

# Ohio's Part B STATE SYSTEMIC IMPROVEMENT PLAN PHASE III YEAR 3 REPORT



# Table of Contents

Executive Summary .....	vi
Introduction .....	1
Measurable Improvements in the State-identified Measurable Results in Relation to Targets .....	1
State-identified Measurable Result 1 .....	1
State-identified Measurable Result 2 .....	3
Alignment to Existing Current State Initiatives .....	5
Progress in Implementing the State Systemic Improvement Plan .....	8
Research-based Early Literacy Instruction .....	8
Ongoing Support and Professional Learning .....	9
Data on Implementation and Outcomes .....	11
Planned Analyses .....	12
Data Dashboard .....	12
Evaluation Questions, Data Sources, Data Collection and Associated Timelines ..	12
Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling .....	18
Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory .....	24
Coaching .....	29
Curriculum-based Measurement .....	35
Surveys and Focus Groups .....	42
Sharing Evaluation Data with Stakeholders .....	44
Demonstrated Progress and Modifications .....	44
Intended Outputs .....	45
Stakeholder Involvement.....	46
Ohio’s State Literacy Team .....	46
Regional Literacy Network .....	47
SSIP Stakeholder Team .....	48
State Advisory Panel for Exceptional Children .....	50
Overall Stakeholder Involvement .....	50
Plans for Year 4.....	53
Building Coaching Capacity .....	54
Transferring Knowledge to Practice .....	54

Supporting Instruction..... 55  
    Implementation of Evidence-based Language and Literacy Practices ..... 55  
    Differentiating Assessment and Instruction for Students with Disabilities ..... 55  
Family and Community Engagement..... 56  
    Partnerships for Literacy ..... 57  
    Updating Evaluation Questions ..... 58  
Sustainability and Scaling up ..... 58  
    Ohio LETRS Facilitators ..... 58  
    State Scale-Up ..... 59  
Implementation Barriers and Limitations ..... 59  
Technical Assistance and Support..... 62  
    Technical Assistance Needed ..... 62  
Conclusion ..... 63  
References ..... 65

# 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).....	2
Figure 2. 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).....	4
Figure 3. Percentage of all kindergarten through third-grade students in Cohort 1 and Cohort 2, respectively, who are on track for reading proficiency, as measured by state-approved reading diagnostic assessments (SIMR 2), by student subgroup.....	4
Figure 4. Percentage of students with disabilities enrolled in pilot schools .....	15
Figure 5. Anticipated timeline for learning, implementation and change .....	17
Figure 6. Percentage correct on LETRS pre- and post-tests for kindergarten through grade 3 educators in Cohort 1 .....	21
Figure 7. Percentage correct on LETRS Early Childhood pre- and post-tests for preschool educators in Cohort 1 .....	22
Figure 8. Percentage correct on LETRS units 1-4 pre- and post-tests for kindergarten through grade 3 educators in Cohort 2.....	23
Figure 9. Percentage correct on LETRS Early Childhood pre- and post-tests for preschool educators in Cohort 2.....	23
Figure 10. Summary of each tier measured by the Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory (R-TFI).....	25
Figure 11. R-TFI Tier 1 total and subscale scores for Cohort 1 .....	27
Figure 12. R-TFI Tier 1 total and subscale scores for Cohort 2 .....	28
Figure 13. Number of coaching sessions by type of coaching for Cohort 1 educators ..	30
Figure 14. Number of coaching sessions by type of coaching for Cohort 2 educators ..	31
Figure 15. Most frequently selected topics for instructional coaching sessions for Cohort 1 (2017-2018) .....	32
Figure 16. Most frequently selected topics for systems coaching sessions for Cohort 1 (2017-2018) .....	33
Figure 17. Most frequently selected topics for instructional coaching sessions for Cohort 2 (2017-2018) .....	33
Figure 18. Most frequently selected topics for systems coaching sessions for Cohort 2 (2017-2018) .....	34
Figure 19. Percentage of students at or above benchmarking goals by grade and assessment across Cohort 1 schools for implementation year 2 – the 2017-2018 school year .....	36

Figure 20. Percentage of students at or above benchmarking goals by grade and assessment across Cohort 2 schools for implementation year 1 – the 2017-2018 school year ..... 38

Figure 21. Percentage of students relative to benchmarking goals by grade and assessment across Cohort 1 schools 2017-2018 (implementation year 2) ..... 39

Figure 22. Percentage of students relative to benchmarking goals by grade and assessment across Cohort 2 schools for 2017-2018 (implementation year 1) ..... 40

Figure 23. Practice-to-policy feedback loops. Active Implementation Hub Module 5. (n.d.) ..... 53

Figure 24. Building a disposition to improve literacy achievement ..... 56

# List of Tables

Table 1. SIMR 1 baseline, targets and results .....2

Table 2. SIMR 2 baseline, targets and results .....3

Table 3. Number of preschool through grade 3 students and educators served in Ohio’s Early Literacy Pilot in 2017-2018 ..... 14

Table 4. LETRS professional learning implementation by cohort ..... 20

Table 5. R-TFI facilitation timeline for project years 2 through 5 .....26

Table 6. Definitions of student subgroups identified for comparison across schools .....39

Table 7. SSIP Stakeholder Team recommendations and the Department’s plan to address them ..... 49

Table 8. 2017-2018 SSIP stakeholder involvement ..... 50

# Executive Summary

Ohio's Part B State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) report describes the results-driven accountability work implemented during 2017-2018 by Ohio Department of Education (the Department) staff members, Ohio's 16 regional state support teams, local education agencies and stakeholders. It also offers an overview of the information already submitted in [Ohio's previous SSIP reports](#). Ohio identified improving early literacy outcomes for all children, including those with disabilities, as its priority.

- In Phase I of the SSIP (ODE, 2015), the Department and its stakeholders reviewed various data sources and found a significant gap between targets and performance on state reading and math assessments for all Ohio students, including those with disabilities. This information, existing state early literacy initiatives such as the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, and the reality 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 (ODE, 2016) 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 as they implement 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 (ODE, 2017) 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.
- Phase III, Year 2 of the SSIP (ODE, 2018c) detailed continued professional learning opportunities provided across the educational cascade, changes to state and regional infrastructures to increase alignment across state initiatives, and data from the first year of pilot implementation with Cohort 1 buildings. The first year of

implementation saw a slight decrease in both state-identified measurable results, but an increase in educator knowledge of literacy instructional practices and improvement in measures of a language and literacy Multi-Tier System of Supports. Additionally, the Department saw improvement for kindergarten and grade 1 students on curriculum-based measures. Finally, the report concluded with descriptions of technical assistance sought by the Department, barriers to implementation and plans for future implementation.

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 district improvement plans. Leveraging the OIP to implement evidence-based early literacy instruction allows districts to use 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 receive support to help them implement the OIP via state support team and educational service center staff. State support team and educational service center staff were trained to facilitate the Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory, which measures a school's language and literacy Multi-Tier System of Supports. This training increased each state support team's capacity to help districts assess their infrastructure supports for implementing evidence-based literacy instruction and embed literacy as a goal in all district improvement plans.

Staff members from several Department offices make up the SSIP Core Team, including the following:

- Office for Exceptional Children and Office of Early Learning and School Readiness in the Center for Student Supports;
- Office of Improvement and Innovation in the Center for Continuous Improvement; and
- Office of Approaches to Teaching and Professional Learning in the Center for Teaching, Leading, and Learning.

The SSIP Core Team also includes district leaders, an external evaluation team, and staff from Ohio's Statewide Family Engagement Center. Each team member helps 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; [P.L. 114-95](#)) – emphasizes using evidence-based practices. The Department is committed to supporting implementation of these practices by Ohio's educational institutions. Under the SSIP: Early Literacy Pilot, Ohio improved its infrastructure to better support implementation of evidence-based language and literacy practices. Infrastructure improvements in 2018 included adding a third literacy specialist to the Department's Literacy Unit, as well as two adolescent literacy specialists and two Ohio literacy leads to the existing 17 regional early literacy specialists. The Literacy Unit is led by the director of the Office of Approaches to Teaching and Professional Learning, who coordinates collaborative efforts among Department offices and external stakeholders as they design, develop, and implement language and literacy supports for Ohio learners. The Department continued to work with a project manager who guided coordination, planning,



organization, facilitation, research, communication and stakeholder engagement efforts. The project manager guides the team in setting and adhering to planning and implementation timelines. These infrastructure enhancements allowed the Department to support Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot in 15 districts and across its 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. This includes enhancing state, regional and local supports for literacy improvement.

The Early Literacy Pilot relies heavily on the state's 17 regional early literacy specialists who support implementation in both cohorts of districts. These specialists support 15 districts with two types of coaching. They provide systems coaching to building leadership teams, principals and district coaches, as they develop a Multi-Tier System of Supports to implement evidence-based literacy strategies. They deliver instructional coaching to classroom teachers, intervention specialists and small groups of educators to support classroom implementation based on student data.

In 2017-2018, all preschool through grade 3 educators attended professional learning sessions on evidence-based language and literacy practices, delivered through the Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) series; Cohort 1 completed training in units 5 through 8 and Cohort 2 completed training in units 1 through 4. Regional early literacy specialists and district literacy coaches facilitated the Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory (Tiers 1, 2 and 3 for both cohorts). Also, regional early literacy specialists and district coaches supported teachers use of curriculum-based measures to inform their instruction and interventions while measuring student growth over time.

Improving early language and literacy instruction and outcomes across the state requires planning for and implementing many well-defined system and instructional-level activities that have the potential to improve all students' reading achievement. This Phase III, Year 3 report offers details on an extensive list of activities implemented during the past year.

Highlights for the 2017-2018 school year include:

- 1) 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;
- 2) Providing in-person Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) professional learning sessions for K-3 educators, preschool educators and administrators;
- 3) Collaborating with Voyager Sopris Learning to design measurement tools for coaching and data collection, as well as virtual coaching webinars to train regional early literacy specialists and literacy coaches to use the LETRS Application of Concepts tools;
- 4) Collaborating with Voyager Sopris Learning and Mount St. Joseph University to provide college credit for educators completing LETRS professional learning;
- 5) 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;

- 6) Designing, creating and implementing the Jim Knight Instructional Coaching professional learning as both an implementation support and a clearly defined coaching activity (Knight, 2017);
- 7) Providing professional learning on facilitating, implementing and gathering data using the Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory (R-TFI Tiers 1, 2 and 3), a tool teams use to measure the extent to which a school's Multi-Tier System of Supports for language and literacy is being implemented as intended. Dr. Kim St. Martin, Ph.D., leads this instruction (St. Martin, Nantais, Harms, & Huth, 2015);
- 8) Partnering and investing effort across Department offices to ensure high-quality professional learning to support those implementing language and literacy professional learning and coaching across the educational cascade (classrooms, grade-levels, buildings, districts, regions and the state);
- 9) Collaborating with Ohio's Statewide Family Engagement Center to design and implement research-based family and community engagement professional learning with designated regional family engagement leads;
- 10) Working closely with the 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 update and implement a data dashboard. The dashboard allows state, regional and local staff members to upload data, view data in real time and access reports;
- 12) Continuing collaboration with external evaluators at the University of Cincinnati Evaluation Services Center to implement a high-quality evaluation plan, including multiple methods for data collection, analysis and reporting to the state and its stakeholders;
- 13) Continuing to develop the online [early literacy toolkit](#) for scaling up evidence-based practices with additional districts based on implementation science;
- 14) 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
- 15) Identifying and implementing 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 be 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 uses both quantitative and qualitative methods and provides several sources of data from which to make decisions. The complete evaluation plan is described in detail in the *Data on Implementation and Outcomes* 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, informing timely adjustments as implementation unfolds. Data highlights from the second year of pilot implementation include:

- An increase in the first state-identified measurable result (SIMR 1), the percentage of students with disabilities scoring proficient or higher on Ohio's Third Grade English Language Arts Achievement Test, a 6.5 percent increase from baseline to year 2 was apparent for Cohort 1; Cohort 2, however, saw a decrease of 11.3 percent from baseline to year 1 implementation. Cohort 2's pattern is consistent with the first year of implementation for Cohort 1;
- An increase in the second state-identified measurable result (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, for both cohorts. Cohort 1 increased 3.2 percent from baseline to year 2 of implementation; Cohort 2 increased 3.0 percent from baseline to year 1 of implementation. Though not directly measured in SIMR 2, Cohort 1 also saw an increase of 7.0 percent from baseline to year 2 for students with disabilities;
- K-3 educators in Cohort 1 increased knowledge by 17 percent from pre-test to post-test for LETRS units 5-8, a statistically significant change;
- K-3 educators in Cohort 2 increased knowledge by 24 percent from pre-test to post-test for LETRS units 1-4, a statistically significant change;
- Preschool teachers in both cohorts increased knowledge by 37 percent from pre-test to post-test for *LETRS Early Childhood* units, a statistically significant change;
- The state saw increases in educator knowledge across grade levels and specializations (for example, Title I specialists, intervention specialists) for both cohorts;
- Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory (R-TFI) scores increased significantly across Cohort 1 schools for the full assessment of Tiers 1 and 2, as well as for the *Implementation, Resources* and *Evaluation* subscales of each tier. Overall R-TFI Tier 1 scores for Cohort 2 schools also increased significantly, as well as for the *Implementation* and *Resources* subscales;
- Nearly 3,000 instructional coaching sessions took place with 530 educators of preschool through grade 3 across all pilot buildings (83 percent of the 637 total educators served in the pilot). The most frequent instructional coaching session topics included phonological awareness, teaching beginning phonics and spelling, use of assessments and oral language development;
- District literacy coaches and regional early literacy specialists conducted more than 900 systems coaching sessions with coaches, administrators and teachers across all pilot buildings. The most frequent systems coaching topics included data collection, interpreting and problem solving, school-wide reading model or plan, and grade level reading schedule and instructional plans;
- Across Cohort 1 schools, curriculum-based language and literacy measures showed:
  - Increases in Phoneme Segmentation Fluency and Nonsense Word Fluency for kindergarten students;
  - Slight increases in Nonsense Word Fluency and Oral Reading Fluency for first grade students;

- No change in Oral Reading Fluency for second grade students; and
- An overall decrease in Oral Reading Fluency and Comprehension for third grade students.
- Across Cohort 2 schools, curriculum-based language and literacy measures showed:
  - An increase in Phoneme Segmentation Fluency for kindergarten students;
  - A slight decrease in Nonsense Word Fluency for kindergarten students;
  - An increase in Nonsense Word Fluency for first grade students;
  - A decrease in Oral Reading Fluency for first grade students;
  - A slight increase in Oral Reading Fluency for second grade students; 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;
- Focus groups with Cohort 2 participants, led by the external evaluator, revealed high levels of buy-in by educators, as well as an appreciation for coaching relationships.

These data have helped Department staff enhance several components of the Early Literacy Pilot, including: 1) updating the District Partnership Agreements for both cohorts to more accurately reflect the expectations and timelines (Appendices F and G); 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 *Data on Implementation and Outcomes* section of this report contains detailed descriptions of more complete data analyses. As Ohio continues to execute the evaluation plan, it will use new sources of data to make more decisions about 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 future SSIP reports. 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 will also describe efforts to scale up components of this initiative with 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 (ODE, 2015), Department staff and stakeholders reviewed several 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 targets and performance that was largest for state reading and math assessments. Citing research and additional data sources, such as Ohio's current legislated priorities and input from stakeholders about existing infrastructure, Department staff and stakeholders chose to focus on and leverage existing resources for improving early literacy outcomes for all children in preschool through grade 3, including children with disabilities.

