, described and explored during the five-year evaluation. The evaluation plan addresses each strand of the Theory of Action: leadership, Multi-Tier System of Supports, teacher capacity, family partnerships and community collaboration. Department personnel and the external evaluators have focused the evaluation plan on 1) professional learning; 2) language and literacy coaching; 3) student and teacher outcomes; and 4) family and community engagement.

Ohio is collecting data related to teacher knowledge, classroom practices, student outcomes, administrative supports, regional early literacy specialist supports, coaching, professional learning and family and community engagement. The external evaluator uses quantitative and qualitative methods to capture the information needed to inform this Early Literacy Pilot. Much of the data is collected using online formats.

1. LETRS data—used to measure teacher knowledge. Voyager Sopris Learning gathers this data and shares it with the Department and the external evaluators;
2. Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory data—used to support school leadership teams in assessing and improving the effectiveness of their Multi-Tier System of Supports for language and literacy. Regional early literacy specialists and districts coaches collect this data and upload it to the data dashboard;
3. Coaching data—used to measure the intensity and impact of coaching. Regional early literacy specialists and district coaches collect this data and upload it to the data dashboard;
4. Curriculum-based measures such as aimsweb or DIBELS Next, the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment and Grade 3 Ohio's State Tests in English Language Arts—used to measure student outcomes. Districts collect this data and load it into the data dashboard for use by districts, regions, the state and external evaluators. The data from the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment and Grade 3 Ohio's State Tests in

English Language Arts will be reported to the Department. As part of the data sharing agreement, the Department will provide these data for participating schools to the external evaluators;

5. Online, self-report surveys—used to measure classroom practices, parent and community engagement, administrative supports, coaching supports and supports received from the regional early literacy specialists. These data are being collected using Qualtrics (2015), an online data collection software used for many professional and academic research purposes; and
6. Focus groups and site visits—used to measure classroom practices, teacher perceptions, school climate, administrative supports and supports received from the regional early literacy specialists. External evaluators conduct these focus groups.

Memoranda of understanding governing data sharing are in place and signed by the appropriate parties. No individually identifying information will be collected. All data measures, collection procedures and analysis methods have been reviewed and approved by the University of Cincinnati’s Institutional Review Board. Each evaluation question, the Theory of Action strand it represents, the source(s) of data, collection procedures and associated timelines are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Evaluation Data Collection Plan

Evaluation Question	Theory of Action Strand	Proposed Measure(s)	Collection Timeline												
To what extent did the teachers of students in preschool-grade 3 implement early language and literacy core instruction using evidence-based practices with fidelity, as assessed using the Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) knowledge post-test and the LETRS Application of Concepts tool?	Leadership, Multi-Tier System of Supports, Teacher Capacity	Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) post-test LETRS Application of Concepts	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="3" style="text-align: center;">LETRS post-test</th> </tr> <tr> <th></th> <th style="text-align: center;">Cohort 1</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Cohort 2</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Units 1-4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">spring 2018</td> <td style="text-align: center;">spring 2019</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Units 5-8</td> <td style="text-align: center;">spring 2019</td> <td style="text-align: center;">spring 2020</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> Begin collection for LETRS Application of Concepts tool fall 2018	LETRS post-test				Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Units 1-4	spring 2018	spring 2019	Units 5-8	spring 2019	spring 2020
LETRS post-test															
	Cohort 1	Cohort 2													
Units 1-4	spring 2018	spring 2019													
Units 5-8	spring 2019	spring 2020													
To what extent did instructional coaches support teachers in the use of evidence-based early literacy practices, as documented by the coaching data?	Leadership, Multi-Tier System of Supports	Coaching log	Collected continuously												

Evaluation Question	Theory of Action Strand	Proposed Measure(s)	Collection Timeline
To what extent did the teachers of students in preschool-grade 3 use data literacy skills to implement screening, progress monitoring and instructional decision-making with fidelity, as assessed by the Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory?	Leadership, Multi-Tier System of Supports, Teacher Capacity	Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory	Baseline Tier 1 in fall of implementation year 1, annual administration of Tier 1 and baseline Tiers 2 & 3 in spring of implementation year 1, Annual administration of Tiers 1, 2 & 3 in spring of years 2-5
To what extent was the implementation of early literacy and language core instruction and interventions supported by the Ohio Improvement Process (OIP) shared leadership structures at the district, building and teacher levels, as assessed by the Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory?	Leadership, Multi-Tier System of Supports, Teacher Capacity	Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory	Baseline Tier 1 in fall of implementation year 1, annual administration of Tier 1 and baseline Tiers 2 & 3 in spring of implementation year 1, annual administration of Tiers 1, 2 & 3 in spring of years 2-5
To what extent did students in kindergarten-grade 3 demonstrate gains in indicators of basic early literacy skills that met or exceeded national benchmark rates of improvement for students at the greatest risk of reading difficulty, as measured by DIBELS Next or aimsweb assessments?	Leadership, Multi-Tier System of Supports, Teacher Capacity	Early literacy curriculum-based measures (DIBELS Next or aimsweb) Ohio's Third Grade English Language Arts Test State-approved Reading Diagnostic Assessments	Fall, winter and spring CBM benchmark periods, annual spring administration of Ohio's Third Grade English Language Arts Test, Annual fall administration of state-approved reading diagnostic assessment
To what extent did implementation of evidence-based early literacy instruction and intervention at the preschool level improve language and literacy skills at kindergarten entry, as measured by the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment?	Leadership, Multi-Tier System of Supports, Teacher Capacity	Kindergarten Readiness Assessment	Annually in the fall
To what extent did teachers increase family engagement in language and literacy development (in years 3-5 of the project), as assessed by the Levels of Collaboration Survey?	Parent Partnerships	TBD	Fall survey administration for each incoming cohort beginning in Year 3 and then annually in the spring

Evaluation Question	Theory of Action Strand	Proposed Measure(s)	Collection Timeline
To what extent did district leadership team and building leadership team members increase their level of collaboration with external partners to guide the development of and access to community-wide systems of support for language and literacy (in years 3-5 of the project), as assessed by the Levels of Collaboration Survey?	Collaborative Structures	TBD	Fall survey administration for each incoming cohort beginning in Year 3 and then annually in the spring

Each spring, the University of Cincinnati collects additional data by surveying the teachers, regional early literacy specialists, district coaches and building leadership. These surveys will ask personnel to self-report on several different topical areas, including demographic information; engagement with the Early Literacy Pilot and associated activities; and attitudes, beliefs and perceptions about the activities, the implementation and their impact.

During the first implementation year, the external evaluators will complete site visits at participating schools. The intention of the site visit is to conduct focus groups or interviews with teachers, administrators and parents that provide details on the implementation of language and literacy professional learning, family engagement and school climate activities. Focus groups also were conducted with regional early literacy specialists. These data give the external evaluators greater details into the early literacy implementation process, what’s working, what needs to be changed and other factors that may be impeding successful implementation of the Early Literacy Pilot.

The Department and external evaluators monitor all data for reliability, validity and quality. Checks for quality and reliability are built into the evaluation plan. Until data collection processes have been standardized and a larger amount of evaluation data are gathered, the Department and the external evaluators will be cautious about results. The Department and the external evaluators are knowledgeable about methods for improving data quality and will implement processes to improve data quality when necessary.

Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS)

The regional early literacy specialists, Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence and Outreach Center for Deafness and Blindness specialists, district coaches, teachers, intervention specialists and administrators received in-person professional learning on language and literacy research-based practices through LETRS professional learning. The scope and sequence of the language and literacy research-based practices can be found in Appendix H. Voyager Sopris Learning’s national trainers conducted the hands-on, face-to-face professional learning sessions for kindergarten through grade 3 educators over three days during the 2017-2018 school year.

Administrators and educators also took part in online LETRS units created by Voyager Sopris Learning. The LETRS professional learning for kindergarten through grade 3 educators includes eight units separated into two sets of four (i.e., units 1-4 and 5-8). Each unit contains eight sessions. The different units cover The Challenge of Learning to Read; The Speech Sounds of English; Teaching Beginning Phonics, Word Recognition, and Spelling; Advanced Decoding, Spelling, and Word Recognition; The Mighty Word—Oral Language and Vocabulary; Digging for Meaning—Understanding Reading Comprehension; Text-Driven Comprehension Instruction; and The Reading-Writing Connection.

Each unit contains a summary of the information presented. Checks for understanding and “bridges to practice” are woven throughout the online learning platform. Participants must pass quizzes at the end of each unit. The online learning component provides an opportunity for participants to complete case studies and build portfolios of progress for each case.

Online LETRS professional learning for early childhood educators (preschool and kindergarten) include four units of two to four sessions each. The various units cover the following topics: Developmentally Appropriate Practice; Role of Assessment; Oral Language Development; Phonological Awareness; and Print Knowledge. Checks for understanding, and “bridges to practice,” are included in each unit. Participants take a pre-test before beginning the online modules and take the same test after completing unit four. Voyager Sopris Learning’s national trainers conducted the hands-on, face-to-face professional learning sessions for preschool and kindergarten educators over two days during the 2017-2018 school year.

Voyager Sopris Learning and the SSIP Core Team developed two strategies to recognize teacher participation and incentivize teachers to complete the professional learning. Participants who meet minimum criteria receive a “certificate of mastery.” This certificate requires mastery of all content assessments and calls for participants to score 80 percent or higher. Teachers who do not meet this requirement receive a “certificate of completion.” Both certificates document the number of professional learning hours completed. Teachers can use them to document activities to meet their individual professional learning plans. Participants who meet additional criteria may apply for graduate credit through Mount St. Joseph University, where Amy Murdoch, Ph.D., has worked to make graduate credit available for participants in the Early Literacy Pilot.

As Cohort 2 joined the pilot in the 2017-2018 school year, several minor differences in LETRS implementation occurred. These are noted below and displayed in Table 2.

Cohort 1

Cohort 1 administrators participated in LETRS professional learning in January 2017, while teachers started their professional learning in August 2016. Educators completed the first four units of LETRS during the 2016-2017 school year, and Cohort 1 continues with units 5-8 in the 2017-2018 school year.

Cohort 2

Cohort 2 administrators participated in professional learning in June 2017, while teachers began in-person LETRS professional learning in August 2017. Preschool staff took part in a one-day session in fall 2017 and will participate in the second one-day session in April 2018. The Department contracted with Voyager Sopris Learning to conduct professional learning sessions at three regional sites. Appendix I of the 2017-2018 LETRS Professional Learning Calendar lists the dates, regions and intended audiences.

Table 2. LETRS professional learning implementation by cohort.

		Cohort 1		Cohort 2	
		Year 1 (2016-2017)	Year 2 (2017-2018)	Year 1 (2017-2018)	Year 2 (2018-2019)
Administrators	In-person	January 2017		June 2017	
K-3	Online	Units 1-4	Units 5-8	Units 1-4	Units 5-8
	In-person	One-day training three times a year			
Early Childhood	Online		Early Childhood and K-3 unit 1	Early Childhood and K-3 unit 1	
	In-person	Two-day training once a year		One-day training twice a year	

LETRS Professional Learning Data

Voyager Sopris Learning collects and shares participant satisfaction survey data with the Department. The Department tracks attendance data for both in-person and online professional learnings. The Department works with Voyager Sopris Learning to capture the completion rates of those participating in the online modules, their knowledge measured by pre- and post-tests and their responses to checks for understanding.