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 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) State Plan:

- 1) State-identified measurable result (SIMR) 1: The percentage of students with disabilities scoring proficient or higher on Ohio's Third Grade English Language Arts Achievement Test; and
- 2) 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.

## Measurable Improvements in the State-identified Measurable Results in Relation to Targets

Ohio's SSIP team, along with stakeholders, selected targets for each state-identified measurable result (SIMR) designed to measure progress for Cohort 1 schools. In this and subsequent SSIP reports, the Department will also describe the progress of Cohort 2 schools using the same targets. It is important to note that analyses are not comparing the same students across years. For example, third grade students in 2015-2016 are not the same students in 2016-2017 or 2017-2018. Going forward, the Department will be working closely with the external evaluator to track students engaged in the pilot from kindergarten through third grade.

### State-identified Measurable Result 1

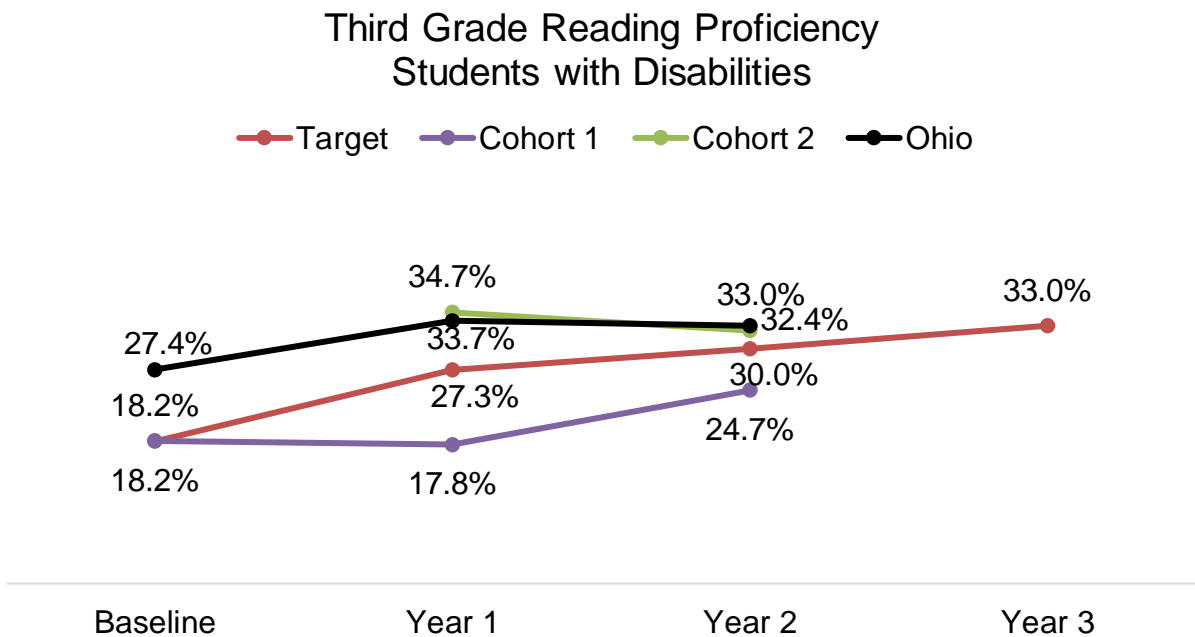
State-identified measurable result 1: The percentage of students with disabilities scoring proficient or higher on Ohio's Third Grade English Language Arts Achievement Test

The targets for SIMR 1, along with baseline and student results, are detailed in Table 1 and Figure 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. Over two years of implementation, Cohort 1 schools increased the percentage of students with disabilities scoring proficient or higher on Ohio’s Third Grade English Language Arts Achievement Test by 6.5 percent. Cohort 1 schools saw an initial decrease, however, between baseline and their first year of implementation (0.4 percent). Cohort 2 showed a similar pattern with a small decrease between baseline and their first year of implementation (2.3 percent). The state, however, remains relatively constant in the percentage of students with disabilities scoring proficient or higher on Ohio’s Third Grade English Language Arts Achievement Test. Additional analyses for SIMR 1 are available in Appendix D.

Table 1. SIMR 1 baseline, targets and results

School Year	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
<b>Target</b>	18.2%	27.3%	30.0%	33.0%
<b>Cohort 1</b>	18.2% (Baseline)	17.8%	24.7%	
<b>Cohort 2</b>	n/a	34.7% (Baseline)	32.4%	
<b>Ohio</b>	27.4%	33.7%	33.0%	

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



## State-identified Measurable Result 2

State-identified measurable result 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

The targets for SIMR 2, along with baseline and student results, are detailed in table 2 and figure 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. Over two years of implementation, Cohort 1 schools increased the percentage of students on track for reading proficiency by 3.2 percent. Cohort 1 schools saw an initial decrease, however, between baseline and their first year of implementation (1.4 percent). Cohort 2 showed an increase from baseline to their first year of implementation (3.0 percent). Overall, Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot is seeing positive changes in the percentage of all kindergarten through third-grade students who are on track for reading proficiency. The state, however, has seen a slight decrease in the percentage of students on track for reading proficiency across three years.

*Table 2. SIMR 2 baseline, targets and results*

School Year	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
<b>Target</b>	56.3%	56.3%	64.0%	75.0%
<b>Cohort 1</b>	56.3% (Baseline)	54.9%	59.5%	
<b>Cohort 2</b>	n/a	62.2% (Baseline)	65.2%	
<b>Ohio</b>	70.9%	70.2%	69.4%	

The Department recognizes that the state-approved reading diagnostic used to assess whether students are on track for reading proficiency varies from district to district. It is also notable that SIMR 1 includes the results of students who take alternate assessments, whereas SIMR 2 does not include any student placed on an alternate assessment because these students are excused from the reading diagnostic.

Though SIMR 2 includes all students, the Department also analyzed these data by student subgroup. Figure 3 displays the percentage of all students with disabilities in kindergarten through third-grade in Cohorts 1 and 2 and their peers who are on track for reading proficiency. Though the percentage is increasing for Cohort 1, closing the gap ever so slightly, each figure clearly depicts a persistent gap in reading achievement between students with disabilities in kindergarten through third-grade and their peers. Additional analyses for SIMR 2 are available in Appendix E.

Figure 2. 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)

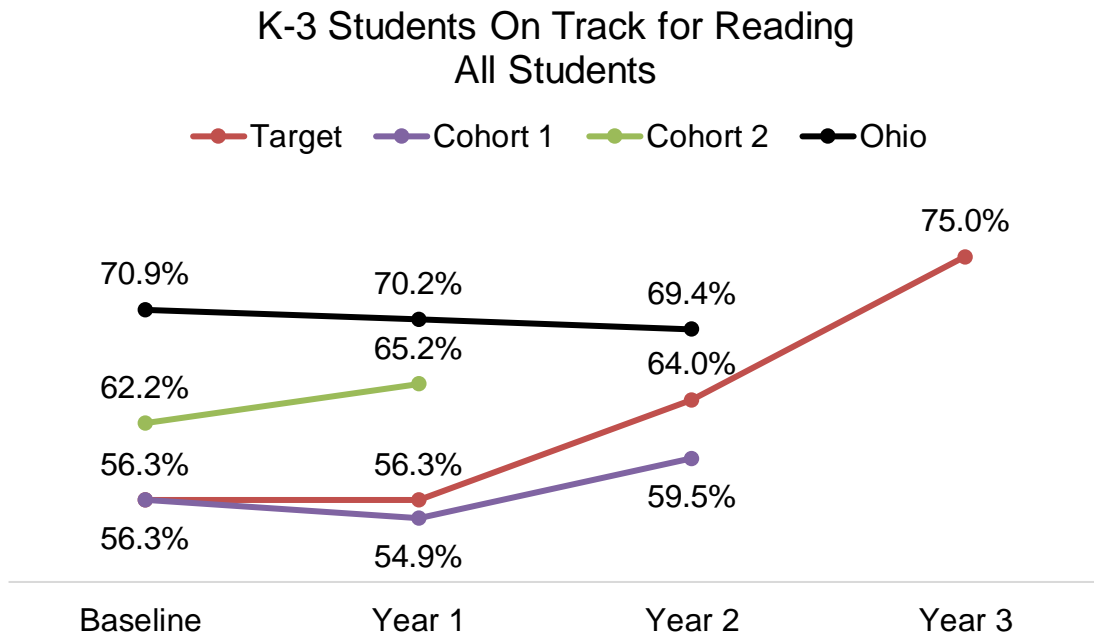
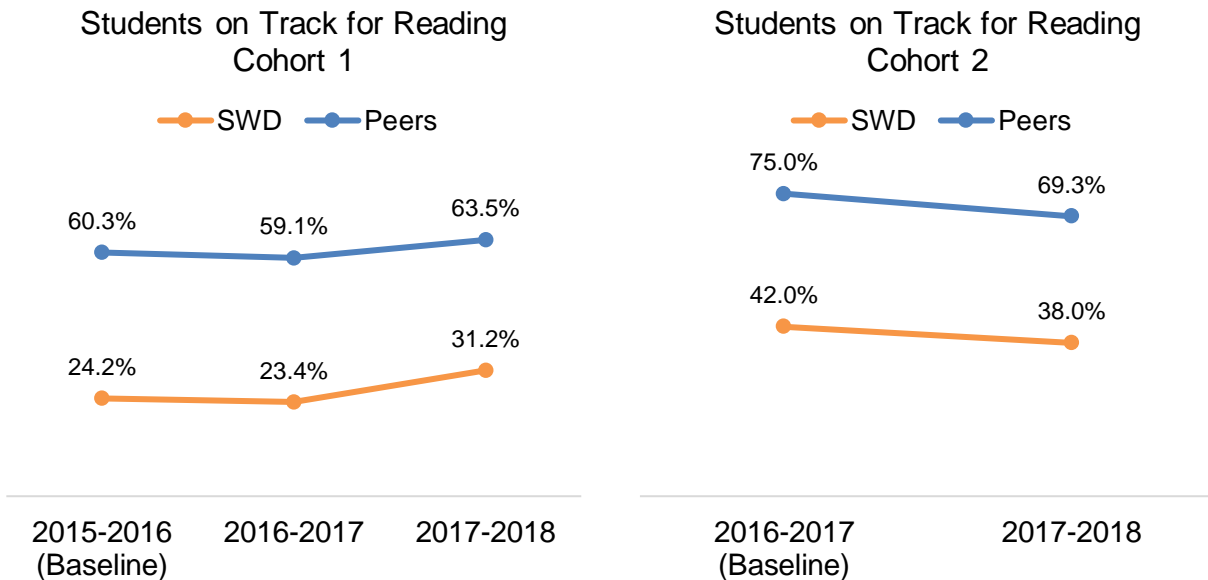


Figure 3. Percentage of all kindergarten through third-grade students in Cohort 1 and Cohort 2, respectively, who are on track for reading proficiency, as measured by state-approved reading diagnostic assessments (SIMR 2), by student subgroup



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



conducting a comprehensive evaluation plan. These activities will guide current and future systemic improvement efforts around 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, Office of Improvement and Innovation and Office of Approaches to Teaching and Professional Learning form the SSIP Core Team (see Appendix H). 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 also covers technical assistance and other supports 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

*Each Child, Our Future* is Ohio's shared plan for ensuring each student is challenged, prepared, and empowered for his or her future, by meeting the needs of the whole child in prekindergarten through grade 12 education (Ohio Department of Education, 2018a; see Appendix I). *Each Child, Our Future* is built on three core principles (equity, partnerships, and quality schools); four learning domains; (foundational knowledge and skills, well-rounded content, leadership and reasoning, and social-emotional learning), and ten priority strategies, including:

- 1) Highly effective teachers and leaders;
- 2) Principal support;
- 3) Teacher and instructional support;
- 4) Standards reflect all learning domains;
- 5) Assessments gauge all learning domains;
- 6) Accountability system honors all learning domains;
- 7) Meet needs of whole child;
- 8) Expand quality early learning;
- 9) Develop literacy skills; and
- 10) Transform high school/provide more paths to graduation.

While Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot most directly aligns with strategy 9 and the principle of equity, this work includes components that touch on many of the other strategies, notably teacher and instructional support, principal support and highly effective teachers and leaders.

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 collection 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 collection of aligned policies and practices include a variety of funding sources, legislation and other policy drivers.

The Department uses existing structures to continuously refine Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot. These structures include Ohio's Learning Standards for English Language Arts, the extended standards, 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 now includes three literacy specialists and a Third Grade Reading Guarantee administrator who are housed at the Department, as well as two Ohio literacy leads and two adolescent literacy specialists housed in regional offices. Under the guidance of the director for the Office of Approaches to Teaching and Professional Learning, the Literacy Unit's role is to build capacity to support language and literacy development from birth through grade 12 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 Ohio's strong regional support systems. Ohio developed state support teams to provide targeted support for evidence-based practices that improve outcomes for the state'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 for special education. In collaboration with the Department, 17 regional early literacy specialists and two Ohio literacy leads 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 and educational service center 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 recently updated its [Third Grade Reading Guarantee Manual](#) and Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plans. Guidance 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 also established [Ohio's Evidence-Based Clearinghouse](#), which includes evidence-based strategies aligned with the ESSA definitions of Strong, Moderate, Promising and Demonstrating. The clearinghouse provides support for districts to identify evidence-based strategies that align to their students' needs.

Under Ohio Revised Code 3302.13, traditional districts and community schools (charter schools) are required to submit Reading Achievement Plans if they meet the following criteria 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 2017-2018, 80 traditional districts and community schools met this requirement. The Department worked with the state support teams to help districts develop Reading Achievement Plans by offering professional learning. These learning opportunities ranged from conducting deep data analysis, to goal setting, to identifying and monitoring evidence-based strategies to increase outcomes for all students.

Ohio received its third State Personnel Development Grant in August 2017. With each new set of grant funding, the Department builds 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 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 [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.

Ohio is committed to alignment and coherence of literacy improvement efforts and has used the State Systemic Improvement Plan (preschool-grade 3) activities as the foundation for literacy improvements from birth to grade 12. In October 2017, Ohio was awarded a \$35 million Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy grant. Grant efforts are focused on increasing literacy achievement for Ohio's most vulnerable students, including those living in poverty, those with disabilities, English learners and those at risk for having reading difficulties. Activities that make an impact on teacher and child outcomes have transferred from the SSIP to larger-scale efforts.

In January 2018, the Department published [Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement](#). This plan guides the state in promoting evidence-based language and literacy teaching and learning for all learners from birth to grade 12. This plan articulates a cohesive state literacy framework aimed at promoting proficiency in reading, writing and oral language for all learners. The state's plan is driven by scientific research and encourages a professional movement toward implementing data-based, differentiated, evidence-based practices in educational settings throughout the state. Specifically, this plan illustrates the strong language and literacy efforts currently underway in Ohio and the vision to expand and strengthen them to support improvement across the educational cascade (state, regions, districts, schools, classrooms and families and communities). Districts across the state are now expected to align school improvement goals for literacy to this state plan.

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

## Progress in Implementing the State Systemic Improvement Plan

### Research-based Early Literacy Instruction

To improve early language and literacy outcomes for all students in preschool through grade 3, 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 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 that have shown evidence of effectiveness. *Research-based practices* are based on research but have not been empirically tested. The primary research-based professional learning series selected for Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot is the Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS). LETRS is based on decades of research on how children learn to read, including the neurobiological basis of reading development. LETRS promotes evidence-based language and literacy instructional practices (Voyager Sopris Learning, Inc., 2016).

The second research-based activity is instructional and systems coaching for district and regional staff. 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). Implementation of Early Literacy Pilot activities relies heavily on both research-based practices (content-specific professional learning and language and literacy coaching) to improve outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities. Based on feedback from 2016-2017 implementation activities, support for administrators was identified as an area of growth. As a result, the Department developed

and implemented a framework for coaching systems to support the implementation of evidence-based practices. The Department defines systems coaching as developing knowledge, skills and abilities in the systems to support high-quality use of language and literacy practices

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. Last year, Ohio updated its 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 teacher knowledge of early language and literacy skills to implement evidence-based practices with 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 2017-2018 school year started with several professional learning activities aligned to the SSIP intended outcomes. Department staff and cross-agency partners 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 levels. These activities are described below and in the Logic Model (Appendix B).

- **State:** The Department is providing professional learning opportunities to staff throughout the agency to align resources, language and messaging. These include, but are not limited to, book studies, informal professional learning communities and invitations to all state-sponsored literacy focused sessions. For the Department to build alignment and coherence of literacy efforts and ensure consistent messaging, goals have been set to implement more frequent professional learning and enhanced conversations across centers and offices.
- **Regional:** Regional support staff, including regional early literacy specialists participate in the State Literacy Network, which provides access to all district and teacher-level professional learning supports and includes monthly literacy sessions to build the state's capacity to serve its districts. The Department developed a four-year Regional Professional Learning Series in Literacy (Appendix J), which began with the State Literacy Network in September 2018. This series includes more than 100 regional staff from educational service centers and state support teams. These

regional teams work with districts and schools promoting evidence-based literacy instruction and effective systems to support implementation. Year one of the professional learning (2018-2019) focuses on building a common disposition and understanding of what it will take to raise literacy achievement throughout the state. The goal of this professional learning series is to guide regional staff in explicitly connecting Department efforts to promote overall school improvement. These efforts include, but are not limited to, professional learning on Integrated Comprehensive Services, the Ohio Improvement Process and implementation science. Years two through four (2019-2022) will focus on evidence-based language and literacy practices. Each evidence-based practice session will include resources for instructional support, system implementation, Multi-Tier System of Supports and data-based decision making, diverse learners and home and community connections. This series is led by a team of Department literacy staff, Ohio literacy leads, regional early literacy specialists, adolescent literacy specialists and staff from the Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence and the Outreach Center for Deafness and Blindness.

All regional early literacy specialists have ongoing access to Voyager's two-day 2018 Virtual Summer Literacy Symposium (see Appendix K) during which many leading literacy experts presented topics. Examples include: How New Dyslexia Laws Will Impact Your School, District or State (Jack Fletcher, Ph.D.); What to Consider When Choosing Programs or Assessments (David Liben); and The Seven Factors that Influence English Learners' Language and Academic Development (Elsa Cardenas-Hagan, Ph.D.). Additional experts included Louisa Moats, Ed.D., David A. Kilpatrick, Ph.D., and Carol Tolman, Ed.D.

- District and school: District and school leaders participating in Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot are engaging in an administrator's version of Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS), consisting of both online units and face-to-face sessions with national experts. Regional early literacy specialists and district coaches support central office 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 and webinar forums led by the Department and administrators from pilot buildings.

Administrator forum webinars, created in collaboration between participating administrators and Department staff, provide implementation updates, allow districts to share experiences and include resources to support implementation of evidence-based practices in classrooms. These forums offer opportunities to delve deeper into systems-level content, such as supporting partnerships between special and general educators. 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 in multiple ways. Content knowledge is built through LETRS online units

supported by face-to-face sessions with national experts. Regional early literacy specialists provide extended support through coaching as described above. The professional learning includes job-embedded activities in the form of bridge-to-practice activities to promote real-time application of evidence-based language and literacy practices. Teachers receive support from regional early literacy specialists and district coaches, as well as building administrators in applying the concepts learned and practiced through the professional learning.

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

- To develop a clear, consistent coaching model that will support language and literacy content, all members of the State Literacy Network and pilot district coaches are participating in an e-course through Corwin on Jim Knight's instructional coaching framework (Knight, 2007). Regional early literacy specialists and pilot district coaches are also completing a bridge-to-practice developed by a previously trained colleague and in-state experts from the Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence, using the Impact Cycle (Knight, 2018) with at least one teacher of students with disabilities who have complex needs.
- The Department offered a week-long professional learning series on explicit instruction with Dr. Anita Archer in June 2018. Explicit instruction is a systematic, direct, engaging and success-oriented teaching process. Regional early literacy specialists, SSIP pilot district coaches, state support teams and educational service center staff who support literacy instruction across grades participated in this professional learning opportunity and are developing trainings at the local level, as well as incorporating strategies acquired in all professional learning.

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 aligned to Ohio's strategic plan, *Each Child, Our Future*, and added to Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement as the Department finalizes them (Ohio Department of Education, 2018a; Ohio Department of Education, 2018b).

## Data on Implementation and Outcomes

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 qualitative and quantitative data with ongoing feedback for program improvement. The external evaluation team at the University of Cincinnati Evaluation Services Center analyzes the qualitative data following several major steps. Team members 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 analyzes quantitative data using statistical packages to calculate descriptive and inferential statistics and reports all findings in aggregate and disaggregated forms based on the Department's feedback. The evaluation team obtains 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 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 use the data being collected to inform policy recommendations and monitor how data are 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 dashboard to meet the needs of data collection for all measurable pilot activities. The dashboard contains "real-time" building-, teacher- and child-level data, including curriculum-based measure data, R-TFI and professional learning data, a professional activities calendar, coaching logs and professional learning 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 all pilot districts upload student-level 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 upload data regarding coaching intensity (number and length of each coaching session) and topic of focus. The Department continues to work with Ms. Averitt to ensure users can download data reports that meet their needs. The dashboard gives users access to a recorded orientation webinar, as well as a Guide to the SSIP Data Dashboard for quick reference (see Appendix L). Modifications to the data dashboard will continue throughout the SSIP to best suit the needs of the districts, regions, state and external evaluators.

## Evaluation Questions, Data Sources, Data Collection and Associated Timelines

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 supports 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. The evaluation plan focuses on: 1) professional learning; 2) language and literacy coaching; 3) student and teacher outcomes; and 4) literacy-based 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.

1. LETRS data are used to measure teacher knowledge. Voyager Sopris Learning gathers this data through its online learning platform and shares it with the Department and the external evaluators;
2. Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory data are used to help school leadership teams assess and improve the effectiveness of their Multi-Tier System of Supports for language and literacy. Regional early literacy specialists and districts coaches oversee data collection and upload it to the data dashboard;
3. Coaching data are used to measure the intensity and impact of coaching. Regional early literacy specialists and district coaches record this data in the data dashboard;
4. Curriculum-based measures, such as aimsweb or DIBELS Next, are used to measure student outcomes. Districts collect curriculum-based measurement data and load it into the data dashboard for use by districts, regions, the state, and external evaluators.
5. State assessment data include data from the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, Reading Diagnostic, and Grade 3 Ohio's State Tests in English Language Arts, which are reported to the Department through the Education Management Information System (EMIS). As part of the data-sharing agreement, the Department provides these data for participating schools to the external evaluators;
6. Online, self-report surveys are 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 collected by the external evaluation team using Qualtrics (2015), an online data-collection software used for many professional and academic research purposes; and
7. Focus groups and site visits are used to gather information on educators' perceptions of classroom practices, school climate, administrative supports and guidance provided by 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 identifiable information is collected. The University of Cincinnati's Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved all data measures, collection procedures and analysis methods. Each evaluation question, the Theory of Action strand it represents, sources of data, collection procedures and associated timelines are presented in Appendix M.

In addition to data collected for each evaluation question, each spring, the University of Cincinnati collects annual surveys from the teachers, regional early literacy specialists,

district coaches and building leadership. These surveys ask personnel to self-report on several different 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 for both cohorts, the external evaluators completed site visits at participating schools. The intention of these visits was to conduct focus groups or interviews with teachers, administrators and parents to record their observations on the implementation of language and literacy professional learning, family engagement and school climate activities. Evaluators also conducted focus groups with regional early literacy specialists. The data gathered from these groups give the external evaluators greater details about the early literacy implementation process, what is working, what needs to be changed and other factors that may be supporting or 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 these evaluators are knowledgeable about methods for improving data quality and will implement these processes when necessary.

### ***Early Literacy Pilot Participation***

As previously described, Ohio's Early Literacy pilot is being implemented over five years among two cohorts of teachers representing 15 districts and 24 schools. Table 3 shows the number of students and educators served in the pilot.

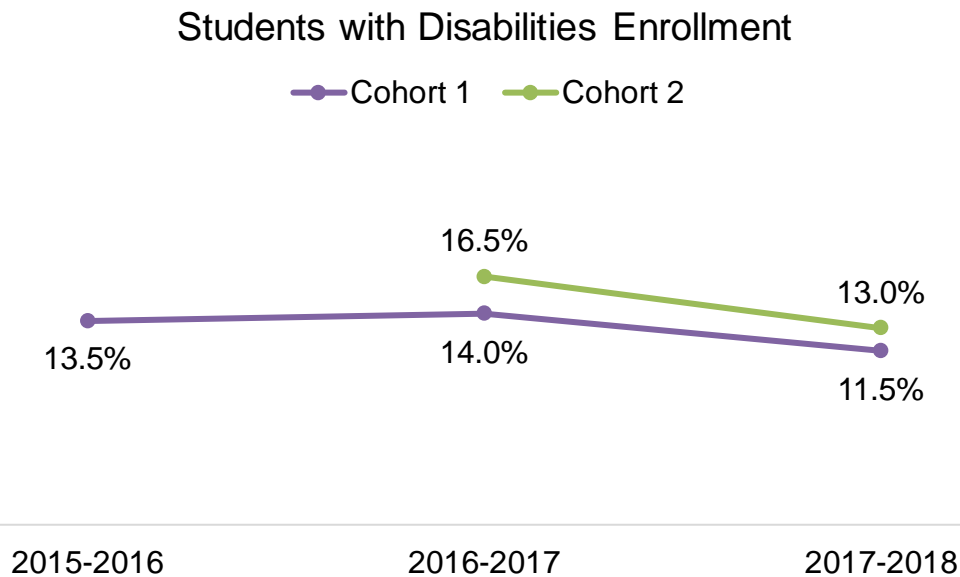
*Table 3. Number of preschool through grade 3 students and educators served in Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot in 2017-2018*

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Total
Preschool – Grade 3 Educators	344	293	637
Preschool – Grade 3 Students	4,632	3,515	8,147

Approximately 15 percent of Ohio's K-12 students are identified as students with disabilities, slightly more than the national average of 13 percent. Within the pilot, 14 percent of Cohort 1 students and 16 percent of Cohort 2 students are identified as having a disability. Ohio's goals in addressing Tier 1 instruction for all educators are to more readily diagnose why students are struggling with reading, be able to provide evidence-based reading instruction and intervention, and lower the number of students being identified as having a disability. The percentages of students with disabilities identified in each cohort each year are displayed in Figure 4. Cohort 1 showed an initial increase in the

percentage of students with disabilities from baseline to year 1 of pilot implementation, but an overall decrease of 2.0 percent across three years of data and two years of pilot implementation. Cohort 2 showed an initial decrease of 3.5 percent from their baseline to year 1 of implementation. As with the SIMR data, this initial analysis does not track students with disabilities from year to year; rather, these data include students with disabilities from preschool to third grade enrolled in pilot schools each year. The Department will continue assessing the percentage of students with disabilities identified in pilot schools each year and will work with the external evaluator to track students across years.

Figure 4. Percentage of students with disabilities enrolled in pilot schools



It is too early in the pilot implementation process to expect to see changes in student outcomes and, likewise, identification of students with disabilities, though the Department will continue to review these data (see *Anticipated Timeline for Learning, Implementation and Change* section).

***Anticipated Timeline for Learning, Implementation and Change***

The Department is staggering the implementation of professional learning content between Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 to allow for continuous improvement and to support long-term sustainability and scalability. For these reasons, changes in outcomes may not be apparent immediately after exposure to professional learning content. Figure 5 outlines the pilot implementation schedule, including when teachers learn LETRS content, when they can implement their learning in the classroom and when effects may be anticipated for students. The color intensity for each row in the figure denotes the anticipated increase across project years in outcome changes from lesser (lighter shades) to greater (darker shades) (Dariotis, Duan, Holton, Bailey, Toraman, Smith, Morrison, & Telfer, 2018a).

LETRS K-3 units 1 to 4 include content aimed primarily at students in kindergarten and grade 1. Cohort 1 K-3 teachers learned content for units 1 to 4 in 2016-2017. During 2017-

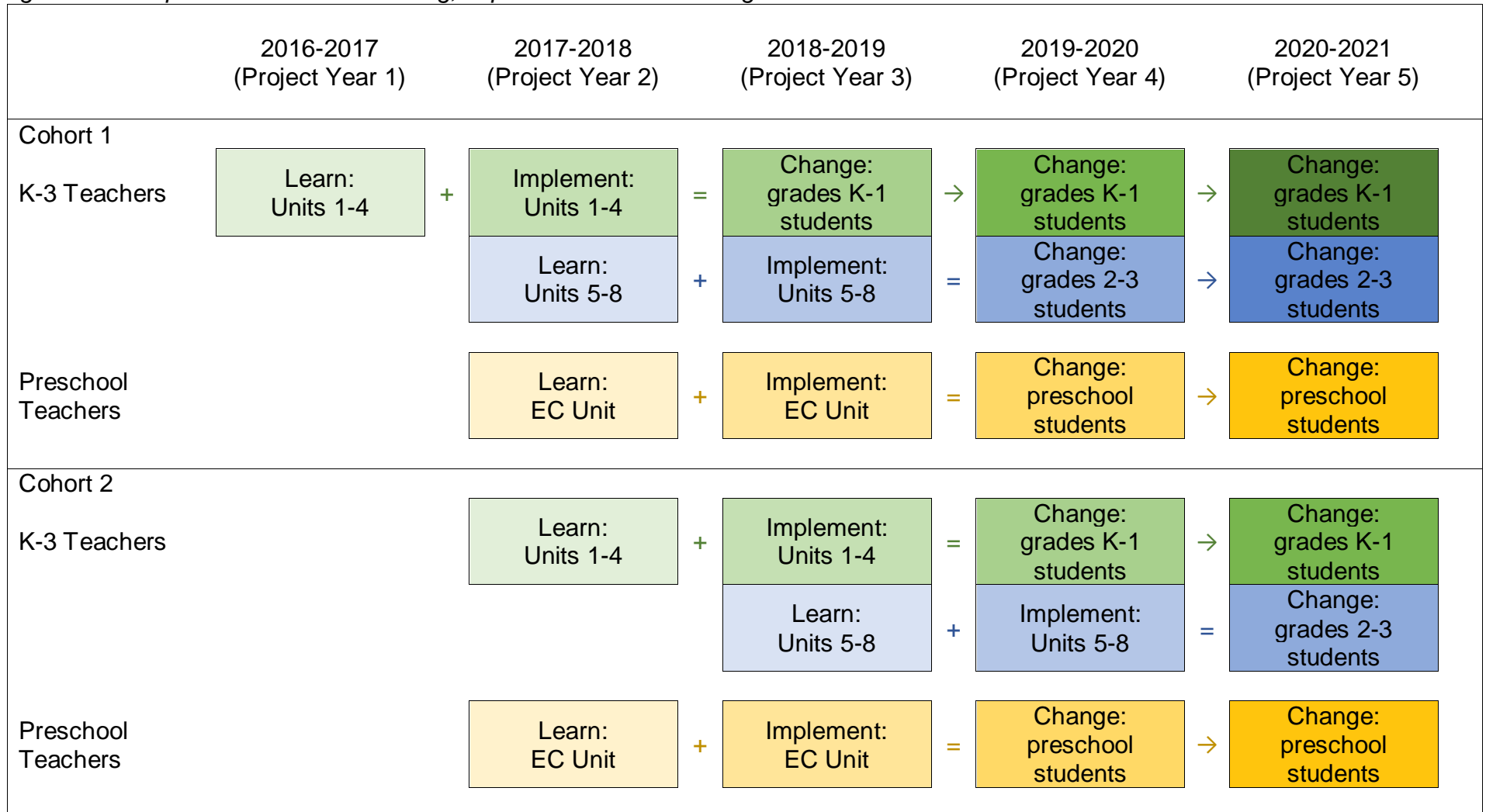
2018, it was expected that Cohort 1 K-3 teachers would implement what they learned in units 1 to 4 (denoted by light green shading). Observable changes in student language and literacy are not expected among Cohort 1 kindergarten and grade 1 students until 2018-2019 at the earliest and may be seen to a greater extent in 2019-2020 and beyond, as indicated by progressively darker green shading. This pattern in observable student changes is expected to be similar for Cohort 2. Cohort 2 K-3 teachers learned content for units 1 to 4 in 2017-2018 and will implement these practices in 2018-2019; observable changes in student language and literacy in kindergarten and grade 1 students may be seen beginning in 2019-2020 and through 2020-2021 (Dariotis et al., 2018a).