Pre- and post-tests are administered in the fall and spring for all content contained in the first four professional learning units for Year 1 and the last 4 units for Year 2. Pre- and post-test scores were analyzed to determine whether participants’ knowledge increased after taking part in the first four units of LETRS’s online professional learning. The Department saw an overall increase from the pre- to post-test, with teachers scoring 30 percent higher after participation in the first four units. While the number of items associated with each unit varied, there also was an increase in percentage correct on each unit. Of the 250 teachers who completed both the pre- and post-tests, 95 percent showed gains in language and literacy knowledge. Language and literacy knowledge increased across all 14 Cohort 1 schools and among all educator subgroups (see Figure 8). Figure 7 depicts the average percentage correct for each unit and the overall test.

Figure 7. Percentage correct on LETRS Units 1-4 pre- and post-tests for kindergarten through grade 3 educators.

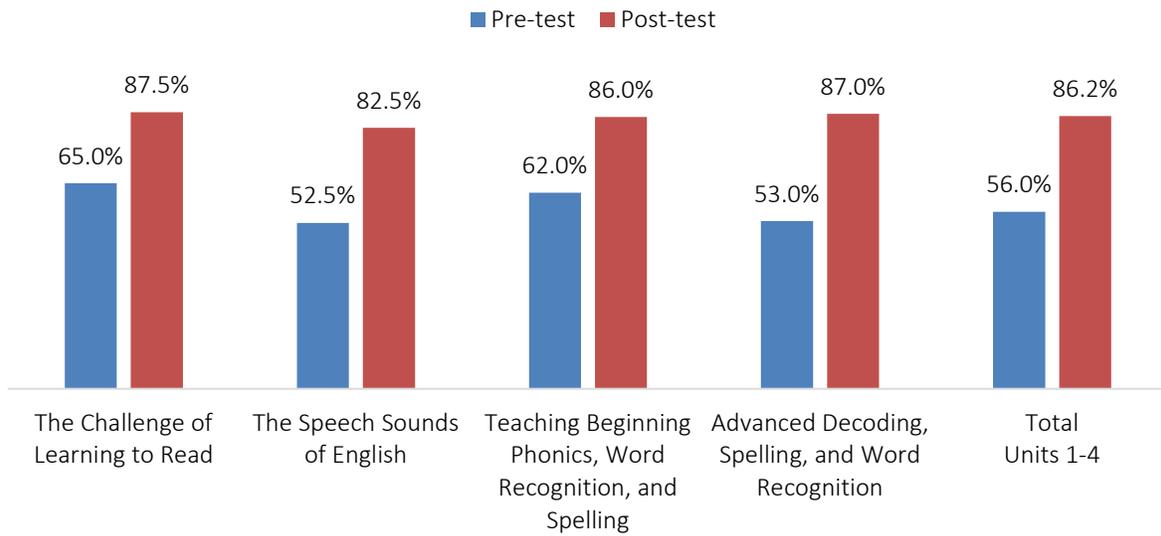
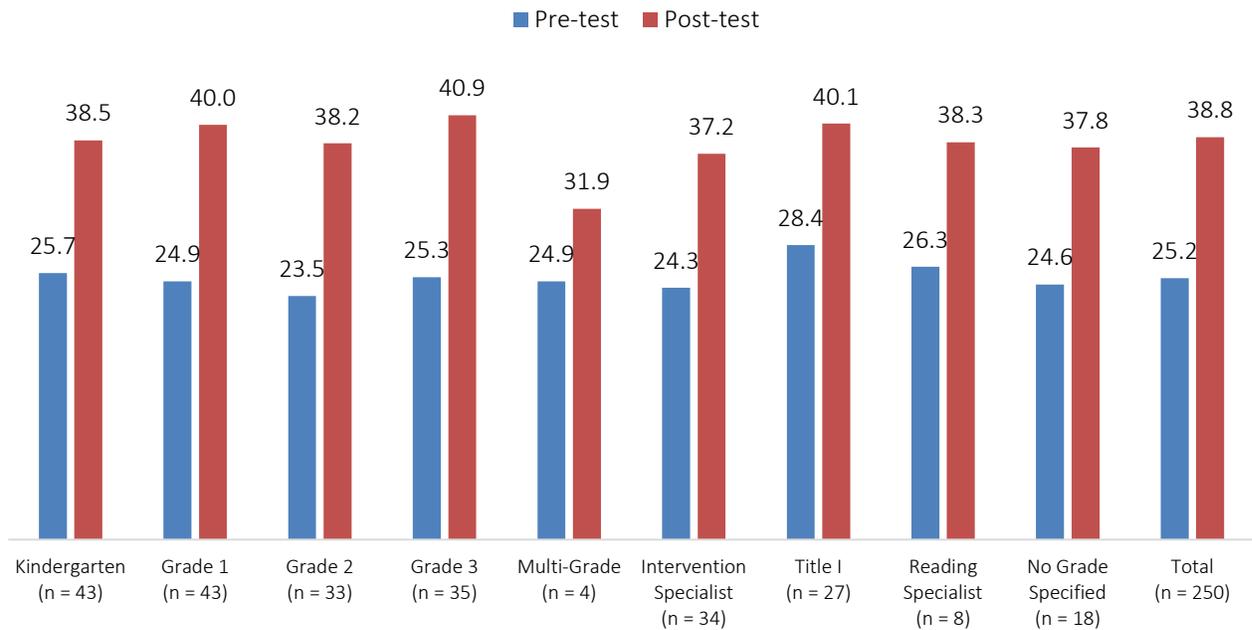


Figure 8. Total number of questions answered correctly on LETRS Units 1-4 pre- and post-tests for kindergarten through grade 3 educators by subgroup.



Cohort 1 educators showed an increase in language and literacy knowledge in year 1. They will be assessed again after completing units 5-8, at the end of the 2017-2018 school year. The Department also will assess Cohort 2 at the end of the 2017-2018 school year, once they complete the first four units of LETRS.

While knowledge increase is a goal of the professional learning, the pilot also helps Ohio assess whether educators are using the evidence-based instructional skills for language and literacy in

their classrooms. Classroom observations will begin in fall 2018 using the “LETRS Application of Concepts” tool, previously called “Keys to LETRS Implementation,” created by Louisa Moats, Ph.D., and Voyager Sopris Learning. The LETRS Application of Concepts tool contains items referencing language and literacy skills and strategies, specific to the face-to-face and online professional learning. This tool has two purposes: (1) to collect data on the implementation of newly acquired language and literacy knowledge, and (2) to help literacy coaches in facilitate instructional coaching with teachers. Regional early literacy specialists and literacy coaches will be collecting the observation data, but the Department still needs to determine other data collection details. The Department, Voyager Sopris Learning and the external evaluation team are working together to determine how best to collect these data for analysis.

LETRS Professional Learning Data Quality Issues

Currently, there are no obvious data quality issues with the pre- and post-test data gathered from the LETRS professional learning. The pre- and post-tests are all automated within the online units. The Department and the regional early literacy specialists have discovered that some teachers are completing units, and the corresponding checks for knowledge, in pairs or teams. The Department is working on what, if anything, to do about this issue. The Department identified the need to add in-person professional learning attendance data to the data dashboard and worked with the dashboard developer to make this amendment in summer 2017. The external evaluators will work with Voyager Sopris Learning personnel to monitor those data for quality and completeness.

Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory (R-TFI)

Kim St. Martin, Ph.D., from Michigan’s Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative, trained the regional early literacy specialists in facilitating and using Tiers 1, 2 and 3 of the Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory (R-TFI) with building leadership teams (St. Martin et al., 2015). This assessment tool was developed in Michigan to support building leadership teams in assessing the implementation of a School-Wide Reading Model. A School-Wide Reading Model includes multi-tiered structures encompassing evidence-based practices that focus on improving reading outcomes for all students. It also includes systems to address the continuum of reading needs across the student body, as well as data use and analysis. The R-TFI is designed for use in a data-based decision-making process, in coordination with student outcome data.

The R-TFI guides building leadership teams as they examine building level language and literacy Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS), including analyzing and using data for instructional planning. The R-TFI also examines Tier 2 and 3 instructional supports on top of Tier 1 core instructional practices. The R-TFI helps schools gauge their School-Wide Reading Model features for all three tiers to prioritize or develop their Multi-Tier System of Supports for language and literacy, initially focusing goals on the lowest scoring elements of Tier 1. The R-TFI measures three tiers and 12 subscales; every item is scored as 0 (not in place), 1 (partially in place), or 2 (fully in place) and helps teams prioritize next steps to improving their Multi-Tier System of Supports. The overall tier and each subscale can have a minimum score of 0 and a maximum score of two times the total number of relevant items. For example, Tier 1 has 27 items, so the total score will not exceed 54. Higher scores denote better implementation of Multi-Tier System

of Supports. Average scores for each subscale and all of Tier 1 are reported here as percentages. At this time, a total and tier score of 80 percent is recommended to indicate implementation with fidelity (St. Martin et al., 2015). Data gathered from the Early Literacy Pilot will help in continuing measurement of standardization for this tool. Figure 9 summarizes each tier of the R-TFI. Find a complete list of the items on the R-TFI in Appendix J.

Figure 9. Summary of each tier measured by the Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory (R-TFI).

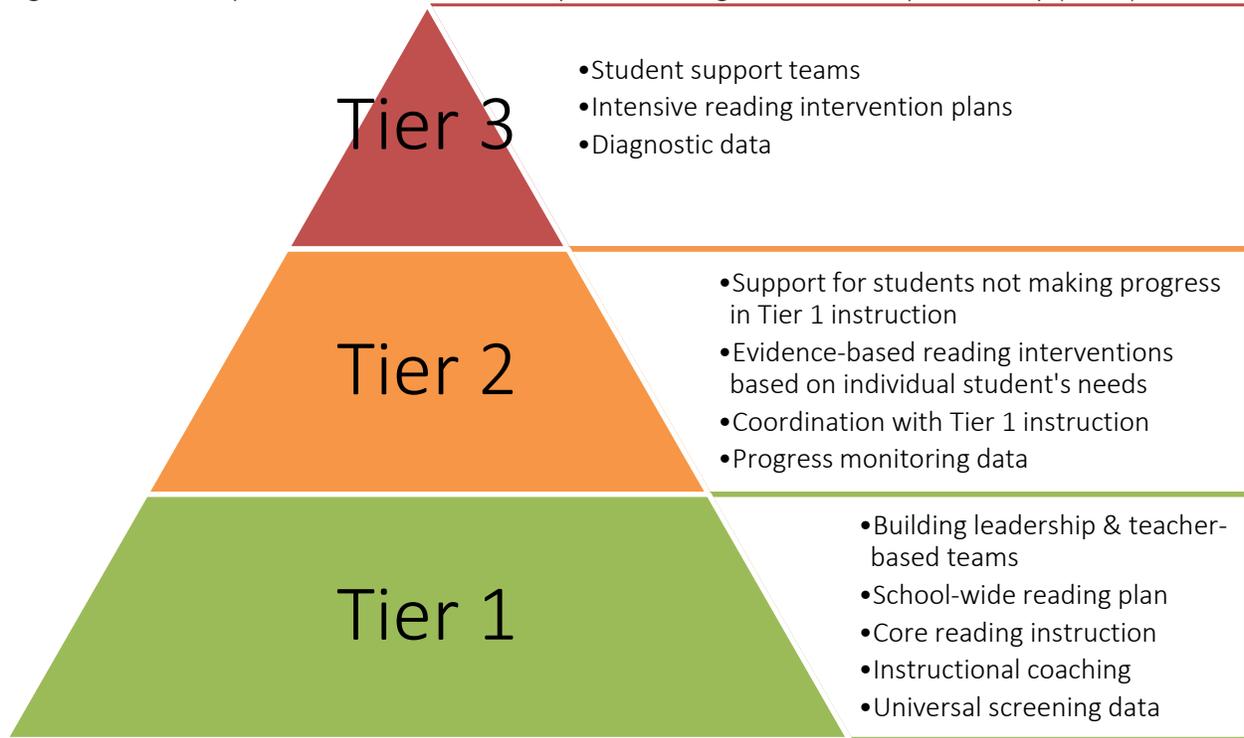


Table 3. R-TFI facilitation timeline for project years 2 through 5.