LETRS K-3 units 5 to 8 include content aimed primarily at students in grades 2 and 3. Cohort 1 K-3 teachers learned content for units 5 to 8 in 2017-2018. During 2018-2019, Cohort 1 K-3 teachers will implement what they learned (denoted by light blue shading). Changes in student language and literacy are not expected among Cohort 1 grades 2 and 3 students until 2019-2020 at the earliest and to a greater extent in 2020-2021, indicated by progressively darker blue shading. This pattern in observable student changes is expected to be similar for Cohort 2. Cohort 2 K-3 teachers will learn content for units 5 to 8 in 2018-2019, will implement these practices in 2019-2020, and changes in student language and literacy in grades 2 and 3 students may be evident in 2020-2021 (Dariotis et al., 2018a).

Preschool teachers in both cohorts learned LETRS content for the early childhood units 1 to 4 in 2017-2018 and will implement these practices in 2018-2019. Observable changes in preschool students' language and literacy may be anticipated beginning in 2019-2020 and beyond, denoted by progressively darker yellow shading (Dariotis et al., 2018a).

In sum, the Department expects there will be a one-year lag between teachers learning unit content and classroom implementation of that content, followed by another yearlong lag between implementation and observable student-level changes. Thus, the Department anticipates a two-year lag between teachers learning content and observable changes in student language and literacy outcomes. Results should be reviewed with this lag in mind (Dariotis et al., 2018a).

Figure 5. Anticipated timeline for learning, implementation and change



(Dariotis et al., 2018a, p. 28)

## Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling

Department staff, regional early literacy specialists, Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence and Outreach Center for Deafness and Blindness specialists, district coaches, teachers, intervention specialists, administrators and Department staff received in-person professional learning on language and literacy research-based practices through Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) professional learning.

### *Kindergarten – Grade 3 Educators*

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 both the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years. 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 in two sets of four (units 1-4 and 5-8). Each unit contains between six and 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 also contains a summary of the information presented. Checks for understanding quizzes and bridge-to-practice activities are woven throughout the online learning platform. Participants must pass quizzes at the end of each unit; while the bridge-to-practice provides an opportunity for participants to complete case studies of up to three students and build portfolios of progress for each student. Participants take a pre-test before beginning the online modules and take the same test after completing unit four; another pre-test is administered prior to beginning unit five, with a post-test following unit eight.

### *Early Childhood Educators*

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. Online LETRS professional learning for early childhood educators (preschool and kindergarten) includes 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 bridge-to-practice activities are included in each unit. Participants take a pre-test before beginning the online modules and take the same test after completing unit four. The online units were made optional for Cohort 1 educators as they were not released until their second year of implementation.

### *Administrators*

Voyager Sopris Learning's national trainers conducted the hands-on, face-to-face professional learning sessions for administrators over two days during the 2016-2017 school year. Online LETRS professional learning for administrators became available

during the 2018-2019 school year, and administrators in both cohorts are slated to complete the training by July 2019. The administrator series helps instructional leaders create systems and structures in their districts and schools to increase reading performance. Eight units are included in this series: (1) Facilitating Change; (2) Assessment and Outcome Data; (3) Universal Instruction; (4) Resource Management; (5) Targeted and Intensive Intervention; (6) Data Analysis; (7) School Leadership Teams; and (8) Professional Development and Sustainability. An additional eight units each provide an overview to the corresponding series for K-3 educators, including quick resources to support teachers participating in LETRS, tools to use for observations and ideas to help the administrator provide ongoing support to teachers.

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 record 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 4.

### ***Cohort 1***

Cohort 1 administrators participated in face-to-face professional learning in January 2017, while teachers began their professional learning in August 2016. Preschool staff took part in a two-day face-to-face session during the 2016-2017 school year and had the option of completing the early childhood online series during the 2017-2018 school year. K-3 educators completed units 1-4 during the 2016-2017 school year and units 5-8 in the 2017-2018 school year, with three one-day face-to-face sessions each year. Administrators will complete their online series in spring 2019.

### ***Cohort 2***

Cohort 2 administrators took part in face-to-face professional learning in June 2017, while teachers began their professional learning in August 2017. Preschool staff took part in two one-day face-to-face sessions and completed the early childhood online series in the 2017-2018 school year. K-3 educators completed units 1-4 during the 2017-2018 school year and are finishing units 5-8 in the 2018-2019 school year, with three one-day face-to-face sessions each year. Administrators will complete their online series in spring 2019.

Table 4. LETRS professional learning implementation by cohort

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

### LETRS Professional Learning Data

Voyager Sopris Learning tracks teacher completion rates of those participating in the online modules, their knowledge measured by pre- and post-tests and their responses to checks for understanding. *LETRS 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition* contains two pre-tests and post-tests, 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. *LETRS Early Childhood* also contains a pre-test before unit 1 and post-test following unit 4. Pre- and post-test scores were analyzed to determine whether participants’ knowledge increased after taking part in each portion of the online professional learning.

#### Cohort 1 Educator Knowledge Change

Figure 6 displays the knowledge increase for kindergarten through grade 3 educators in Cohort 1 from the pre-to post-tests for both sets of units in *LETRS 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*.

##### Units 1-4

Eighty-six percent of educators in cohort 1 completed both the pre- and post-tests for units 1-4 in the 2016-2017 school year. The Department saw an overall knowledge increase of 31 percent, with increases for 95 percent of participating educators (Dariotis, Duan, Morrison, Toraman, Bailey, Holton, & Smith, 2018b).

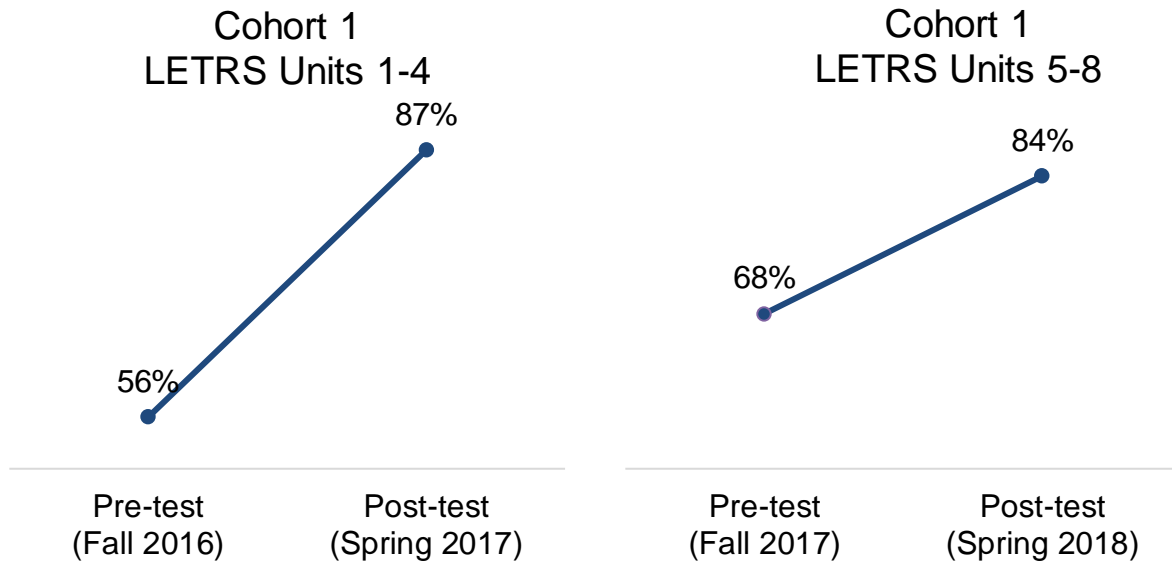
##### Units 5-8

Eighty-six percent of educators in cohort 1 completed both the pre- and post-tests for units 5-8 in the 2017-2018 school year. The Department saw an overall knowledge increase of 17 percent for units 5-8, with increases for 88 percent of participating educators (Dariotis et al., 2018a).



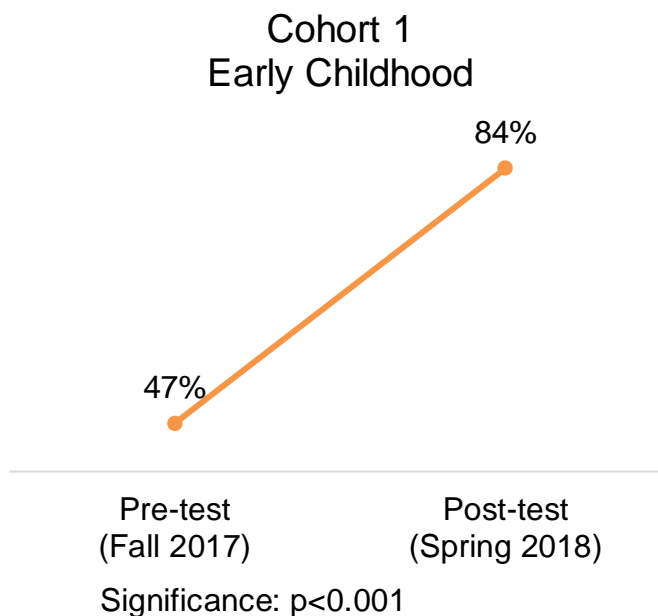
The Department saw positive changes among teachers of all grades and teaching specialties from pre- to post-test for both units 1-4 and units 5-8.

Figure 6. Percentage correct on LETRS pre- and post-tests for kindergarten through grade 3 educators in Cohort 1



Preschool educators in Cohort 1 also showed an increase in knowledge from the pre- to post-test in the *LETRS Early Childhood* series. Sixty-four percent of preschool educators in Cohort 1 completed both the pre- and post-tests for early childhood in the 2017-2018 school year (see Figure 7). As a reminder, the online series was an optional component for Cohort 1 educators. The Department saw an overall knowledge increase of 37 percent, with increases for 94 percent of participating educators.

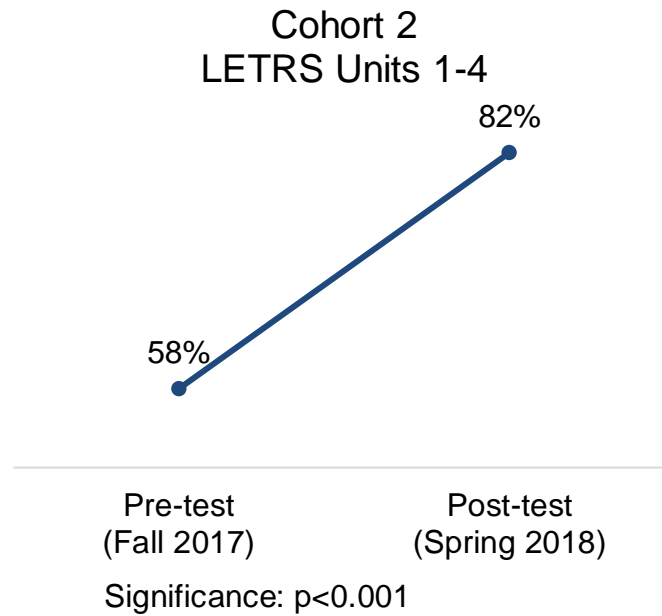
Figure 7. Percentage correct on LETRS Early Childhood pre- and post-tests for preschool educators in Cohort 1



### Cohort 2 Educator Knowledge Change

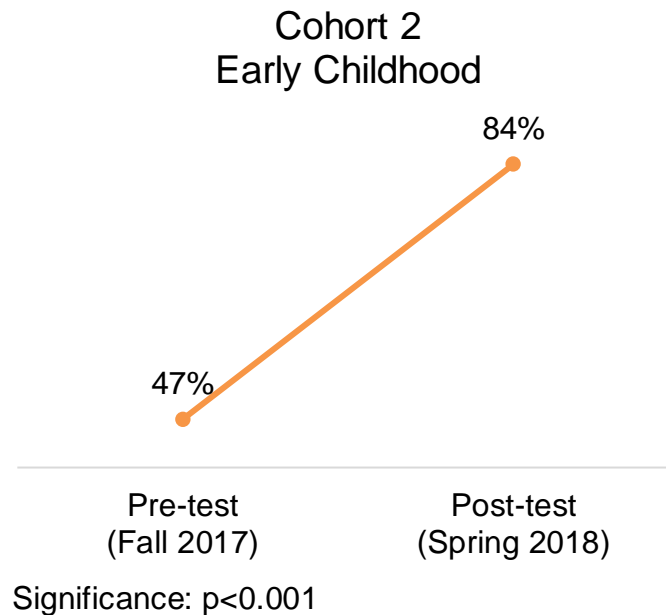
Figure 8 displays the knowledge increase for kindergarten through grade 3 educators in Cohort 2 from pre- to post-test for the first four units of *LETRS 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*. Ninety-two percent of educators in cohort 2 completed both the pre- and post-tests for units 1-4 in the 2017-2018 school year. The Department saw an overall knowledge increase of 24 percent, with increases for 97 percent of participating educators. The Department saw positive changes among teachers of all grades and teaching specialties from pre- to post-test for units 1-4.

Figure 8. Percentage correct on LETRS units 1-4 pre- and post-tests for kindergarten through grade 3 educators in Cohort 2



Preschool educators in Cohort 2 also showed an increase in knowledge from the pre- to post-test in the *LETRS Early Childhood* series. Seventy-eight percent of preschool educators in Cohort 2 completed both the pre- and post-tests for early childhood in the 2017-2018 school year (see Figure 9). The Department saw an overall knowledge increase of 37 percent, with increases for 97 percent of participating educators.

Figure 9. Percentage correct on LETRS Early Childhood pre- and post-tests for preschool educators in Cohort 2



Cohort 2 preschool through grade 3 educators showed an increase in language and literacy knowledge in the early childhood series as well as the first four units of *LETRS 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*. K-3 educators will be assessed again at the end of the 2018-2019 school year, after completing units 5-8.

### *LETRS Summary*

The Department saw an overall increase across both cohorts from pre- to post-test for each component of LETRS (units 1-4, units 5-8, and early childhood). Language and literacy knowledge increased across all schools among all educator subgroups in both cohorts, with Title I reading specialists' knowledge increasing the most, 22 percent, of all educator subgroups in Cohort 1 and multi-grade educators increasing the most, at 34 percent, in Cohort 2.

While knowledge increase is a goal of the professional learning, pilot activities are also designed to assess whether educators are using the evidence-based instructional skills for language and literacy in their classrooms. The *LETRS Application of Concepts* tools (Appendices N and O), previously called "Keys to LETRS Implementation," created by Louisa Moats, Ph.D., Lucy Hart Paulson, Ed.D., and Voyager Sopris Learning, will be used to collect classroom implementation data (Voyager Sopris Learning, 2018a & 2018b). The *LETRS Application of Concepts* tools contain items referencing language and literacy skills and strategies, specific to the face-to-face and online professional learning. These tools have two purposes: (1) literacy coaches will use the tools as a checklist to facilitate instructional coaching with teachers, and (2) regional early literacy specialists will collect data on the implementation of newly acquired language and literacy knowledge. Regional early literacy specialists will collect the observation data on a subset of teachers who scored 80 percent or greater on each LETRS post-test. For data collection, there will be two observations for each teacher and these will be integrated into that teacher's ongoing coaching cycle. Voyager Sopris Learning has created a series of 10 webinars to train literacy coaches and regional early literacy specialists on the use of these tools. Cohort 1 began data collection January 2019, and Cohort 2 will begin in fall 2019. The external evaluation team will analyze these data, while considering and triangulating with other data sources.

### *LETRS Professional Learning Data Limitations*

Currently, there are no obvious limitations 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, which may have impacted post-test scores.

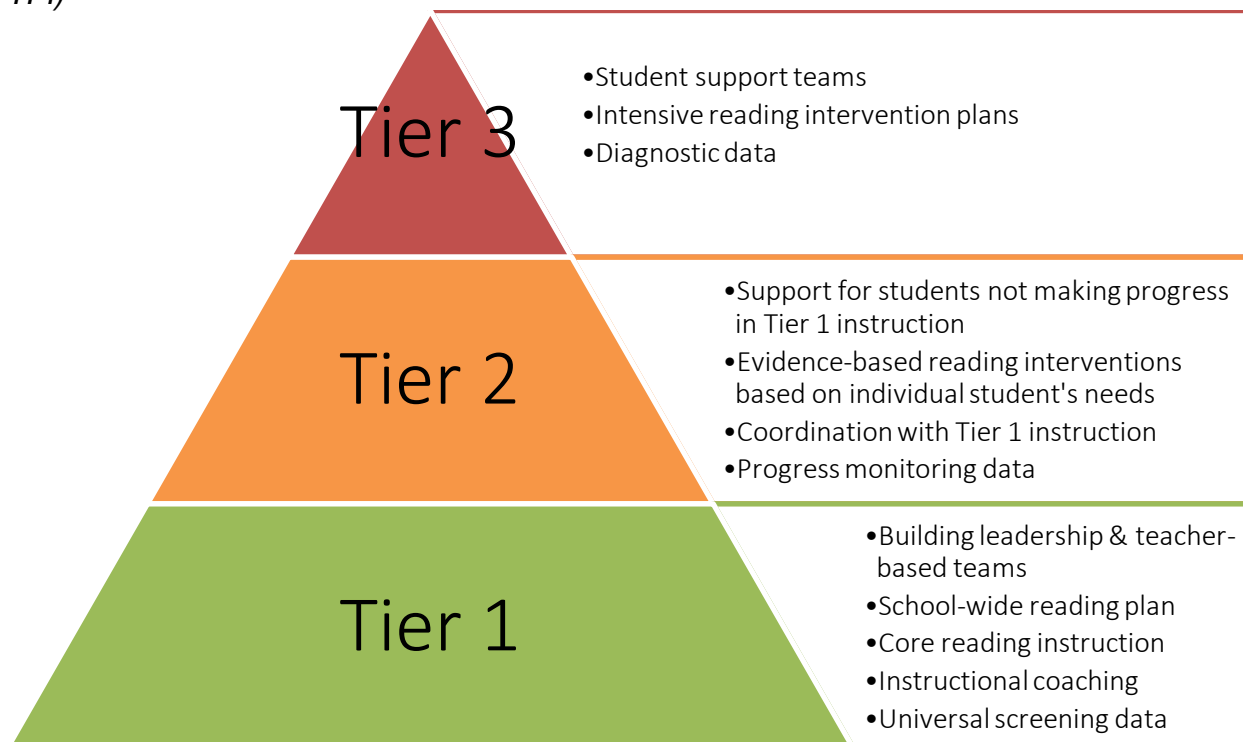
## **Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory**

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, 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 10 summarizes each tier of the R-TFI. A complete list of the items on the R-TFI is provided in Appendix P.

Figure 10. Summary of each tier measured by the Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory (R-TFI)



Across the first two years of implementation, each district will collect data on all three tiers of the R-TFI. 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 subsequent project year. Table 5 displays the facilitation timeline for each cohort going forward. Regional early literacy specialists will continue to use these data to provide appropriate, systems-level coaching supports.

Table 5. 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	Annual administration Tiers 1, 2, 3	Annual administration Tiers 1, 2, 3	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			

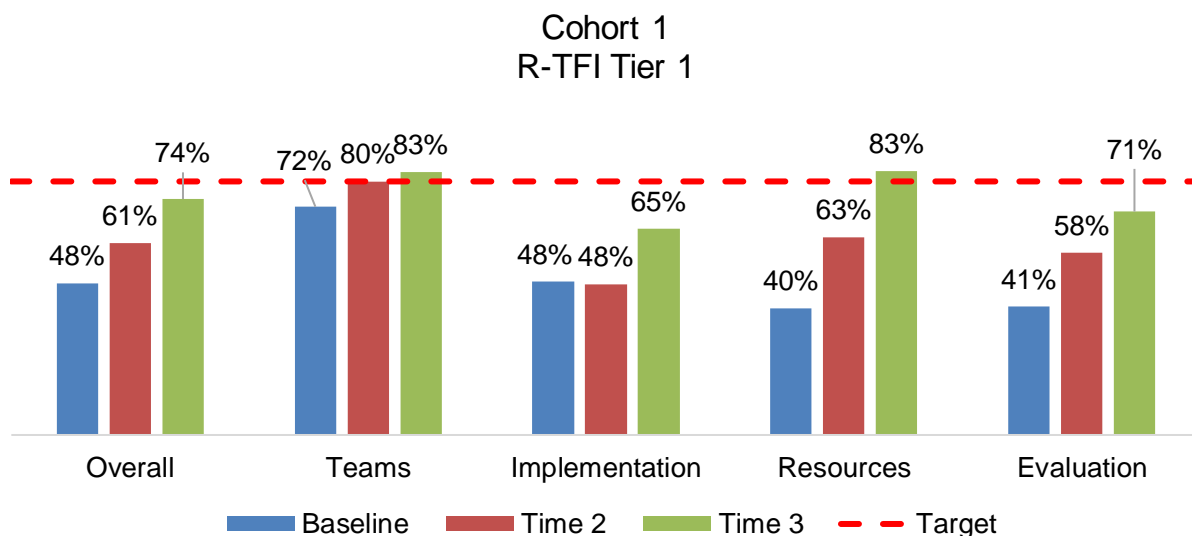
The regional early literacy specialists and the building leadership teams are reviewing these data at least once a year in the spring. Teams also develop a School-Wide Reading Plan and Coaching Service Delivery Plan based on the R-TFI results. The Coaching Service Delivery Plan specifies the concepts or skills district personnel 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 Plan defines criteria to prevent reading difficulties and ensure reading success. All R-TFI data are entered in the data dashboard, so local, regional, state, and evaluation staff can use them. 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.

### Cohort 1 Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory Data

By the end of 2017-2018, 10 of the 14 Cohort 1 schools completed the R-TFI Tier 1 over three time points, in fall 2016, spring 2017 and spring 2018 (see Figure 11). The Overall score and all subscale scores showed increases from baseline (time 1) to time 3, which demonstrates improvement in the implementation process. Both the *Teams* and *Resources* subscale scores reached the 80 percent benchmark target. The high baseline for *Teams* (72 percent) is attributed to the Ohio Improvement Process team structures that were already in place as a foundation for pilot implementation. Increases were statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) for the Overall score and for both the *Resources* and *Evaluation* subscale scores. The largest gain was observed for *Resources*, which more than doubled. Of the 10 schools, eight schools reached the 80 percent benchmark on the *Teams* subscale; two schools reached the benchmark on the *Implementation* subscale; seven schools reached the benchmark on the *Resources* subscale; and four

schools reached the 80 percent benchmark on the *Evaluation* subscale (Dariotis et al., 2018a).

Figure 11. R-TFI Tier 1 total and subscale scores for Cohort 1

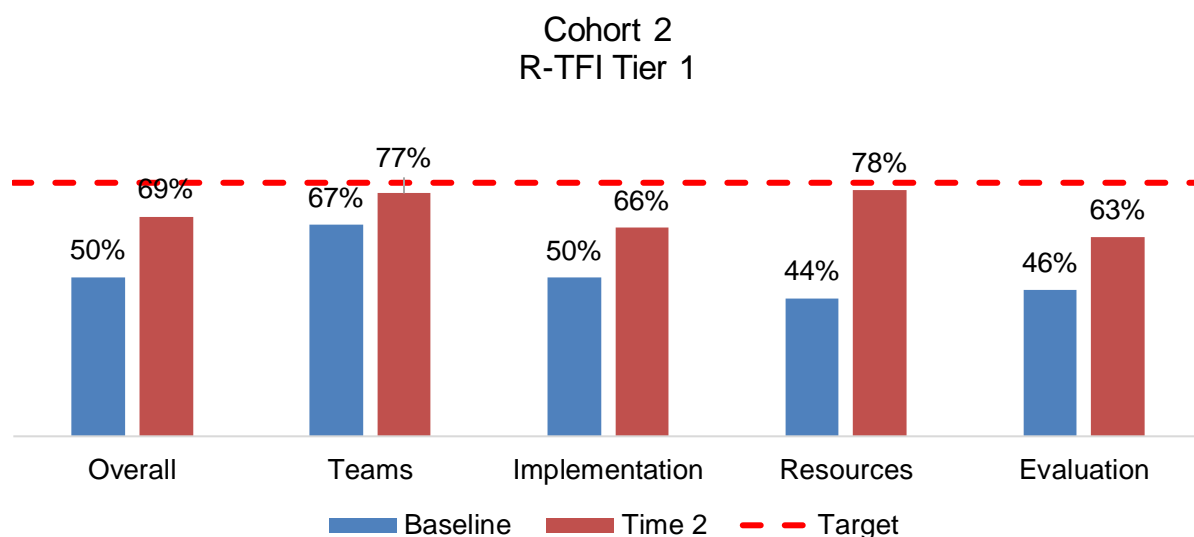


Tier 1 has been the primary focus of the pilot, though Tier 2 data were collected twice, and Tier 3 data were collected once. R-TFI data for Tiers 2 and 3 are detailed in Appendix Q.

### Cohort 2 Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory Data

Nine of 10 Cohort 2 schools had Tier 1 data available for both time points (fall 2017 and spring 2018). The Overall score and all subscale scores showed increases from baseline to the second time point, which demonstrated improvement in the implementation process even though the 80 percent target was not met (see Figure 12). Statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) increases were observed for the Overall score and for both the *Implementation* and *Resources* subscale scores. Of the nine schools, six schools reached the 80 percent benchmark on the *Teams* subscale; three schools reached the benchmark on the *Implementation* subscale; seven schools reached the benchmark on the *Resources* subscale; and one school reached the 80 percent benchmark on the *Evaluation* subscale (Dariotis et al., 2018a).

Figure 12. R-TFI Tier 1 total and subscale scores for Cohort 2



### R-TFI Summary

The R-TFI findings demonstrate improvement and progress toward a Multi-Tier System of Supports for school-wide language and literacy core instruction and reading intervention. For both cohorts, the R-TFI Tier 1 Overall score is approaching the 80 percent target. Tier 1 *Implementation* and *Evaluation* supports are showing the greatest area of need. For both cohorts, lowest scoring items on the *Implementation* and *Evaluation* subscales included the School-Wide Reading Plan. At least a quarter of schools in both cohorts do not have a School-Wide Reading Plan in place and fewer than half have one fully in place. Of the schools that do have plans in place, none of their leadership teams are monitoring implementation. School-Wide Reading Plans have been identified as an area of focus for both cohorts moving forward. The Department has asked schools with plans in place to submit them to the data dashboard for Department review. Submission was optional in spring 2018 and will be required in the spring of each subsequent project year. As these supports are put in place over time, the Overall score should increase and eventually exceed the 80 percent benchmark for Tier 1. For both cohorts, Tier 1 *Teams* was the highest scoring subscale; this was expected since the Ohio Improvement Process allowed for team structures to be in place before the start of the Early Literacy Pilot.

### R-TFI Data Limitations

While the Department expects increases in scores over time, there may be an initial dip because teams of educators began with the self-assessment before completing the professional learning. Engaging in the professional learning has led educators to understand they are not implementing an evidence-based language and literacy Multi-Tier System of Supports as well as they had initially thought, and they may have rated themselves lower in subsequent assessments. Also, while the R-TFI provides data on implementation of language and literacy Multi-Tier System of Supports, it does not capture the discussions that occur among building leadership teams. Anecdotes from Ohio's regional early literacy specialists suggest that educators are having deeper



conversations that suggest a greater understanding of where they need to go in the future than may be reflected here. Additionally, the R-TFI is a self-assessment and 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 in the cohort districts.

## Coaching

Coaching is an integral part of the overall Early Literacy Pilot. The instructional coaching promotes the implementation of the evidence-based practices learned included in the LETRS modules. Regional early literacy specialists provide direct support to district coaches and, in some cases, classroom teachers on effective implementation of LETRS content. District coaches, in turn, provide instructional coaching to classroom teachers and support staff. The roles and responsibilities of regional early literacy specialists are updated each year to reflect cohort progress with pilot activities implementation (Appendices R and S). District coaches are expected to assume more responsibility for coaching as years progress. The Department continuously modifies the support for the implementation of a coaching system based on the yearly coaching analysis and needs identified by regional early literacy specialists and district coaches.