	Spring 2018	Spring 2019	Spring 2020	Spring 2021
Cohort 1	Annual administration Tiers 1, 2, 3			
Cohort 2	Annual administration Tier 1	Annual administration Tiers 1, 2, 3	Annual administration Tiers 1, 2, 3	Annual administration Tiers 1, 2, 3
	Baseline administration Tiers 2, 3			

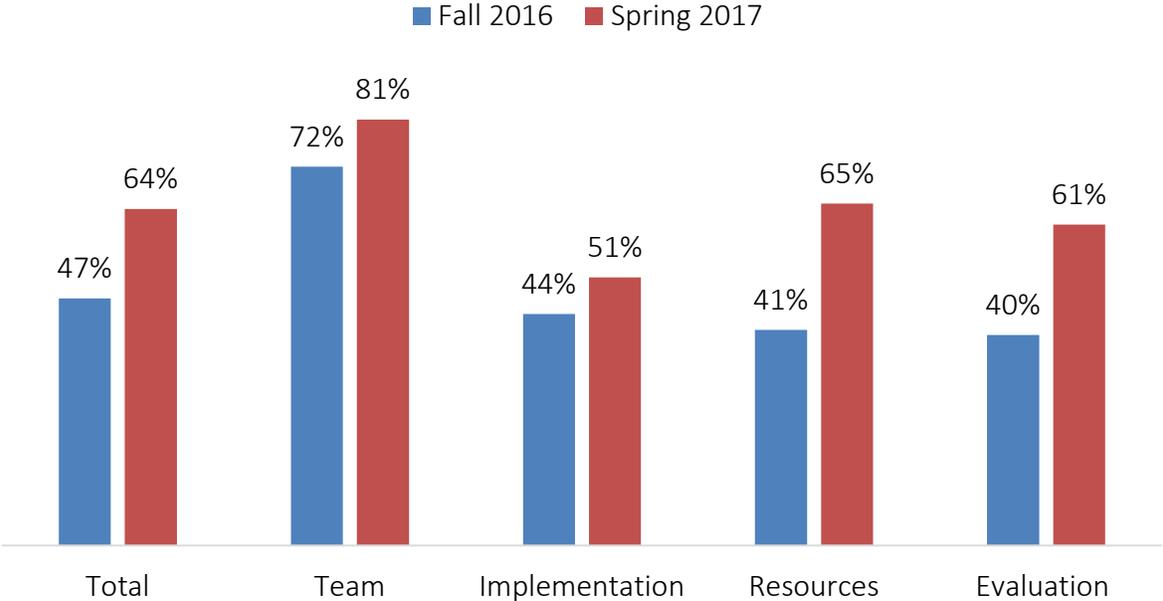
Across the first two years of implementation, each district will take part in all three tiers of the R-TFI data collection. Regional early literacy coaches and district coaches collected baseline data on the R-TFI for both cohorts and will do a full administration, including all tiers, in the spring of each project year. Table 3 displays the facilitation timeline for each cohort going forward. Regional early literacy specialists will continue to use these data to develop appropriate, systems-level coaching topics.

The regional early literacy specialists and the building leadership teams are reviewing these data at least once a year in the spring. Teams develop a School-Wide Reading Model and Coaching Service Delivery Plan. The Coaching Service Delivery Plan specifies the concepts or skills district staffs need to learn to effectively use a program or innovation and outlines essential steps coaches will take to develop teams of educators who accurately implement a program or innovation. The School-Wide Reading Model defines criteria to prevent reading difficulties and ensure reading success. All R-TFI data are entered in the data dashboard, so they may be used by local, regional, state and evaluation staff. Coaching Service Delivery Plans are uploaded to the data dashboard for easy access by district coaches and regional early literacy specialists. These plans will guide the work at the local level.

Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory Data

Thirteen of the 14 Cohort 1 schools completed the R-TFI Tier 1 in fall 2016, and 12 schools completed the R-TFI Tier 1 in spring 2017. Analyses are limited to 12 schools with fall 2016 and spring 2017 data. Overall for Cohort 1, schools achieved increases between fall and spring facilitations in total score and across all four subscales of R-TFI Tier 1: *Team, Implementation, Resources, Evaluation* (see Figure 10).

Figure 10. R-TFI Tier 1 total and subscale scores for Cohort 1.



Paired t-tests (mean difference between two sets of observations is zero) showed statistically significant (p -value < 0.05) changes from fall 2016 to spring 2017 for the overall total score (across the four subscales). By the end of the school year, nine schools had increased their total R-TFI scores and one school reached over 80 percent. However, no statistically significant changes occurred for the *Team* or *Implementation* subscales from fall to spring. Of the 12 schools with both Tier 1 fall and spring data, eight showed a slight increase on the *Team* subscale; three showed a slight decrease and one showed no change. Ten schools scored 80

percent or higher on the *Team* subscale by the end of the school year. Ten of the 12 schools showed an increase on the *Resources* subscale and two showed a decrease. At the end of the school year, three schools scored higher than 80 percent on the *Resources* subscale and four schools reached 80 percent or higher on the *Evaluation* subscale. Although, on average, there was significant improvement on the *Evaluation* subscale from fall 2016 to spring 2017, four schools had no change or showed a decline. Of the four schools in this group, one maintained a score of 85 percent. Of the 12 schools with complete data, seven showed slight increases on the *Implementation* subscale; three showed slight decreases and two showed no change. At the end of the school year, one school scored higher than 80 percent on the *Implementation* subscale and three schools' scores decreased. Notably, five of 12 schools showed no change or negative changes for the *Implementation* subscale. In conclusion, compared to fall 2016, the R-TFI Tier 1 assessment in spring 2017 showed significant increases in the overall mean total score and the mean scores of two Tier 1 subscales, *Resources* and *Evaluation* (Dariotis et al., 2018b).

R-TFI Data Quality Issues

There is potential for certain data quality issues with the R-TFI, simply because the tool is still being standardized. The Department views Ohio's use of the R-TFI as an opportunity to inform the standardization process. The Department works closely with the creator of the R-TFI to address issues that arise from implementing this tool within the cohort districts.

Coaching

Coaching is an integral part of the overall Early Literacy Pilot. Coaching supports and aligns with LETRS professional learning opportunities in a concerted effort to ensure that teachers are transferring what they are learning to classroom practice. Department staff, with technical assistance from Jennifer Pierce, Ph.D., created the initial Language and Literacy Coaching System document (see Appendix K) that outlines the roles and expectations of the regional early literacy specialists and the district coaches. The Department is currently updating the document to reflect the field testing of Jim Knight's coaching elements and to reflect systematic support for district coaches. Ohio will modify the coaching system, as with all other components of the Early Literacy Pilot, based on evaluation data, feedback from the field and identified needs.

Ohio has learned that it is critical to provide support through systems coaching, as well as practice/content/classroom-level (district/teacher-level) coaching. The regional early literacy specialists serve as both systems coaches and content coaches to build Ohio's capacity for supporting implementation of evidence-based early language and literacy instructional practices. These specialists work to coach and develop leaders, district literacy coaches, classroom teachers and intervention specialists. They are coaching district literacy coaches to work closely with building administrators, teachers and intervention specialists in implementing evidenced-based early language and literacy instructional practices. Regional early literacy specialists will gradually release coaching responsibilities to the literacy coaches in project years 2 and 3 but will continue to support them throughout the pilot. The Department is developing coaching supports to address district coaches' specific needs as they assume more of the coaching responsibilities and regional early literacy specialists shift to a support role.

Ohio expects the regional early literacy specialists to maintain strong communication and partnership with each district literacy coach, building principal, building leadership team and the teacher-based teams. Regional early literacy specialists coach on reading imperatives such as the big ideas of reading; planning, sequencing, and scaffolding of instruction; and data collection and analysis, and they model the effective use of evidence-based language and literacy instructional practices. They carefully align instructional coaching to the professional learning educators receive. Equally importantly, regional early literacy specialists support district and school staffs in assessing and improving their Multi-Tier System of Supports so all learners can become successful readers.

To help determine the effectiveness of coaching, Ohio is collecting data on coaching intensity through coaching logs kept in the data dashboard. The structure of coaching is determined by the intensity, which is being measured by the frequency of coaching, the length of each coaching session and the duration of coaching from the first coaching session to the last (Powell & Diamond, 2013). Also, Ohio's regional early literacy specialists are working with Department staff to create coaching tools that tightly align to the professional learning content. Ohio aims to develop an effective, robust approach to early literacy coaching, embracing both systems and instructional coaching. The Department is working with regional early literacy specialists, Voyager Sopris Learning, Chris Rauscher, Ph.D., and Jennifer Pierce, Ph.D., to develop a fidelity measure for coaching practices. Doing so will help the state better understand how coaching is supporting the application of evidence-based literacy practices in the classroom.

Coaching Data

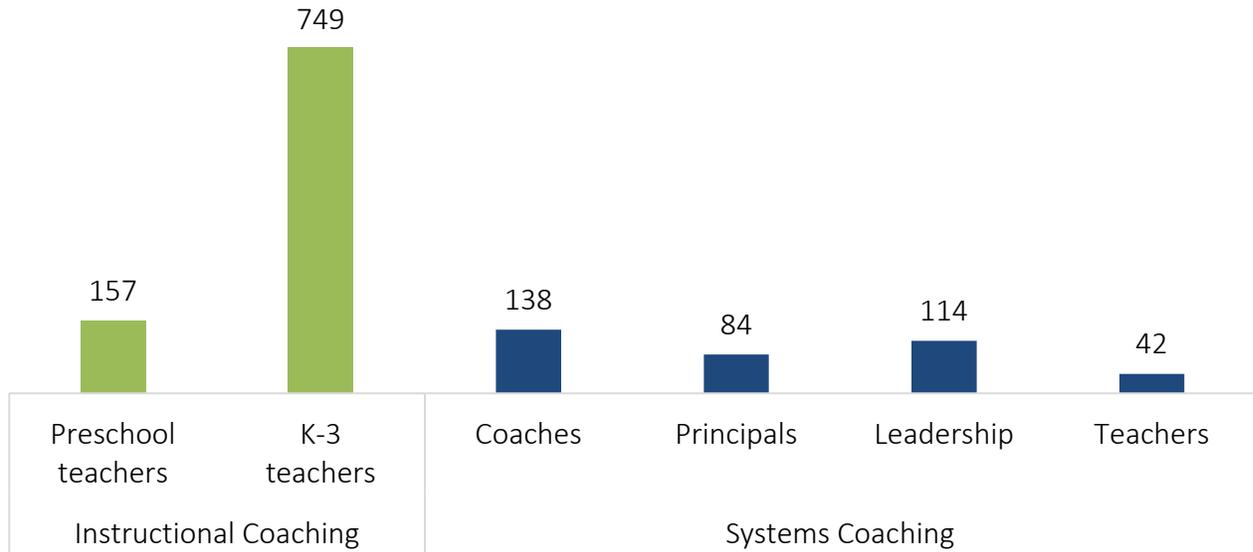
All regional early literacy specialists and district coaches document both systems coaching and instructional coaching activities in the coaching logs that are part of the data dashboard (see Appendix L). The coaching logs track coaching implementation by examining the "domains" and "dimension" of coaching outlined by Powell and Diamond (2013). Domains include structure, process and content. Structure refers to the intensity of the coaching: number of sessions, length of each session and duration from the start of the coaching session to the end of the coaching session. Process refers to actions aimed at promoting the use of evidence-based language and literacy instructional practices through coaching. Finally, content refers to the individual academic content focus for each educator to provide core instruction for all students, extend practices as reflected in class schedules and offer individual instruction based on student needs.