Through continuous feedback from district and regional teams, the Department has learned it is critical to provide support to building and district leaders in the form of systems coaching. As with instructional coaching, regional early literacy specialists support district coaches as they build capacity for the implementation of evidence-based language and literacy practices. Systems coaching engages the principals, district literacy coaches, classroom teachers and intervention specialists in critical examination of the systems in place to support effective practices. Activities of systems coaching include:

- Assessing needs, fit and context of new innovations;
- Promoting buy-in and readiness for new innovations;
- Forming a district leadership team, building leadership team and/or teacher-based teams;
- Developing the district leadership team, building leadership team and/or teacher-based teams;
- Facilitating MTSS needs assessment for literacy;
- Supporting fluency in school-wide reading model:
  - Evidence-based practices and interventions;
  - Data interpretation;
  - School-wide reading assessment system;
  - School-wide reading schedule.

District literacy coaches are working closely with regional early literacy specialists to help building administrators and teacher-based teams to build their capacity to engage in the practices listed above. Ohio is modeling a gradual release of responsibility so that

by year 5, pilot districts will not rely on regional early literacy specialists as their in-house experts. District coaches and administrators will assume the role of experts. The Department is continuously developing coaching supports to meet specific district needs.

### Coaching Data

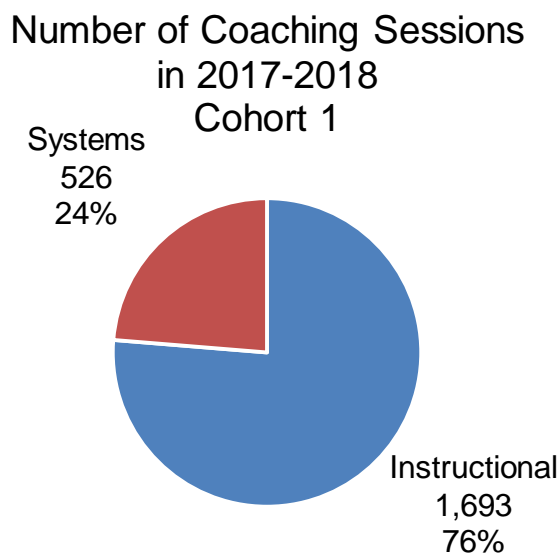
Regional early literacy specialists and district coaches document both systems and instructional coaching activities in the coaching logs that are part of the data dashboard (see Appendix T). The coaching logs track coaching implementation by examining the domains of coaching outlined by Powell and Diamond (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 that promote 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 logs capture the structure and content of Ohio's coaching system within the Early Literacy Pilot.

### Coaching Structure

#### Cohort 1 Coaching Structure

Regional early literacy specialists and district coaches in Cohort 1 submitted 2,219 coaching logs over the 2017-2018 school year. Of these, 1,693 were instructional coaching sessions and 526 were systems coaching sessions (see Figure 13). Ninety-eight percent of K-3 teachers in Cohort 1 engaged in at least one coaching session of either type, while 60 percent of preschool teachers received coaching of either type (Dariotis et al., 2018a).

Figure 13. Number of coaching sessions by type of coaching for Cohort 1 educators

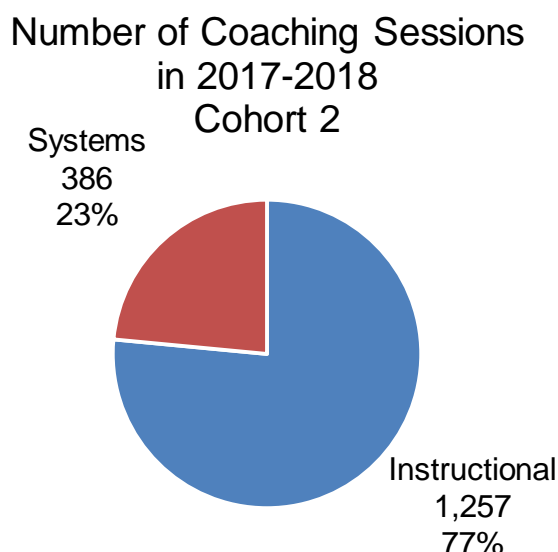


Ninety-three percent of K-3 teachers in Cohort 1 received instructional coaching, while 56 percent received systems coaching. Eight-five percent of preschool teachers received instructional coaching while only 7 percent received systems coaching. Across all Cohort 1's instructional coaching sessions over 2017-2018, the average number of sessions per K-3 teacher was 8.6 sessions, while the average cumulative time coaches spent with each K-3 teacher was 5.3 hours. The average number of sessions with K-3 teachers for systems coaching sessions was 5.1, for an average of 5.6 hours per educator. For preschool teachers, the average number of sessions per teacher was 4.2 sessions, while the average cumulative time spent with each preschool teacher was 2.7 hours. The average number of systems coaching sessions with preschool teachers was 3 for an average of 3.2 hours per educator (Dariotis et al., 2018a).

### Cohort 2 Coaching Structure

Regional early literacy specialists and district coaches in Cohort 2 submitted 1,643 coaching logs over the 2017-2018 school year. Of these, 1,257 were instructional coaching sessions and 386 were systems coaching sessions (see Figure 14). Ninety-five percent of K-3 teachers in Cohort 2 received at least one coaching session of either type, while 55 percent of preschool teachers received coaching of either type (Dariotis et al., 2018a).

Figure 14. Number of coaching sessions by type of coaching for Cohort 2 educators



Ninety-one percent of K-3 teachers in Cohort 2 received instructional coaching, while 55 percent received systems coaching. Sixty-seven percent of preschool teachers received instructional coaching, while only 28 percent received systems coaching. Across all Cohort 2's instructional coaching sessions over 2017-2018, the average number of sessions per K-3 teacher was 9.9 sessions, while the average cumulative time coaches spent with each K-3 teacher was 7.3 hours. The average number of systems coaching sessions with K-3 teachers was 5.2, for an average of 4.4 hours per educator. For preschool teachers, the average number of instructional coaching sessions per teacher was 8.3 sessions, while the average cumulative time spent with each preschool teacher

was 7.9 hours. The average number of systems coaching sessions with preschool teachers was 2.8 for an average of 2.9 hours per educator (Dariotis et al., 2018a).

### Coaching Content

Coaches selected one specific literacy topic for each instructional coaching session; participants could select only one topic per instructional coaching session, while systems coaching logs allowed for multiple selections. There were 12 topic options for instructional coaching of preschool teachers and 11 topic options for instructional coaching of K-3 teachers. Systems coaching topics were divided between leadership (nine options) and teacher-based teams (three options). See the full list of coaching log topics in Appendix T.

### Cohort 1 Coaching Content

The three instructional coaching topics discussed most frequently for Cohort 1 are ranked and displayed in Figure 15, in order of frequency. Systems coaching topics appear in Figure 16.

Figure 15. Most frequently selected topics for instructional coaching sessions for Cohort 1 (2017-2018)

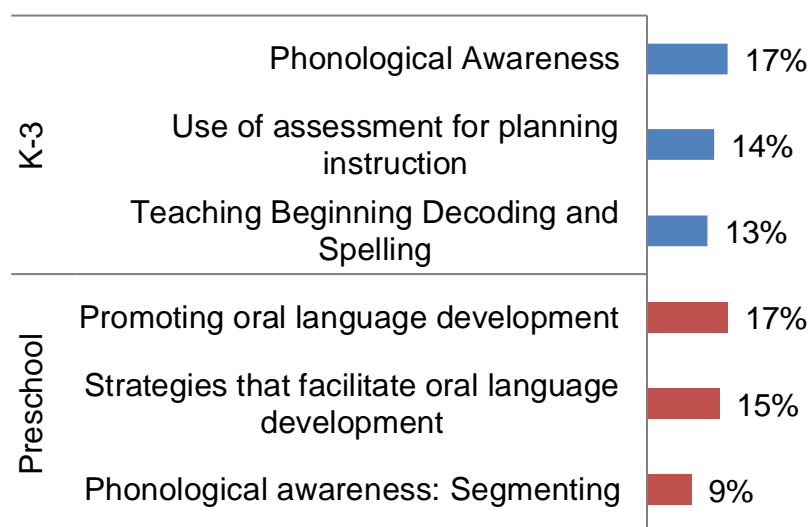
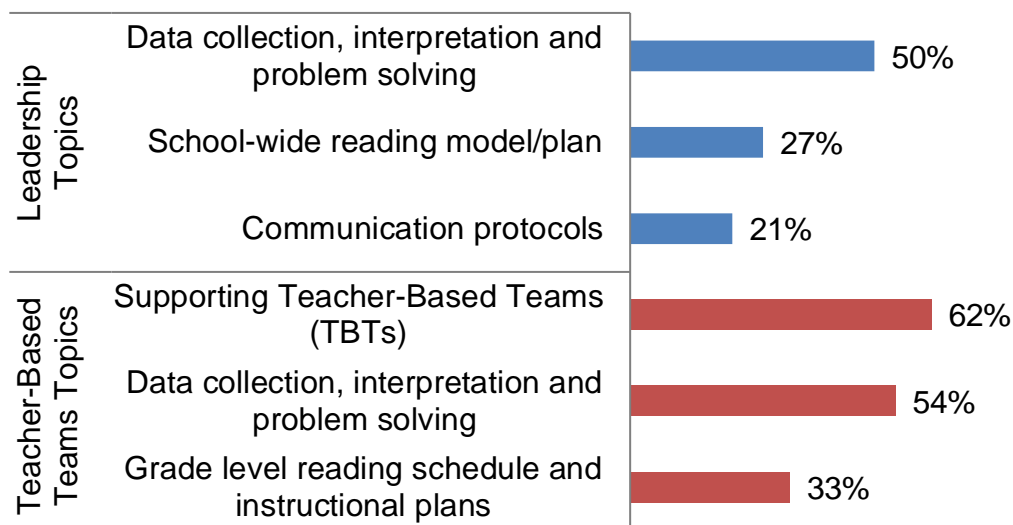


Figure 16. Most frequently selected topics for systems coaching sessions for Cohort 1 (2017-2018)



### Cohort 2 Coaching Content

The three most frequently discussed instructional coaching topics for Cohort 2 are ranked and displayed in Figure 17, in order of frequency. Systems coaching topics are displayed in Figure 18.

Figure 17. Most frequently selected topics for instructional coaching sessions for Cohort 2 (2017-2018)

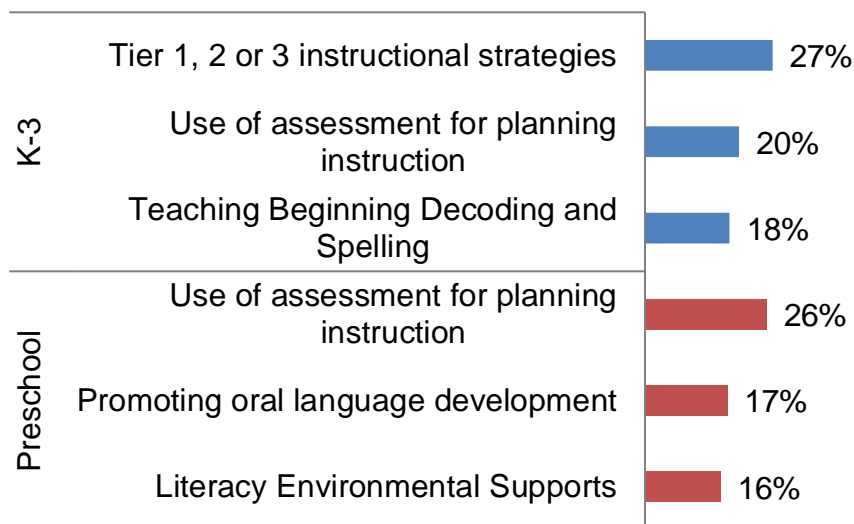
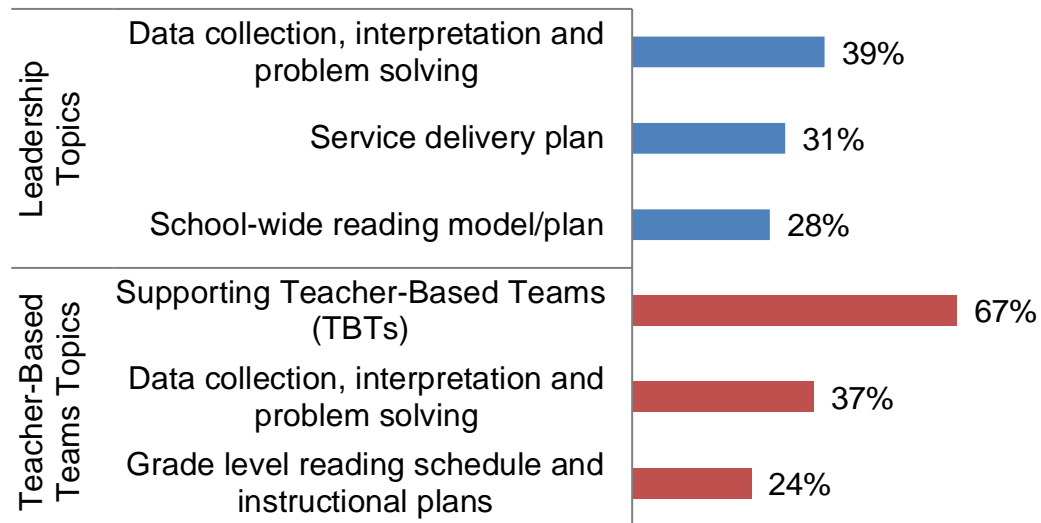


Figure 18. Most frequently selected topics for systems coaching sessions for Cohort 2 (2017-2018)



### Coaching Summary

The total number of instructional and systems coaching sessions delivered by regional early literacy specialists and district coaches in 2017-2018 was 2,219 for Cohort 1 and 1,643 for Cohort 2. About three in four coaching sessions involving teachers were instructional coaching (76 percent for Cohort 1 and 77 percent for Cohort 2) compared to systems coaching (24 percent for Cohort 1 and 23 percent for Cohort 2). This would be expected given the initial focus of the pilot on improving teacher knowledge and classroom implementation. Instructional coaching focused on a mix of language development and assessment use among K-3 and preschool teachers, and systems coaching focuses on data use, school-wide reading model or plan, and supporting teacher-based teams.

### Coaching Data Limitations

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, feedback loops revealed that 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 by articulating clear coaching definitions for instructional and systems coaching (see Appendix U). 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, the measurement tool — coaching logs — has evolved to more accurately capture the process. While

adaptations to the tool increase usability, comparability across years may be limited (Dariotis, 2018b).

## Curriculum-based Measurement

As part of the District Partnership Agreement, districts taking part in this work are obligated to collect student-level data from a curriculum-based measurement. These tools support teachers' progress monitoring and use of 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 literacy 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 assessment.

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). Appropriately, not all 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 measurements, since some are administered only to specific grade levels (Good, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 2010; Pearson, 2012; University of Oregon, 2017). Analyses were performed for schools that provided complete curriculum-based measurement data: 14 Cohort 1 schools (4,053 students) and nine Cohort 2 schools (2,944 students). One school in Cohort 2 serves only preschool students and does not collect CBM data. Among the 14 schools in Cohort 1, 11 used DIBELS Next and three used aimsweb for benchmarking in 2017-2018. Among the nine schools in Cohort 2, eight used DIBELS Next and one used aimsweb for benchmarking (Dariotis et al., 2018a). As the anticipated timeline for change in student outcomes shows (Figure 5, page 17), student change in kindergarten and grade 1 is not expected until the 2018-2019 school year for students in Cohort 1 and not until 2019-2020 for Cohort 2. Likewise, change in student outcomes for students in grades 2 and 3 is not expected until the 2019-2020 school year for students in Cohort 1 and until 2020-2021 for students in Cohort 2. Thus, curriculum-based measurement data should be interpreted with caution.