Coaching Structure

Figure 11 shows the structure of coaching through the number of coaching logs regional early literacy specialists and district coaches submitted in year 1. As expected, literacy coaches and leaders received systems coaching far more often than teachers. Regional specialists provided instructional coaching only to teachers. In the 157 instructional coaching sessions that included preschool teachers, 39 educators (55 percent) participated. Likewise, in the 749 instructional coaching sessions that included kindergarten through grade 3 teachers, 254 educators (88 percent) participated.

Individual instructional coaching sessions lasted about 40 minutes on average, while group instructional sessions lasted about 10 minutes longer than individual sessions. Across all instructional coaching sessions in year 1, the average cumulative time coaches spent with each teacher was five hours and 15 minutes (range = 3 to 7 hours).

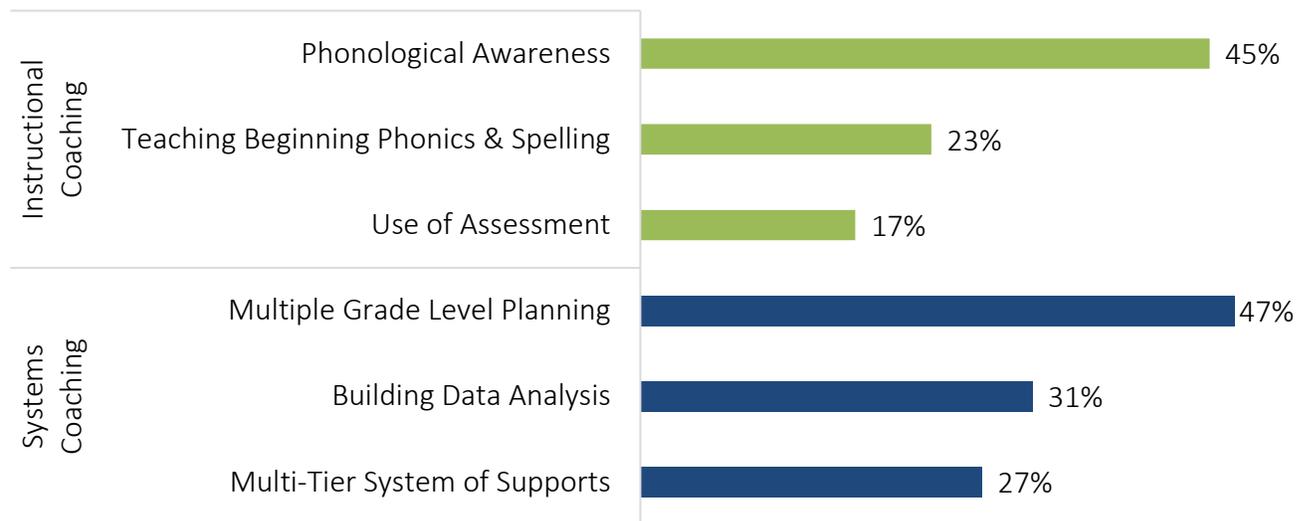
Figure 11. Number of coaching sessions by role and type of coaching for Cohort 1 educators.



Coaching Content

Coaches selected specific literacy topics in 544 of 749 instructional coaching sessions (73 percent) and 242 of 378 systems coaching sessions (64 percent). Selecting a topic was not a required field; participants could select only one topic per instructional coaching session while systems coaching logs allowed for multiple selections. There were 11 topic options for instructional coaching and nine options for systems coaching. Among the coaching logs with specified topics, the three most frequently discussed topics are ranked and displayed in Figure 12, in order of frequency.

Figure 12. Most frequent topics selected for instructional and systems coaching sessions for Cohort 1 (2016-2017).



Coaching Data Quality Issues

Coaching implementation varies across schools in several ways, including the effort required of district coaches, time spent with each pilot building, use of systemic coaching schedules and which teachers are targeted for coaching (Dariotis, 2018b). Likewise, regional early literacy specialists and district coaches were not logging their coaching sessions in the same way across all sessions. These differences introduced additional sources of variation, complicating analyses. The Department is working to reconcile these differences for future consistency. There is limited empirical data related to coaching. Therefore, Ohio’s process is evolving as the Department learns more about the coaching process from regional early literacy specialists and district coaches. As the Department has continued to develop and refine Ohio’s coaching model over the project year, the measurement tool (coaching logs) has changed several times to more accurately capture the process. While adaptations to the tool increase usability, comparability across years may be limited (Dariotis, 2018b).

Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM)

As part of the District Partnership Agreement, districts participating in this work are obligated to collect student-level data from a curriculum-based measurement. These tools support teachers in progress monitoring and in using the appropriate interventions for each child’s needs. In Ohio, SSIP partner schools agreed to use either DIBELS Next or aimsweb for data analysis as a part of Ohio’s Early Literacy Pilot. Both tools are standardized and available online. Regional Early Learning Specialists received professional learning opportunities on the specific tools in project years 1 and 2. Each district was responsible for training its teachers on the curriculum-based measurement. The Department has encouraged pilot participants to monitor the fidelity of implementation of their chosen curriculum-based measurement.

Curriculum-Based Measurement Data

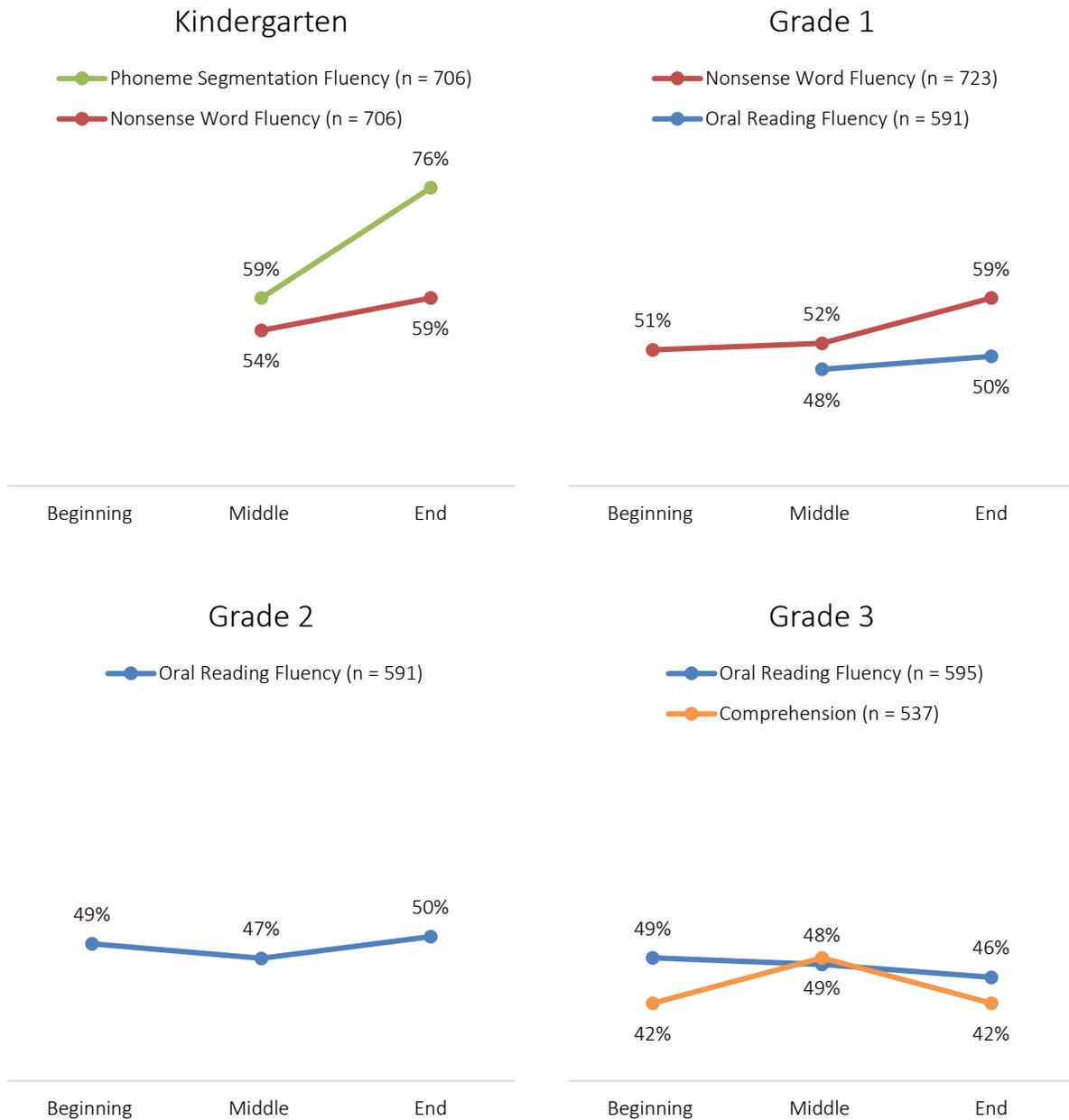
Standardized curriculum-based measurements take the form of benchmarking assessments to determine the basic early literacy skills of kindergarten through grade 3 students, including Phonemic Awareness, Oral Reading Fluency and Comprehension (Dariotis et al., 2018b). Among the Cohort 1 schools, 10 used DIBELS Next, three used aimsweb and one used aimswebPlus. Schools administer benchmarking curriculum-based measurement assessments to each student, using their respective grade-level probes, at the beginning, middle and end of each school year.

Appropriately, not all constructs, or types of measurements, were available for every school, because schools served students in different grades and administered benchmarking assessments differently depending on grade level. Some schools did not administer certain constructs, since some are administered only to specific grade levels (Good, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 2010; Pearson, 2012; University of Oregon, 2017). Specifically, four elementary schools served students from preschool to grade 2 and four intermediate schools served grade 3 students. Data were available for between five to eight schools across the constructs. Not all schools collected data for all measures; thus, benchmarking data reported herein are limited to 11 of the 14 Cohort 1 schools for which data were available (Dariotis, 2018b).

As shown in Figure 13, patterns of change in the percentage of students at or above benchmarking goals varies across grade and measure. Kindergarten phonemic awareness, measured by Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF), shows the greater increase (16.5 percent) in students meeting benchmarking goals from the middle to the end of the year. Grade 1 Phonemic Awareness, measured by Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF), was next, with an 8.5 percent increase from the beginning to the end of the year. Next, kindergarten phonemic awareness, measured by Nonsense Word Fluency, showed a 5 percent increase from middle to end of the year, and grade 1 Oral Reading Fluency showed a 1.5 percent increase. Grade 2 Oral Reading Fluency and grade 3 Comprehension remained relatively flat, with 0.6 percent and 0.2 percent change, respectively, from the beginning to the end of the school year. Oral Reading Fluency for grade 3 showed a decrease of 2.6 percent in the percentage of students at or above benchmark from beginning to end (Dariotis, 2018b).

The changes between benchmark periods varied by measurement. A large percentage of schools showed improvement in kindergarten Phonemic Awareness-PSF (86 percent) and grade 1 Phonemic Awareness-Nonsense Word Fluency (63 percent). In grade 3, 17 percent showed improvement for Oral Reading Fluency and 40 percent showed improvement for Comprehension. Most schools with grade 3 literacy measures experienced a decrease in Oral Reading Fluency (83 percent of schools) and Comprehension (60 percent of schools). Most schools improved in benchmark scores of Phonemic Awareness but not Oral Reading Fluency and Comprehension. It may be because the LETRS professional learning content in units 1 to 4 focused on these areas. Teachers had to complete Units 1-4 during the 2016-2017 academic year, with Unit 1 starting in late fall for many schools, Unit 2 starting in winter and Units 3 and 4 being completed at the end of the year (Dariotis, 2018b).

Figure 13. Percentage of students at or above benchmarking goals by grade and assessment across schools.

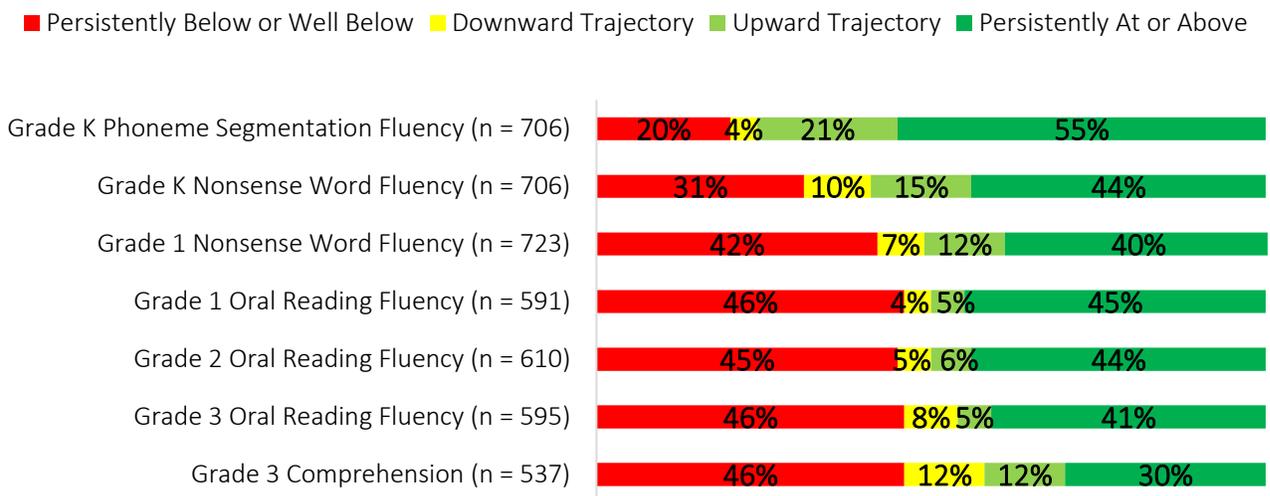


The external evaluator compared benchmarking data from students in kindergarten to grade 3 across benchmark periods to evaluate gains in early literacy skills and to identify students at the greatest risk of reading difficulty. Table 4 defines the four subgroups of students identified for analysis (Dariotis, 2018b). Figure 14 summarizes benchmark trajectory findings across all schools.

Table 4. Definitions of student subgroups identified for comparison across schools.

Persistently at or above	Students who persistently scored at or above benchmark goals across benchmark periods.
Upward trajectory	Students who scored below or well below benchmark goals at the first benchmark period (beginning or middle, depending on measure) and scored at or above the benchmark goals at the end benchmark period.
Downward trajectory	Students who scored at or above benchmark goals at the first benchmark period (beginning or middle, depending on measure).
Persistently below or well below	Students who scored persistently below or well below benchmark goals across benchmark periods.

Figure 14. Percentage of students relative to benchmarking goals by grade and assessment across schools.



Several patterns emerged across assessments. First, the percent of students in the “persistently below or well below” category was smaller for kindergarten (20.3 percent and 30.9 percent) compared to grades 1 through 3, in which more than 40 percent of students scored persistently low against benchmarking goals (41.6 percent for the lowest – grade 1 Nonsense Word Fluency – to 46.4 percent for the highest – grade 3 Oral Reading Fluency). Second, the “persistently at or above” category became smaller as grade level increased, with 30 percent of grade 3 students at or above the benchmark score for comprehension. The two categories with movement – downward and upward trajectories – were relatively small compared to the persistent categories. This suggests that where a student starts at the beginning of the year is highly related to where the student ends the year regarding benchmarking goals. For kindergarten Phoneme Segmentation Fluency, 21 percent of students went from not meeting to meeting benchmarking goals by the end of the year. Nearly 15 percent of kindergarten students had upward mobility for Nonsense Word Fluency. For all other assessments, the “persistent” categories were

substantially larger than the upward and downward trajectory categories. Fortunately, the downward trajectory category was relatively small (not exceeding 12 percent for any assessment), meaning if a student is meeting benchmarking goals at the beginning of the year, the student is likely to continue to meet benchmarking goals (Dariotis, 2018b).

Curriculum-based Measurement Data Quality Issues

During this project year, the Department continued efforts to improve the quality and quantity of data from the curriculum-based measures DIBELS Next or aimsweb. There are ongoing inconsistencies across schools in the way data are uploaded to the dashboard, with key data fields, such as student identification numbers, missing in some cases. The Department is working with the external evaluators and the data point person at each pilot district to identify and remedy these issues. There also are concerns with the collection of Curriculum-based Measurement data. Teachers receive professional learning on which of the two required curriculum-based measurement tools their districts opt to use; however, there is no way to ensure that teachers are consistently collecting curriculum-based measurement data. In the first year of pilot implementation, one district with two pilot schools collected benchmarking data only on students performing in the lowest 20 percent. Going forward, this district will collect data on all kindergarten through grade 3 students in their buildings. Additionally, one school used a curriculum-based measurement that was not approved for the pilot and did not include national or standard cut scores. This school will be using DIBELS Next in years 2 through 5. The analysis above excludes these three schools. Additionally, as noted above, not all schools collected data at all time points for all measurements appropriate to their students. The Department, in collaboration with the data dashboard developer and external evaluation team, is developing additional guidance on data collection processes and submission of curriculum-based measurement data to mitigate this potential issue with fidelity.

Surveys and Focus Groups

Online, self-report surveys were collected from pilot participants to measure classroom practices, parent and community engagement, administrative supports, coaching supports and regional early literacy supports. The external evaluator conducted focus groups and site visits to measure classroom practices, teacher perceptions, school climate, administrative supports and supports received from the regional early literacy specialists. Results from both sources should be interpreted with caution because they represent a relatively small sample of the total pilot participants (n = 89 for teachers).

Annual Surveys

The external evaluators, working with the SSIP Core Team, created online surveys for teachers, building administrators, regional early literacy specialists and district coaches. The evaluators collected surveys from 89 kindergarten through grade 3 teachers, 11 building administrators, 10 regional early literacy specialists and five district coaches. The survey sample of 89 teachers reflects a 31 percent participation rate, with every school from Cohort 1 represented. Analyses suggest the survey sample represents the demographics of the larger sample of teachers (Dariotis et al., 2018a).

Key findings from the Year 1 survey include:

- Teachers reported that their implementation of LETRS-related strategies in the classroom increased from the beginning to the end of the school year;
- Teachers reported that LETRS professional learning was most responsible for contributing to their learning, followed by regional early literacy specialists and then district coaches;
- Teachers, leaders, regional early literacy specialists and district coaches agreed that since the beginning of the school year their schools engaged in practices to evaluate, identify, examine and communicate reading progress and issues; and
- Teachers reported high levels of efficacy in terms of their perceived ability to impact language and literacy development for their students, including struggling readers (Dariotis et al., 2018a).

Focus Groups

The external evaluators also collected qualitative data during spring site visits via focus group discussions and in-depth interviews among teachers, building administrators, district coaches and parents in the spring of 2016-2017 for Cohort 1. The external evaluators will conduct site visits and focus groups for Cohort 2 in spring 2017-2018. Qualitative data provide an understanding of processes and inform quantitative data interpretation. These findings are not meant to be generalizable, but they provide information about participants' expectations and experiences in the first year of pilot implementation (Dariotis et al., 2018a).

A total of 163 individuals (89 teachers, 25 school and district leaders, all seven district coaches, all 18 regional early literacy specialists from Cohorts 1 and 2 and 24 parents) were interviewed or participated in focus group discussions, which provided data for qualitative analysis. Every school from Cohort 1 was represented in the teacher focus group discussions, and 89 teachers participated, though these are not necessarily the same teachers who completed the survey.

Key themes from the Cohort 1 focus groups include:

- High levels of buy-in from teachers and administrators for the pilot implementation;
- Appreciation for coaching as a source of timely, helpful feedback, modeling of instructional strategies, supplementary materials and support for LETRS implementation;
- Benefits of participation in LETRS professional learning for teachers, including enhanced self-reflection, improved data use and robust strategies they could apply in their classrooms; and
- Indications of LETRS implementation through classroom observations conducted by regional early literacy specialists and administrators (Dariotis et al., 2018a).

Needs and challenges identified from the focus groups are discussed in the *Barriers and Limitations to Implementing the SSIP* section of this report, along with recommendations to mitigate them.

Focus Group and Survey Data Quality Issues

Though analyses suggest the survey sample represents the demographics of all Cohort 1 teachers, the surveys and focus group results should be interpreted with caution, as they represent a relatively small sample of the total pilot participants. The qualitative findings from focus groups and site visits may inform quantitative data interpretation but are not meant to be generalizable. Every school from Cohort 1 was represented in the teacher focus group discussions, but only a very small sample of preschool teachers participated in the focus groups across all pilot schools. To increase participation rates, the external evaluators will disseminate the survey and conduct focus groups earlier this year, with attention given to increased representation of preschool teachers (Dariotis et al., 2018a).

Demonstrated Progress and Modifications

Evaluation data from the first year of implementation of Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot show multiple areas of progress toward intended improvements in infrastructure, teacher capacity and student literacy outcomes. Increases across all four subscales of the Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory for Cohort 1 schools provide evidence of local systems and infrastructure improvements. Regional early literacy specialists and district coaches provided 749 instructional coaching sessions for preschool through grade 3 teachers and 378 systems coaching sessions for administrators and teams of educators across Cohort 1. Taken together, teachers participating in LETRS professional learning demonstrated a 30 percent increase in knowledge from pre- to post-test for the first four units. Of the 250 teachers who completed both the pre- and post-tests, 95 percent showed gains in literacy knowledge. Curriculum-based measurement benchmarking assessments show promising growth in early literacy skills for students in Cohort 1 schools, including a 16.5 percent increase in phonemic awareness from the middle to the end of the year for kindergarten students and an 8.5 percent increase in phonemic awareness from the beginning to the end of the year for first grade students. Overall, these data suggest that Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot is on the right path toward achieving its intended outcomes. Modifications made based on evaluation data collected to date are discussed in the *Plans for Year 3* sections of this report.