### ***Curriculum-based Measurement Grade-level Data***

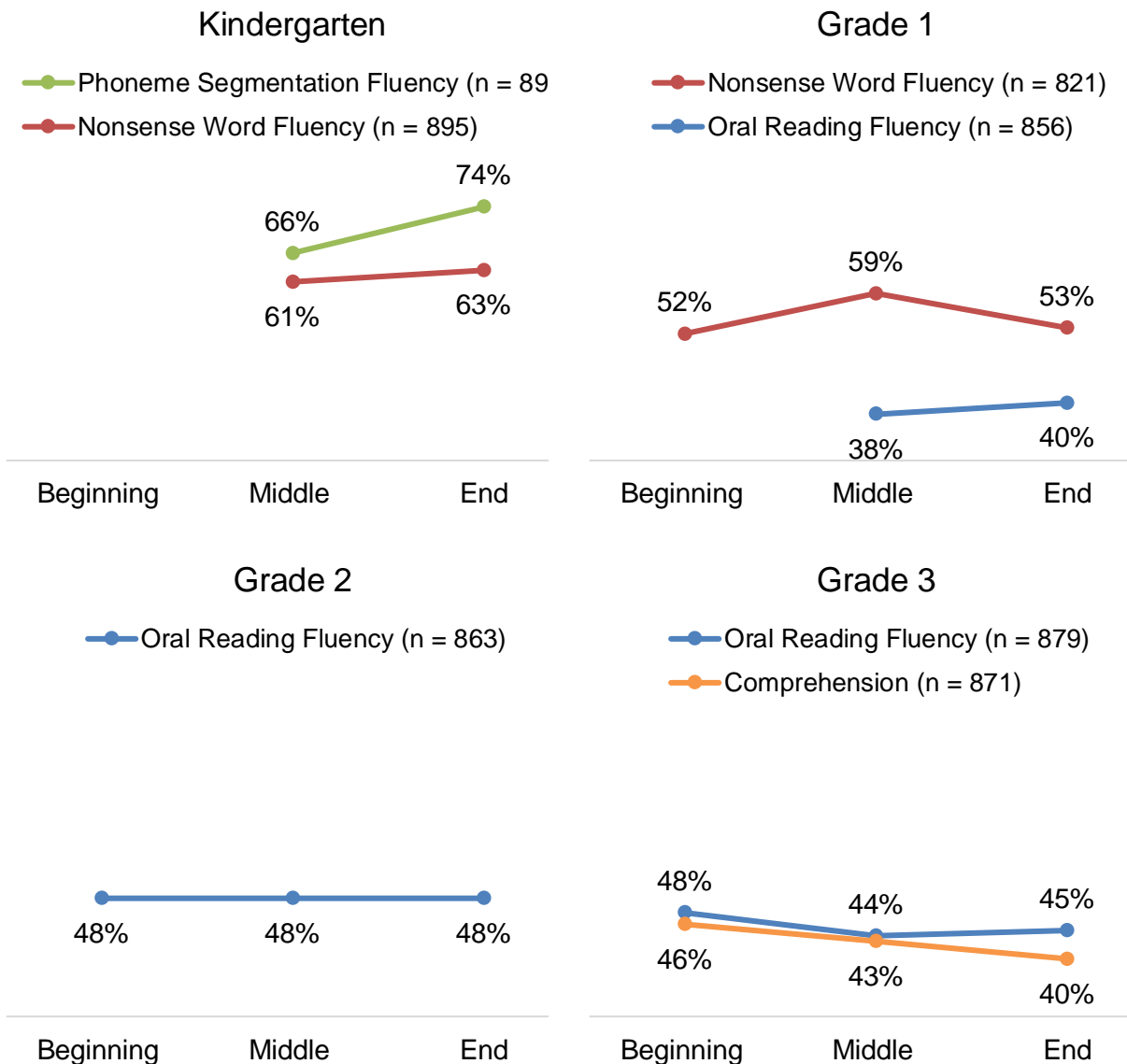
#### ***Cohort 1 Curriculum-based Measurement Grade-level Data***

Patterns of change in the percentages of students at or above benchmark varies by grade and measure (Figure 19). From the beginning to the end of the 2017-2018 academic year, the Department observed the following changes with respect to students meeting benchmark goals (Dariotis et al., 2018a):

- An 8.0 percent increase in kindergarten Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (significant at  $p < 0.001$ );
- A 2.3 percent increase in kindergarten Nonsense Word Fluency;

- No change in grade 1 Nonsense Word Fluency (0.9 percent);
- A 2.0 percent increase in grade 1 Oral Reading Fluency (trending towards significance at  $p < 0.1$ );
- No change in grade 2 Oral Reading Fluency (0.0 percent);
- A 2.8 percent decrease in grade 3 Oral Reading Fluency (significant at  $p < 0.05$ );
- A 5.9 percent decrease in grade 3 Comprehension (significant at  $p < 0.001$ ).

Figure 19. Percentage of students at or above benchmarking goals by grade and assessment across Cohort 1 schools for implementation year 2 – the 2017-2018 school year



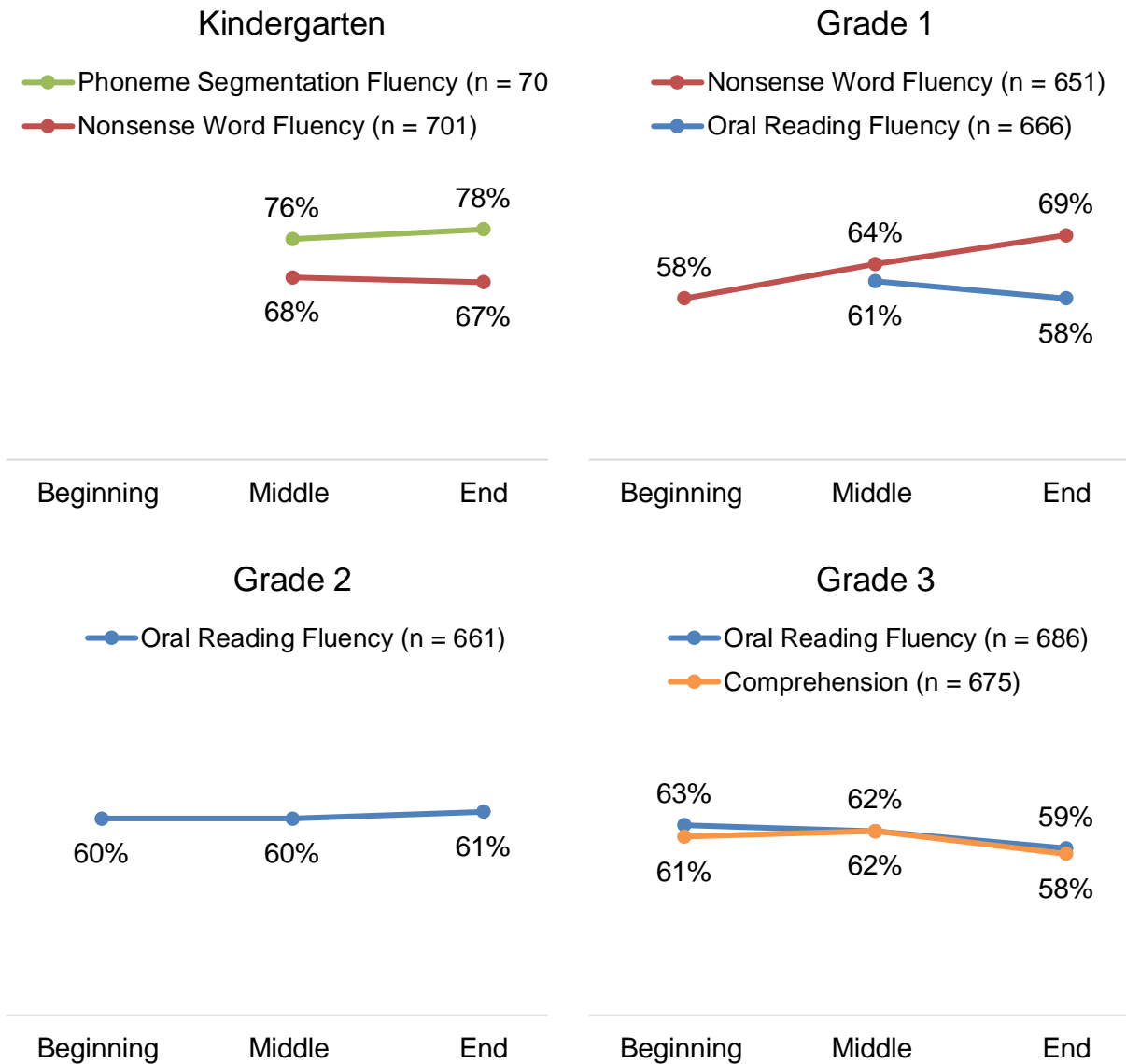


### *Cohort 2 Curriculum-based Measurement Grade-level Data*

Patterns of change in the percentages of students at or above benchmark goals varies across grades and measures (Figure 20). From the beginning to the end of the 2017-2018 academic year (the first year of implementation for Cohort 2 teachers), the Department observed the following changes in students meeting benchmark goals (Dariotis et al., 2018a):

- A 2.1 percent increase in kindergarten Phoneme Segmentation Fluency;
- No change in kindergarten Nonsense Word Fluency (1.0 percent);
- A 10.9 percent increase for grade 1 Nonsense Word Fluency (significant at  $p<0.001$ );
- A 3.2 percent decrease in grade 1 Oral Reading Fluency (significant at  $p<0.05$ );
- A 1.7 percent increase in grade 2 Oral Reading Fluency;
- A 3.8 percent decrease in grade 3 Oral Reading Fluency (significant at  $p<0.05$ );
- A 3.3 percent decrease in grade 3 Comprehension.

Figure 20. Percentage of students at or above benchmarking goals by grade and assessment across Cohort 2 schools for implementation year 1 – the 2017-2018 school year



**Curriculum-based Measurement Benchmarking Trajectory**

The external evaluator compared benchmarking data from students in kindergarten to grade 3 across benchmark periods to evaluate gains in early literacy skills and identify students at the greatest risk of reading difficulty. Table 6 defines the four subgroups of students identified for analysis (Dariotis, 2018b).

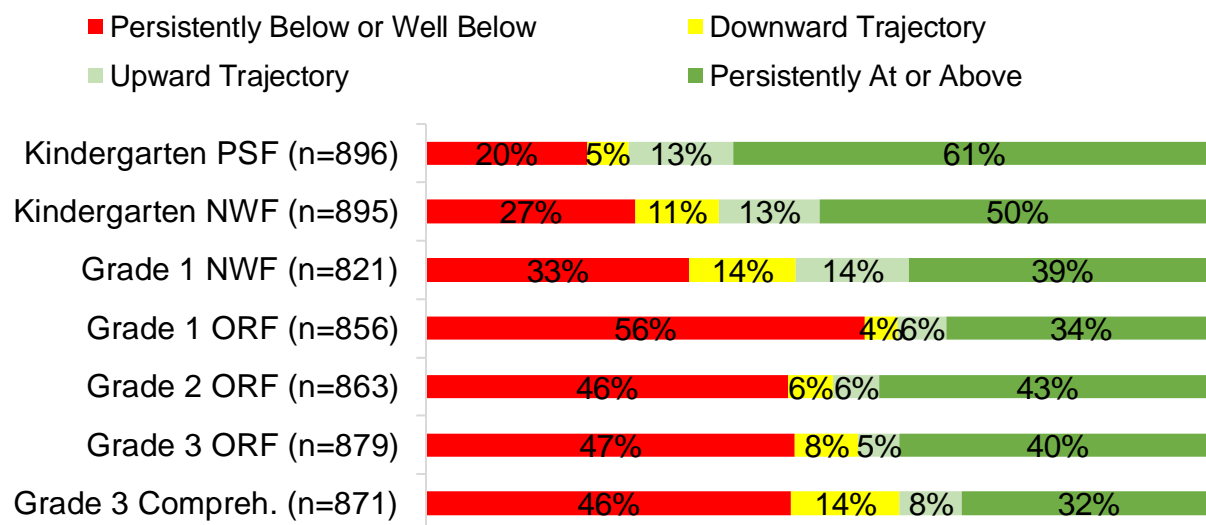
Table 6. Definitions of student subgroups identified for comparison across schools

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

*Cohort 1 Curriculum-based Measurement Benchmarking Trajectory*

Figure 21 summarizes benchmark trajectory findings across all Cohort 1 schools.

Figure 21. Percentage of students relative to benchmarking goals by grade and assessment across Cohort 1 schools 2017-2018 (implementation year 2)



Note: PSF = Phoneme Segmentation Fluency; NWF = Nonsense Word Fluency; ORF = Oral Reading Fluency; Compreh. = Comprehension.

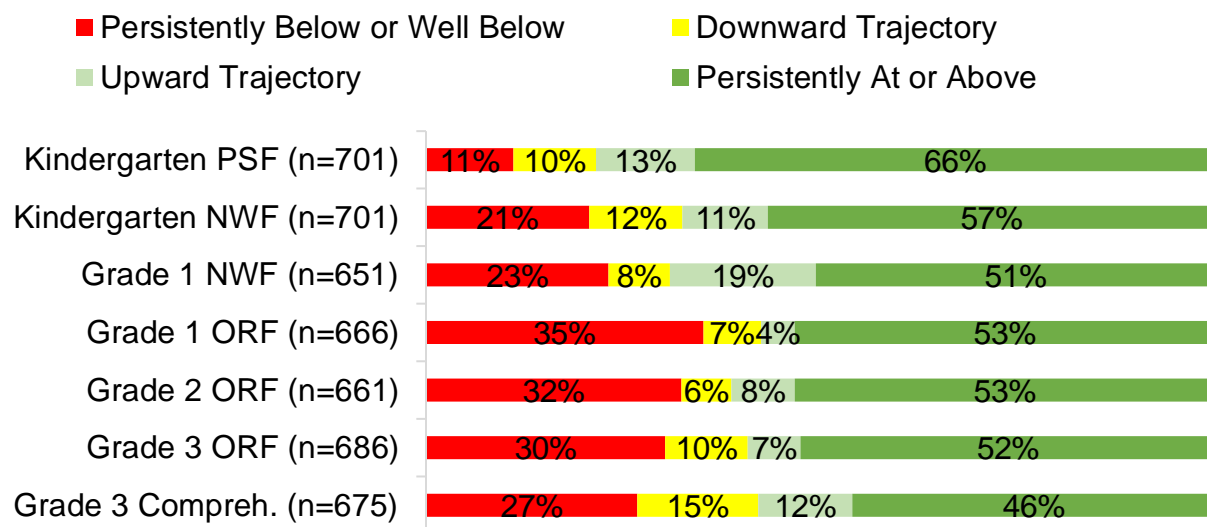
These results are from students who received classroom instruction based on pilot activities during 2017-2018 (Cohort 1's second implementation year and the first full year of classroom implementation for the LETRS units 1 to 4 content learned in 2016-2017). The content of LETRS professional learning online units builds from preschool through grade 3, beginning with foundational skills in the earlier units, so observable changes are expected first among kindergarten and grade 1 students, as reflected in

the findings reported above. This can be seen in the upward trajectory category for the phonemic awareness measures (Phoneme Segmentation Fluency and Nonsense Word Fluency) in kindergarten and grade 1 being larger than other grade levels and measures, suggesting a higher percentage of students went from not meeting to meeting benchmark goals by the end of the year for the early grade-level phonemic awareness measures. These results also suggest that, regarding benchmark goals, where a student starts out at the beginning of the year is highly related to where the student will end the year. Both the downward and upward trajectory categories were relatively small compared to the persistent categories, particularly for Oral Reading Fluency, which appears to be quite stable and less likely to change compared to other measurements. These trends are expected as much of the LETRS units 1 to 4 content focuses on very early literacy skills. As teachers are implementing these new strategies, changes in more advanced skills like Oral Reading Fluency might not be yet expected (Dariotis et al., 2018a).