Intended Outputs

The Department met all the original intended outputs described in the Logic Model (see Appendix B). Goal 1 in the Logic Model concentrates on the research-based language and literacy professional learning and coaching needed to improve early literacy outcomes for students in Ohio. The outputs for that goal focus on providing professional learning to teachers, district coaches, school teams, administrators and regional early literacy specialists. Cohort 1 participants have completed Units 1-4 of LETRS training and currently are completing Units 5-8, while Cohort 2 participants now are completing Units 1-4. There also is attention placed on instructional coaching, which is provided through the Ohio Improvement Process. The SSIP Core Team has begun developing a coaching framework encompassing systems and instructional

coaching (see Appendix M). District coaches need additional professional learning in instructional coaching, but it is challenging to bring this group together across cohorts because of limitations on travel and time away from their districts. The SSIP Core Team is exploring online modules to provide instructional coaching training in an online, self-paced format.

Goal 2 in the Logic Model aims to improve the capacity of the SSIP pilot districts to implement data-driven systems, make infrastructure changes and form external partnerships critical to this work. Cohort 1 school teams have trained in using data for screening, progress monitoring and instructional decision-making within a Multi-Tier System of Supports. Through evaluation of Project Year 1, teachers, leaders and district coaches reported that they used data for identifying small groups to provide differentiated instruction by looking at data in new ways (Dariotis et al., 2018a). Findings support continued professional learning for both Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 districts, as teachers and regional early literacy specialists reported a need for data training to learn how to use benchmarking data efficiently. Efforts to enhance family and community partnerships to promote early language and literacy development is dependent on the work of the district- and building-level teams. This work, described in the Logic Model, will begin in Year 3 of the SSIP. Efforts already are underway, with first testing the [Sit Together and Read](#) (STAR) at Home program completed in spring 2017 in nonpilot early childhood programs. The Ohio State University designed STAR at Home and works with Department staff to increase communication between families and educators and support family engagement. Cohort 1 preschool teachers will implement Sit Together and Read in the classroom in spring of 2018. Full implementation of STAR at Home will take place in Cohort 1 in fall 2018, which marks the third year of SSIP pilot activities for that cohort.

Goal 3 in the Logic Model describes the importance of engaging leaders within all SSIP districts, including using the shared leadership structures that help form the Ohio Improvement Process (OIP). Through evaluation of Project Year 1, teachers, building leaders, district coaches and regional early literacy specialists reported that implementation of OIP helped align existing frameworks such as Multi-Tier System of Supports, with overall school improvement efforts and pilot expectations. This increased the use of data to drive decision-making at the school and classroom levels (Dariotis et al., 2018a).

Stakeholder Involvement

As in years past, stakeholders add tremendous value to the development of Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot and to decision-making about the pilot. Several stakeholder groups meet to provide input, review data, address barriers and identify solutions.

Ohio's State Literacy Team

To build on ongoing work to improve the language and literacy development of all students, Ohio has received a \$35 million, competitive Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Grant from the U.S. Department of Education. In 2017, Ohio convened a State Literacy Team comprised of birth through grade 12 stakeholders with unique expertise in areas such as language and literacy content, assessment, instruction, intervention, district and state

professional learning design and/or program evaluation. The team is collaborating with the Department to develop an updated state literacy plan (Ohio Department of Education, 2018).

The State Literacy Team recommended the following:

- Expand the existing State Systemic Improvement Plan, which focuses on early literacy, to include birth to age 5 and middle and high school frameworks as guidance for local planning to improve language and literacy education;
- Capitalize on Ohio’s system of support and the Ohio Improvement Process; and
- Align state, regional and local literacy efforts to establish a cohesive framework for language and literacy development for all learners.

Ohio’s Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement is based on these three recommendations. The State Literacy Team was established to best represent stakeholders that support educators and families from birth through grade 12. The team includes representatives from:

- The Office of Ohio Gov. John R. Kasich;
- Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence;
- Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities;
- Ohio Teaching English to Students of Other Languages;
- Ohio Department of Job and Family Services;
- Ohio districts and schools;
- Ohio colleges and universities;
- Ohio foundations and partnerships;
- State support teams; and
- The Ohio Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

The State Literacy Team met in June and August 2017 to develop [Ohio’s Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement](#). The team reviewed Ohio's current literacy-development efforts and identified opportunities to expand and explicitly include evidence-based language and literacy practices across the educational cascade (state, regional, district, classroom, family and community levels). Together, the State Literacy Team and Department staff developed a common Theory of Action that lays the foundation for Ohio's comprehensive literacy efforts (see Appendix A). The Early Literacy Administrator and Department staff work collaboratively with the State Literacy Team to communicate Ohio's Comprehensive Literacy Plan across state, regional and local entities and provide a cohesive and consistent message regarding evidence-based language and literacy practices (Ohio Department of Education, 2018).

SSIP Stakeholder Team

SSIP Stakeholder Team input guided the development of the SSIP Theory of Action, Logic Model, evaluation questions, SIMRs and targets. Department staff, regional early literacy specialists, pilot school administrators and the University of Cincinnati evaluation team presented to the SSIP Stakeholder Team on March 1, 2018 (see Appendix N). The team spent the day:

- Learning about Ohio’s Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement and how the SSIP and other related components fit within it;
- Reflecting on previous, current and future SSIP activities;
- Walking through the progress and individual experiences of a Cohort 1 and a Cohort 2 pilot district;
- Sharing ideas for implementing the primary SSIP parent engagement component (with full implementation in project year 3);
- Reviewing the evaluation questions, data and results, including implications and lessons learned;
- Highlighting the strengths and challenges of implementation to date across the pilot schools; and
- Providing feedback on the individual data profiles developed by the external evaluators for each pilot school.

The SSIP Stakeholder Team will continue to review evaluation data and provide guidance to the Department as the foundation built by the SSIP scales up to implementation of Ohio’s Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement.

State Advisory Panel for Exceptional Children

During its quarterly meetings, the State Advisory Panel for Exceptional Children receives updates on SSIP implementation and evaluation and has opportunities to provide input. In 2016-2017, Department staff worked with one of the panel’s ad hoc committees to review Sit Together and Read (STAR) at Home, the program currently driving the pilot’s parent engagement component. The panel discussed the program’s features and gave the Department feedback from a parent perspective.

This year, Department staff have reviewed with the panel evaluation data and highlights from the first year of implementation, including teacher knowledge data from LETRS pre- and post-tests, coaching framework and frequency data and initial student outcome improvements that show promising improvements for pilot schools.

Overall Stakeholder Involvement

Table 5 shows stakeholder groups, how often they meet and the topics they discuss. The input stakeholders provide is recorded, most often, in meeting minutes, online webinar chat formats and via email. Ohio considers this stakeholder input in all facets of SSIP implementation.

Table 5. 2016-2017 SSIP stakeholder involvement

Stakeholder Group	Meeting Topics	Future Involvement
Ohio's State Literacy Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and refine Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement • Establish workgroups for each age band included in the plan: birth to age 5, kindergarten to grade 5, and middle/high school • Develop overarching Theory of Action and a Logic Model for each age band 	<p>This group will continue to convene on a yearly basis to review progress (state, regional and local) and revise Ohio's plan as needed.</p>
SSIP Stakeholder Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review implementation progress (state, regional and local) • Review evaluation data, including implications and lessons learned • Provide input on specific plan components and overall implementation 	<p>This group will review evaluation data and support the Department in making modifications based on the data at least annually.</p>
State Advisory Panel for Exceptional Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and adopt SIMR targets proposed by SSIP Stakeholder Team • Review evaluation data, including implications and lessons learned • Provide input on plan components, particularly family and community engagement 	<p>This group meets four times per year. The SSIP is a standing agenda item for this group.</p>
State Support Team Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide input on SSIP activities, assist with district implementation and identify district and regional needs • Communicate with district administrators about the district partnership agreement and alignment between Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot and other state initiatives • Oversee day-to-day operations of regional early literacy specialists, OIP facilitators and other staff involved in SSIP implementation 	<p>This group meets monthly and will continue to discuss SSIP activities, review data and make data-based decisions at the regional level.</p>
Regional Early Literacy Specialists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and discuss implementation activities and data • Provide feedback on all aspects of program content and implementation • Share experiences and provide input on the design and role of the regional early literacy specialist position • Provide feedback on issues that impact systems-level (district/building) implementation • Assist in the design of Ohio's coaching framework • Participate in interviews with Department staff to gather individual feedback on implementation activities (practice-to-policy feedback loop) 	<p>These meetings will continue each month. SSIP activities are on every agenda. The one-on-one calls are conducted at least once per year.</p>

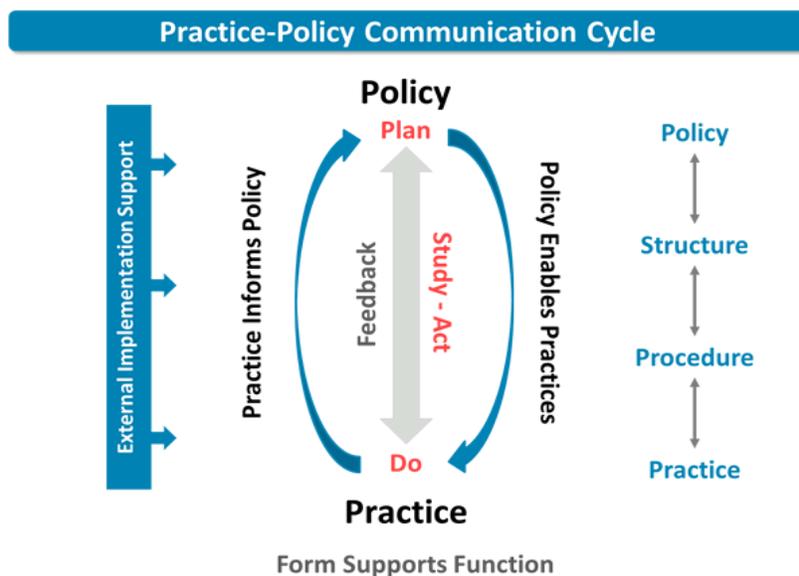
Stakeholder Group	Meeting Topics	Future Involvement
Administrator Forums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in and provide administrator feedback on language and literacy leadership professional learning • Build systems-level language and literacy content to support teacher professional learning • Review and discuss implementation activities and data • Build capacity for principals as instructional leaders 	These forums will continue quarterly with administrators from pilot schools.
Various stakeholder groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Literacy Pilot information was shared with the following stakeholder groups: the Consortium of Higher Education Personnel, the Association of Administrators of State and Federal Programs, the Dean’s Compact on Exceptional Children and the Ohio Association of Pupil Service Administrators 	Department staff will continue to present updates and solicit feedback from these groups through 2021.

All the stakeholder groups listed in Table 5 have had frequent opportunities to hear about implementation activities, ask questions about them and offer insight on how best to implement this complex and important plan. The Department is developing a quarterly newsletter to inform all stakeholders about implementation, make connections to other literacy efforts, highlight the individual stories and successes of participating schools and share resources and lessons learned. The Department will continue garnering stakeholder input by engaging with these groups.

Plans for Year 3

The Department values robust practice-to-policy feedback loops to identify implementation barriers and successes to create a highly aligned system (Active Implementation Hub, n.d.). Figure 15 illustrates the bi-directional practice-to-policy feedback loop protocol used by the Department and supported by research. This type of feedback loop allows the Department to receive and respond to direct feedback from the field.

Figure 15. Practice-to-policy feedback loops. Active Implementation Hub Module 5. (n.d.).



These feedback loops keep communication about policies and program results flowing between those who develop and enact policies at the state and regional levels and those who are implementing evidence-based practices at the local level. The Department recognizes that effective practice-to-policy feedback loops are one of the most powerful strategies for supporting district implementation of evidence-based early language and literacy practices. Through these feedback loops, the Department is learning from regional and district partners what aspects of Ohio’s Early Literacy Pilot support and facilitate effective implementation and what aspects should be modified to address barriers and challenges to regional, district, classroom and student success. Examples of Ohio’s practice-to-policy feedback loops include:

1. Monthly, face-to-face professional learning sessions for regional state support teams, with topics driven by the feedback and requests of participants from the prior month via post-meeting evaluation surveys;
2. Individual interviews conducted annually with each regional early literacy specialist, which provide a structured opportunity to share progress, challenges and recommendations for infrastructure improvements (see Appendix O for interview questions); and
3. Implementation progress reports, submitted by each pilot school three times per year, to gauge adherence to the partnership agreement and identify progress and barriers.

Practice-to-policy feedback loops are providing a mechanism for the Department to continuously engage with stakeholders at multiple levels and to use their feedback to inform implementation

and progress. The following paragraphs describe lessons learned and plans for future implementation.

Building Coaching Capacity

As a result of the analysis on coaching data, the Department recognized that regional early literacy specialists and district coaches were entering coaching data in various ways. Two distinct themes the Department identified were coaching individual teachers versus coaching groups and coaching instruction versus coaching systems. The Department will focus on providing more intensive support regarding these two coaching themes. Building on the work of Jim Knight’s instructional coaching model, the Department will develop coaching supports to address specific instructional and systems needs of the districts. This includes more intensive support for district coaches whose responsibilities shift in year 3 to more intensive coaching.

The Department will work closely with the Voyager Sopris Learning team to refine an observational tool to capture implementation of evidence-based practices (LETRS Application of Concepts; Voyager Sopris Learning, Inc., 2018). Classroom observations will begin in fall 2018. Coaches will receive “virtual coaching sessions” hosted by Voyager Sopris Learning. Data from the observational tool will be collected by regional early literacy specialists and district coaches through the data dashboard to assess the extent to which educators are implementing what they are learning through the LETRS experience.

Supporting Instruction

Feedback regarding the LETRS content indicated that coaches and teachers are requesting additional support in differentiating targeted assessment and language and literacy instruction for students with disabilities. The Department partnered with the Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence and the Outreach Center for Deafness and Blindness to build on the LETRS content to address students with disabilities. Key staff members from these organizations work with the regional early literacy specialists to provide resources and approaches that are critical to supporting students with diverse needs. The Department plans to use internal and external expertise to not only support regional early literacy specialists and district coaches but also to support the Department in providing guidance on language and literacy development for all learners.

Family and Community Engagement

Family and community engagement are an integral part of the early literacy pilot during implementation years 3 through 5. In spring 2017, the Department collaborated with the Crane Center for Early Childhood Research and Policy at The Ohio State University to examine the extent to which [Sit Together and Read \(STAR\)](#), an empirically tested preschool print referencing intervention, would be an appropriate family engagement practice for the Early Literacy Pilot. [STAR at Home](#) was tested with 36 preschool teachers and 256 children in their classrooms, along with their caregivers, in a five-week trial.

Through School-Home Literacy Journals and follow-up surveys, The Ohio State University collected implementation data to assess communication between teachers and caregivers. Overall, the school to home communication that occurred during the STAR at Home pilot was reciprocal. Participants indicated that the read-aloud practices were easy to implement both at school and in the home. Teachers and caregivers found benefit in having an opportunity to connect school-home learning activities (Tambyraja, 2017). Given positive findings and response from caregivers, Ohio will implement STAR at Home with Cohort 1 in fall 2018 and with Cohort 2 in fall 2019.

Sustainability and Scaling up

Ohio LETRS Facilitators

Implementation science research guided the development of the Early Literacy Pilot, with the state intending to scale up implementation throughout the state over time. Information on scale-up plans is included in the District Partnership Agreement (see Appendix P) between the Department and participating districts. Specifically, participating districts must develop scale-up and sustainability plans with alternative funding supports. In-state experts, such as the regional early literacy specialists, are an integral part of the scale-up and sustainability efforts. Regional early literacy specialists and district coaches are prime candidates to become authorized LETRS facilitators. The first Ohio facilitator training will take place in June 2018. Potential facilitators must meet these criteria established by Voyager Sopris Learning:

- 1) Demonstrate deep understanding of the content and a commitment to becoming an expert in the research- and evidence-based theories of LETRS through:
 - a. Completion of the LETRS online content and one day of face-to-face training per unit;
 - b. Passing the end-of-course LETRS exams following Unit 4 and Unit 8, with a score of 90 percent or better;
- 2) Complete an additional two-day, face-to-face facilitator training conducted by a LETRS consultant; and
- 3) Attend ongoing professional learning through the LETRS Online Community Webinar Series and complete assigned activities.

State Scale-Up

In October 2017, the Department revised its state literacy plan. Four objectives now drive Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement:

- 1) Support data driven decision-making and planning through engagement in the Ohio Improvement Process;
- 2) Ensure that local education agencies (districts and community schools) develop evidence-based [Local Literacy Plans](#). These plans should align to the state plan and to overall school improvement efforts. The plans should be sustainable, based on increased capacity;
- 3) Support the fidelity of implementation of evidence-based language and literacy practices, including leadership, instructional, and family and community engagement practices; and

- 4) Provide financial support to literacy improvement efforts and help identify sustainable practices through the awarding of Striving Readers subgrants.

The Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy grant allows for the scale up of the Early Literacy Pilot by giving “priority preference points” to pilot districts to scale up the work across grade bands. Larger pilot districts could propose to expand the pilot to additional elementary buildings. Smaller districts would expand what they have learned across age bands (birth to age 5 and middle/high school). The Department will track Striving Readers subgrantees who are SSIP pilot districts to monitor the effectiveness of scaling activities up within those districts.

Updating Evaluation Questions

All evaluation questions will remain constant. However, the Department acknowledges that the way evaluation question one was originally written was problematic. Clarification of measurements tools will allow the Department to assess knowledge gained, as well as implementation of knowledge gained. Therefore, moving forward this question will be divided into two parts, as follows:

- 1a) To what extent did the teachers of students in preschool-grade 3 increase their knowledge of early language and literacy evidence-based practices, as assessed by the Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) knowledge pre- and post-tests?
- 1b) To what extent did the teachers of students in preschool-grade 3 implement early language and literacy core instruction using evidence-based practices with fidelity, as assessed by the Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) Application of Concepts tool?

Barriers and Limitations to Implementing the SSIP

The qualitative data collected from these focus groups, combined with the quantitative analyses across data sources, revealed several potential barriers and limitations after the first year of pilot implementation (Dariotis, 2018a). These are presented below by evaluation question, along with recommendations to mitigate or minimize them.

Evaluation Question 1: To what extent did the teachers of students in preschool-grade 3 implement early language and literacy core instruction using evidence-based practices with fidelity, as assessed using the Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) knowledge post-test and the LETRS Application of Concepts tool?

Barrier: The LETRS publisher created the online modules on an ambitious schedule for implementation of Ohio’s Early Literacy Pilot, developing units as Cohort 1 teachers were going through them. There were delays caused by technical issues. Many schools report teachers who are not completing LETRS online modules on pace. Teachers in the focus groups said they needed more time to complete the modules and requested release and paid time to do so. This

is because it took them longer than expected, and they would have liked more time to absorb and apply the information they were learning.

Recommendation: The LETRS publisher has rectified the problems caused by the delayed module rollout for Cohort 2, but completion of four units in one school year remains a rigorous undertaking for teachers. Schools may help teachers keep pace with the modules by offering substitutes or stipends for completing modules. Districts that have helped teachers catch up also have provided collaborative work formats and after-school sessions.

Barrier: Teachers, leaders, coaches and regional early literacy specialists identified a need for clear expectations on district-level literacy program alignment. Some teachers reported that classroom practices required adjustments to accommodate individual and small-group needs.

Recommendation: Schools may help teachers implement their newly learned strategies by supporting classroom management strategies, aligning district reading curricula to LETRS strategies and providing a greater coaching presence in the classroom.

Evaluation Question 2: To what extent did instructional coaches support teachers in the use of evidence-based early literacy practices, as documented by the coaching data?

Barrier: Qualitative data suggested some teachers perceived coaching as effective, citing modeling, feedback, classroom observations, quality relationships and supplemental materials as helpful. Others perceived instructional coaching as ineffective due to lack of coaching availability. Examples include requests for coaching in the classroom that could not be met; poor relationships between teachers and coaches; and unrealistic expectations of teachers.

Recommendation: Schools could focus their efforts on ensuring that consistent coaching is available to all teachers and helping coaches meet the unique needs of individual buildings. The Department will support instructional and systems coaching across the educational cascade (state → regional → district → building → classroom).

Evaluation Question 3: To what extent did the teachers of students in preschool-grade 3 use data literacy skills to implement screening, progress monitoring and instructional decision-making with fidelity, as assessed by the Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory?

Barrier: Related to data literacy skills regarding screening, progress monitoring and instructional decision-making, the *Resources* and *Evaluation* R-TFI subscales showed increases from fall 2016 to spring 2017, but most schools have room to improve toward reaching the 80 percent benchmark for each subscale.

Recommendation: Some schools are in the initial developmental stages of data literacy and use, and others are more advanced in data literacy, so areas targeted for future development are effective training of teachers in the collection, interpretation and use of data.

Evaluation Question 5: To what extent did students in kindergarten-grade 3 demonstrate gains in indicators of basic early literacy skills that met or exceeded national benchmark rates of improvement for students at the greatest risk of reading difficulty, as measured by DIBELS Next or aimsweb assessments?

Barrier: Student performance increases were observed for curriculum-based measurements for phonemic awareness (kindergarten and grade 1) but not for oral reading fluency (grades 1, 2 and 3) or comprehension. When curriculum-based measurement trajectories were examined, the number of students in the “persistently below or well below” category increased in higher grades (grades 2 and 3) compared to kindergarten and grade 1. Site visit participants expressed concern for measurable change expectations so early in the pilot.

Recommendation: Though it is too early to expect increases across grade levels, schools can help support the use of data-based decision-making by focusing on systems for universal screening that provide timely data to teachers to make instructional decisions. Schools also can help teachers interpret the state-approved reading diagnostic and state assessments so they can better support their learners’ language and literacy needs.

Evaluation Question 6: To what extent did implementation of evidence-based early literacy instruction and intervention at the preschool level improve language and literacy skills at kindergarten entry, as measured by the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment?

Barrier: Regarding improvement of language and literacy skills at kindergarten entry using the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, scores decreased slightly from baseline to project year 1, which may be attributable to limited early childhood professional learning exposure during project year 1. In future years, the Department needs more input from preschool teachers, through site visits and surveys, to represent their perspectives.

Recommendation: During project year 2, early childhood online LETRS modules have been implemented for both cohorts of preschool teachers. The Department has provided in-person professional development for Cohort 2 preschool teachers and new Cohort 1 preschool teachers. Targeted efforts are needed to increase access to instructional and systems coaching for preschool teachers from both cohorts.

Technical Assistance and Support

The SSIP Core Team members and their collaborative partners continued to utilize technical assistance from a variety of sources to address areas of need related to Ohio’s Early Literacy Pilot. Working across agencies and systems, the Department has sought technical assistance to effectively plan, implement and evaluate evidence-based practices designed to improve early literacy outcomes for Ohio’s children. This assistance is based on developing needs identified across the following SSIP components:

- A. Support for school implementation of evidence-based practices;
- B. Evaluation; and
- C. Stakeholder involvement.

Technical Assistance Accessed

Several sources of technical assistance continue to be instrumental in the Department's efforts to enhance Ohio's infrastructure and plan for successful implementation and evaluation.

- Kimberly St. Martin, Ph.D., Assistant Director, Michigan's Integrated Behavior Learning Support Initiative
 - Dr. St. Martin provides leadership in the development of an integrated academic and behavior Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) model for the state of Michigan. She is a co-author of the Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory and has provided training on facilitation of the R-TFI to Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 Regional early learning specialists and other state support team and Department staff. Dr. St. Martin also led workshops on the R-TFI as part of Ohio's Literacy Academy to support Striving Readers subgrant applicants.

- Louisa Moats, Ph.D., Author, Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling
 - As the lead author of Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS), Dr. Moats assisted the Department in research on teacher capacity and preparation to provide evidence-based, early literacy instruction and intervention based on the science of language and literacy development. As a primary research-based practice within Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot, LETRS is a professional learning program designed to deepen educators' understanding of how children learn to read, diagnose why some children struggle and sharpen teachers' abilities to select and implement effective interventions. Dr. Moats also is supporting the Department in developing strategies and tools to measure implementation of LETRS knowledge and skills at the classroom level.

- Stephanie Stollar, Ph.D., Professional Learning Specialist/Research Associate, Dynamic Measurement Group
 - Dr. Stollar provides professional learning and consultation to school districts on the use of direct assessment measures to improve student outcomes, including the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) curriculum-based measure. She provided training in DIBELS administration to Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 pilot participants.

- Susan Nolan, Ph.D., Ohio University
 - Dr. Nolan assisted the SSIP Core Team by providing a sequence of professional learning focused on side-by-side intensive language and literacy demonstrations. During the 2016-2017 school year, Dr. Nolan offered site-based professional learning for the regional early literacy specialists and district coaches supporting explicit instruction in the skills and strategies of proficient reading, such as phonological awareness and phonics. Dr. Nolan also modeled the use of assessment to inform individual, small-group and whole-group instruction.

- Timothy Shanahan, Ph.D., Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Urban Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago
 - Dr. Shanahan is the principal investigator of the National Title I Study of Implementation and Outcomes and was the chairman and a member of the National Reading Panel, the National Literacy Panel for Language Minority Children and Youth and the National Early Literacy Panel. Dr. Shanahan provided several professional learning opportunities for Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 regional early literacy specialists and for coaches, principals and Department staff. These focused on evidence-based strategies to build a system that supports all students in learning to read and ensuring that all students receive evidence-based, high-quality instruction. Dr. Shanahan delivered the keynote address and led workshops on early and conventional literacy at Ohio’s Literacy Academy to support Striving Readers subgrant applicants.

- W. Christine Rauscher, Ph.D., Senior Technical Assistance Consultant, Great Lakes Comprehensive Center
 - Dr. Rauscher provided reading and literacy expertise to the SSIP Core Team and continues to support development of Ohio’s regional early literacy specialists. She facilitated strategic planning sessions for the SSIP Core Team and the March 1 SSIP Stakeholder Team meeting. Dr. Rauscher helped provide a national perspective, assisted in planning, and helped the Department consider the “big picture” of sustainability. Dr. Rauscher also co-presented a session at Ohio’s Literacy Academy to support Striving Readers subgrant applicants. The Department continues to seek her help in broadening the impact of this work. Dr. Rauscher is helping with efforts to systemically and effectively share pilot learnings, materials, tools and practices and create a culture with vibrant language and literacy support systems across the regions. The intent is to support districts in improving their language and literacy outcomes for all learners. Scalability of effective coaching practices is at the forefront of the Early Literacy Pilot work, and Dr. Rauscher is helping the team identify strategies and frameworks to move this work forward.

- Jennifer Averitt, J Averitt Consulting
 - The SSIP Core Team is working with Jennifer Averitt to enhance a web-based data dashboard for Ohio’s Early Literacy Pilot designed to collect and display all evaluation data at a glance across participating schools and districts. Ms. Averitt developed and implemented the dashboard and continues to make regular enhancements and provide training to pilot participants charged with uploading data to the dashboard.

- Cross-State Language and Literacy Collaborative
 - Participation in the Cross-State Language and Literacy Collaborative provided Ohio’s SSIP Core Team with many opportunities to learn from other states that are focusing on literacy for their State Systemic Improvement Plans. A combination of face-to-face meetings and a virtual engagement platform allows state teams to learn from national experts, network with other states and devote essential planning time in their state teams to develop, implement and evaluate their SSIPs.

Technical Assistance Needed

The Department actively engaged help from all the sources described above during the initial implementation and evaluation of Ohio's State Systemic Improvement Plan. Support for effective instructional coaching continues to be especially critical. The Department designed Ohio's approach to coaching to ensure that it consists of practices that are shown to be effective in improving teacher practice and student outcomes. Data from the first year of implementation suggest a need for additional, more targeted and intentional support for district administrators. The Department continues to consider principles of implementation science (Fixsen, Blase, Horner, & Sugai, 2009; Fullan & Quinn, 2016) in how it provides and modifies coaching and administrator supports in Ohio. Additional technical assistance needs include:

- Instructional coaching training for district coaches;
- Implementation of family and community engagement components of the SSIP; and
- Integration of the SSIP within Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement.

The Department will use evaluation data to help determine ongoing technical assistance for implementing the Early Literacy Pilot.

Conclusion

This report illustrates the Department's commitment to successfully implement Ohio's State Systemic Improvement Plan: Early Literacy Pilot. Successful partnerships across agencies and with regional and local entities are critical. Through effective application and evaluation of the Early Literacy Pilot, Ohio is on track to achieve these goals: (1) More educators will be equipped to provide evidence-based reading instruction; (2) More educators will diagnose why students are struggling and provide evidence-based reading interventions; and (3) More learners, including students with disabilities, will read at grade level, be on track to graduate and be ready for college and careers. The Department looks forward to analyzing year 2 implementation, which will include two cohorts of districts to help it better understand the impact of the pilot activities.

References

- Cantrell, S. C., & Hughes, H. K. (2008). Teacher efficacy and content literacy implementation: An exploration of the effects of extended professional learning with coaching. *Journal of Literacy Research, 40*(1), 95-127.
- Carlisle, J. F., & Berebitsky, D. (2011). Literacy coaching as a component of professional development. *Reading and Writing, 24*(7), 773-800.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., Klassen, A. C., Plano Clark, V. L., & Smith, K. C. (2011). Best practices for mixed methods research in the health sciences. *Bethesda (Maryland): National Institutes of Health, 2*,094-2, 103.
- Dariotis, J. K., Duan, Q., Morrison, A. B., Toraman, S., Bailey, A. E., Holton, J., & Smith, R. (2018a, January). *Ohio's Early Literacy State Systemic Improvement Pilot Project Report – Unmasked (Confidential): Year 1 (2016-2017 Academic Year) Annual Evaluation Report*. Cincinnati, Ohio: Evaluation Services Center, University of Cincinnati.
- Dariotis, J. K., Duan, Q., Morrison, A. B., Toraman, S., Bailey, A. E., Holton, J., & Smith, R. (2018b, February). *Ohio's Early Literacy State Systemic Improvement Pilot Project Report, Technical Supplement, Year 1 (2016-2017 Academic Year) Annual Evaluation Report*. Cincinnati, Ohio: Evaluation Services Center, University of Cincinnati.
- Fixsen, D., Blase, K., Horner, R., & Sugai, G. (2009, April). *Developing the capacity for scaling up the effective use of evidence-based programs in state departments of education*. Retrieved from http://ea.niusileadscape.org/docs/FINAL_PRODUCTS/LearningCarousel/DevelopingCapacity.pdf
- Fullan, M., & Quinn, J. (2016). *Coherence. The right drivers in action for schools, districts, and systems*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Good, R. H., Simmons, D. C., & Kame'enui, E. J. (2010). *DIBELS next: Dynamic indicators of basic early literacy skills* (7th ed.). Longmont, CO: Cambrium/Sopris.
- Knight, J. (2017). Instructional coaching group. Retrieved from <http://www.instructionalcoaching.com/workshops/>.
- Odom, S. L., Brantlinger, E., Gersten, R., Horner, R. H., Thompson, B., & Harris, K. R. (2005). Research in special education: Scientific methods and evidence-based practices. *Exceptional Children, 71*(2), 137-148.

- Ohio Department of Education (2018, January). *Ohio's plan to raise literacy achievement: Birth through grade 12*. Retrieved from <https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/Literacy/Ohios-Plan-to-Raise-Literacy-Achievement.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US>.
- Ohio Department of Education (2017, July). *Ohio striving readers comprehensive literacy grant application*. Retrieved from <http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/Literacy/Striving-Readers-Comprehensive-Literacy-Grant/Striving-Readers-Grant-Proposal-Narrative.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US>.
- Pearson Education, Inc. (2012). *aimsweb technical manual*. Bloomington, MN: Pearson. Retrieved from <http://www.aimsweb.com/wp-content/uploads/aimsweb-Technical-Manual.pdf/>.
- Powell, D. R., & Diamond, K. E. (2013). Studying the implementation of coaching-based professional learning. *Applying implementation science to early childhood programs and systems*, 97-116.
- Qualtrics. (2015). [Computer software]. Provo, UT: Qualtrics.
- Raimondo, E., Vaessen, J., & Bamberger, M. (2016). Toward more complexity-responsive evaluations: Overview and challenges in Bamberger, N., Vaessen, J., & Raimondo, E. (Eds.) *Dealing with complexity in development evaluation: A practical approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Shidler, L. (2009). The impact of time spent coaching for teacher efficacy on student achievement. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 36(5), 453-460.
- Tambyraja, S. (2017). *STAR at Home: Evaluation Report*. Columbus, OH: Crane Center for Early Childhood Research and Policy, The Ohio State University.
- St. Martin, K., Nantais, M., Harms, A., & Huth, E. (2015). *Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory (Elementary-Level Edition)*. Michigan Department of Education, Michigan's Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative.
- University of Oregon. (2017). UO DIBELS data system. Retrieved from <https://dibels.uoregon.edu/assessment/dibels/#measures>.
- Voyager Sopris Learning, Inc. (2016). Language essentials for teachers of reading and spelling. Retrieved from <http://www.voyagersopris.com/professional-development/professional-books/letrs-second-edition/overview>.

Voyager Sopris Learning, Inc. (2018). LETRS application of concepts: Teacher observation form [Measurement instrument]. Unpublished instrument.