### Cohort 2 Curriculum-based Measurement Benchmarking Trajectory

Figure 22 summarizes benchmark trajectory findings across all Cohort 2 schools.

Figure 22. Percentage of students relative to benchmarking goals by grade and assessment across Cohort 2 schools for 2017-2018 (implementation year 1)



Note: PSF = Phoneme Segmentation Fluency; NWF = Nonsense Word Fluency; ORF = Oral Reading Fluency; Compreh. = Comprehension.

The upward trajectory category was larger for phonemic awareness measures in kindergarten and grade 1 compared to other measures, suggesting a large proportion of students went from not meeting benchmark goals to meeting benchmark goals by the end of the year for phonemic awareness measures. As with Cohort 1, these benchmark results also suggest that where a student started at the beginning of the year was highly related to where the student ended the year, considering that both the downward and upward trajectory categories were relatively small compared to the persistent categories, particularly for Oral Reading Fluency (Dariotis et al., 2018a).

## ***Curriculum-based Measurement Summary***

CBM results revealed various patterns in student performance; the following findings are related to student language and literacy performance for both Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 schools. Across all 14 Cohort 1 schools, gains in end-of-year benchmarking were observed for kindergarten Phoneme Segmentation Fluency and Nonsense Word Fluency and grade 1 Oral Reading Fluency. No changes were observed for grade 1 Nonsense Word Fluency or grade 2 Oral Reading Fluency. Decreases were observed in grade 3 Oral Reading Fluency and in Comprehension. A majority of Cohort 1 schools showed improvements in benchmarking performance for phonemic awareness measures (kindergarten and grade 1) and Oral Reading Fluency (grade 2) but not in grade 3 Oral Reading Fluency or in Comprehension. This may be expected as Cohort 1 teachers were implementing LETRS units 1 to 4 material (first full year of implementation), which focuses primarily on very early literacy measures, so change might not be expected for more advanced literacy measures such as Oral Reading Fluency or Comprehension (Dariotis et al., 2018a).

The “persistently at or above benchmark” category was larger for kindergarten Phoneme Segmentation Fluency and Nonsense Word Fluency compared to higher grades, especially grade 3 Comprehension. The upward trajectory category was larger for Phoneme Segmentation Fluency and Nonsense Word Fluency in kindergarten and grade 1 compared to Oral Reading Fluency and Comprehension. The persistently below or well below category was smaller for Phoneme Segmentation Fluency and Nonsense Word Fluency in kindergarten and grade 1 compared to Oral Reading Fluency and Comprehension. The persistent categories tended to be the largest for Oral Reading Fluency in grades 1, 2 and 3, suggesting where students started relative to benchmark goals predicted where they ended, particularly for Oral Reading Fluency. This may be expected as these more advanced early literacy measures might not show change yet, while earlier measures, such as Phoneme Segmentation Fluency, are more sensitive to the types of instructional changes expected with implementation of LETRS units 1 to 4 content (Dariotis et al., 2018a).

Across nine Cohort 2 schools (excluding one preschool), the Department saw gains in end-of-year benchmarking for kindergarten Phoneme Segmentation Fluency, grade 1 Nonsense Word Fluency and grade 2 Oral Reading Fluency. The Department observed no change for kindergarten Nonsense Word Fluency, and saw decreases for grade 1 Oral Reading Fluency and grade 3 Oral Reading Fluency and Comprehension. A majority of Cohort 2 schools showed improvements in benchmarking performance in Phoneme Segmentation Fluency and Nonsense Word Fluency (kindergarten and grade 1) and Oral Reading Fluency (grade 2), but not in grade 1 Oral Reading Fluency, grade 3 Oral Reading Fluency or Comprehension (Dariotis et al., 2018a).

The “persistently at or above benchmark” category was larger for kindergarten Phoneme Segmentation Fluency and Nonsense Word Fluency compared to higher grades, especially grade 3 Comprehension. The upward trajectory category was larger for Phoneme Segmentation Fluency and Nonsense Word Fluency in kindergarten and grade 1 compared to Oral Reading Fluency and Comprehension. The “persistently

below or well below” category was smaller for Phoneme Segmentation Fluency and Nonsense Word Fluency in kindergarten and grade 1 compared to Oral Reading Fluency and Comprehension. The persistent categories tended to be the largest for Oral Reading Fluency in grades 1, 2 and 3, suggesting that relative to Oral Reading Fluency benchmark goals, where students started predicted where they ended.

### ***Curriculum-based Measurement Data Limitations***

During this project year, the Department and external evaluators continued efforts to improve the quality and quantity of data from the curriculum-based measures (DIBELS Next or aimsweb). There are ongoing inconsistencies in the way schools upload data to the dashboard, with key data fields, such as student identification numbers, missing in some cases. The Department is working with 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 teachers are consistently collecting curriculum-based measurement data. Data collection concerns that occurred in the first year of the pilot have since been remedied with more communication between the external evaluators and pilot districts. Examples included two pilot schools, one of which collected benchmarking data only on students in the lowest 20 percent, and the other school that used a curriculum-based measurement that was not approved by the Department and did not include national or standard cut scores. The Department, collaborating with the data dashboard developer and external evaluation team, has developed more guidance on data collection processes and submission of curriculum-based measurement data to avoid potential fidelity issues in the future.

### **Surveys and Focus Groups**

The external evaluator collected online, self-report surveys from pilot participants to measure classroom practices, parent and community engagement, administrative supports, coaching supports and regional early literacy supports. The external evaluators 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.

#### ***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. From Cohort 1, the evaluators collected surveys from 114 kindergarten through grade 3 teachers, 10 building administrators, 10 regional early literacy specialists and five district coaches. The survey sample reflects a 35 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).

From Cohort 2, the evaluators collected surveys from 94 kindergarten through grade 3 teachers, seven building administrators, seven regional early literacy specialists and seven district coaches. The survey sample reflects a 34 percent participation rate, with every school from Cohort 2 represented. Analyses suggest the survey sample represents the demographics of the larger sample of teachers (Dariotis et al., 2018a).

Key findings from the Year 2 survey include:

- Teachers in both cohorts reported their implementation of LETRS-related strategies in the classroom increased from the beginning (“emerging” and “satisfactory”) to the end of the school year (“satisfactory” and “skillful”);
- Teachers, building leadership, regional early literacy specialists, and coaches tended to agree they were receiving leadership support from principals, regional early literacy specialists, and coaches for professional learning and pilot activities;
- Teachers reported both regional early literacy specialists and coaches contributed to their learning;
- Teachers, leaders, regional early literacy specialists and district coaches agreed their schools use practices to evaluate, identify, examine and communicate reading progress and issues; and
- Teachers reported high levels of efficacy in terms of their perceived abilities 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 with teachers, building administrators, district coaches and parents in spring 2018 for Cohort 2 (evaluators conducted focus groups in spring 2017 for Cohort 1). Also, evaluators held two focus groups with regional early literacy specialists, one for each cohort, in which all 17 specialists participated. Qualitative data provide an understanding of processes and inform quantitative data interpretation. These findings are not meant to be generalized, but they provide information about participants’ expectations and experiences in the first year of pilot implementation (Dariotis et al., 2018a).

A total of 153 individuals (77 teachers, 14 school and district leaders, seven district coaches and 37 parents) were interviewed or participated in focus group discussions, which provided data for qualitative analysis. Every school from Cohort 2 was represented in the teacher focus group discussions.

Key themes from the Cohort 2 focus groups include:

- High levels of administrative buy-in;
- Benefits of participation in LETRS professional learning for teachers, including enhanced student engagement, improved data use and robust strategies they could apply in their classrooms;

- Appreciation for knowledgeable and experienced coaches who took time building relationships with teachers;
- Appreciation for coaching as a source of modeling explicit instruction, supplementary materials and support for LETRS implementation and improving instruction in line with the school-wide reading plan;
- Coaches and regional early literacy specialists showed appreciation for their own administrative backgrounds, which helped bring about systemic changes and provided the skills needed to work with a diverse group of teachers;
- Importance of establishing and maintaining relationships between coach and teachers, and appreciation for coaches and regional early literacy specialists with strong literacy backgrounds who meet buildings where they are and celebrate their progress;
- Appreciation for existing Ohio Improvement Process structures, which provided a common goal and language to promote systems change and improve the use of data at the teacher-based team level; 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 *Implementation Barriers and Limitations* section of this report, along with recommendations to mitigate them.

### ***Focus Group and Survey Data Limitations***

Though analyses suggest the survey sample represents the demographics of all pilot teachers, the surveys and focus group results should be interpreted with caution, because they represent a 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 generalized. One cannot conclude that all, or even most, pilot participants share the key themes described above (Dariotis et al., 2018a).

## **Sharing Evaluation Data with Stakeholders**

Evaluation data from Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot are regularly shared with pilot participants and relevant stakeholders through the SSIP Stakeholder Team meetings and the State Literacy Network. With guidance from the Department and stakeholders, Ohio's external evaluation team developed a data profile for each building participating in the pilot (see Appendix V for an example profile). The SSIP Stakeholder Team and regional early literacy specialists have continually provided feedback to enhance the reports each year. Profiles are shared with each pilot building annually. Additionally, masked versions of the annual external evaluation report and each phase III report are also provided to pilot participants and relevant stakeholders for review and comment.

## **Demonstrated Progress and Modifications**

Evaluation data from the second year of implementation of Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot show several areas of progress toward intended improvements in infrastructure, teacher



capacity and student literacy outcomes. Increases across all four Tier 1 and Tier 2 subscales of the Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory for Cohort 1 schools and increases in all four Tier 1 subscales for Cohort 2 provide evidence of continued local systems and infrastructure improvements. Regional early literacy specialists and district coaches provided a total of 3,862 coaching sessions during year 2 implementation. Preschool through grade 3 teachers received 2,950 instructional coaching sessions and administrators and teams of educators received 912 systems coaching sessions. Taken together, teachers from both cohorts participating in LETRS professional learning demonstrated an increase in knowledge from pre- to post-test for the all eight LETRS units. Cohort 1 teachers showed an overall knowledge increase of 16 percent for LETRS units 5-8, with 88 percent of the 249 teachers who completed both the pre- and post-tests showing gains in literacy knowledge. The 201 Cohort 2 teachers demonstrated a 24 percent increase in overall knowledge for LETRS units 1-4, with 97 percent of these teachers showing gains.

Curriculum-based measurement benchmarking assessments show promising gains in language and literacy for all pilot schools from beginning to end-of-year collection. Cohort 1 schools showed an 8 percent increase in Phoneme Segmentation Fluency and a 2.3 percent increase in Nonsense Word Fluency for kindergarten students, as well as a 2 percent increase in Oral Reading Fluency for grade 1 students. Cohort 2 school students showed a 2.1 percent increase in Phoneme Segmentation Fluency for kindergarten students, a 10.9 percent increase in Nonsense Word Fluency for grade 1 students and a 1.7 percent increase in grade 2 students' oral ready fluency skills. Overall, these data suggest Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot is on the right path to achieve its intended outcomes. Modifications based on evaluation data collected to date are discussed in the *Plans for Year 4* sections of this report.

Additional modifications to Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot include the decrease in the number of cohort 2 districts from eight to seven, thus reducing the number of schools by one. The district opted to leave the pilot in June 2018. Data presented in the year 3 evaluation report and within this report do not include students or teachers from this district. The early literacy specialist supporting this district has transitioned to regional and state scale-up language and literacy work.

## Intended Outputs

The Department continues to meet 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 this goal focus on providing professional learning to teachers, district coaches, school teams, administrators and regional early literacy specialists. Cohort 1 participants have completed all eight units of LETRS training, while Cohort 2 participants have completed units 1-4 of LETRS training and are currently completing units 5-8. Administrators in both cohorts are engaging in units 1-8 of the LETRS administrator modules. The SSIP core team continues to develop and enhance Ohio's coaching framework encompassing systems and instructional coaching (see Appendix U). District coaches from both cohorts and

regional early literacy specialists are engaging in a 13-module e-course to improve their knowledge and understanding of instructional coaching.

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. School teams from both cohorts have been trained in and are using data for screening, progress monitoring and instructional decision-making within a Multi-Tier System of Supports. Through evaluation of project year 2, teachers, leaders and district coaches reported that data-driven discussions are happening more regularly at the classroom, grade and building levels (Dariotis et al., 2018a). Findings support continued professional development for both Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 districts, as teachers, leaders and district coaches reported a need for data training to learn how to use benchmarking data efficiently. Concentrated efforts to enhance family and community partnerships began with Cohort 1 schools in fall 2018 through Sit Together and Read (STAR) at Home and Partnerships for Literacy. The Ohio State University designed both programs and works with Department staff to increase communication between families and educators to support the language and literacy development of students. Cohort 2 will begin implementation of STAR and Partnerships for Literacy implementation in the fall of 2019.

Goal 3 in the Logic Model describes the importance of engaging leaders within all SSIP districts, including using the shared leadership structures foundational to the Ohio Improvement Process (OIP). Through evaluation of project year 2, teachers, building leaders, district coaches and regional early literacy specialists reported that literacy is now a standing item on existing OIP teams due to a common language and goal provided by the pilot work. Frequent and consistent discussions around literacy have led to an increase in data-driven decisions 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 ongoing implementation and evaluation. 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 received a competitive Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Grant from the U.S. Department of Education in the amount of \$35 million. 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. In 2018, the team collaborated with the Department to develop an updated state literacy plan (Ohio Department of Education, 2018b).

Approximately 95 percent of the \$35 million award is distributed directly to local schools or early childhood providers to improve literacy outcomes for children from birth through grade 12. The three-year grant focuses on serving the greatest numbers of students living in poverty, students with disabilities, English learners and students identified as having reading difficulties.

The Department awarded grants following a competitive peer review process. The Department received 110 individual and consortium applications, representing 208 entities requesting more than 92 million dollars. The federal grant requirements included a prescribed distribution of funding across defined age and grade bands from birth through high school (15 percent to birth to age 5 programs, 40 percent to K through grade 5 programs and 40 percent equitably distributed across middle and high school programs). In addition to the federal requirements, the Department committed to awarding grants across all 16 state support team regions with priority given to high-quality applications serving the highest numbers of disadvantaged students. The Department encouraged those applicants that did not receive awards to continue their commitment to improving literacy outcomes in their communities through implementation of the Local Literacy Plans developed as part of the application process.

The grant builds on Ohio's commitment to ensuring all students have the reading skills needed to succeed in education and life. The Department recently worked with Ohio educators and educational leaders to develop [Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement](#), as well as to update and refine Ohio's English language arts learning standards. In addition, the Third Grade Reading Guarantee aims to ensure all students are reading at grade level by the end of third grade. Through this initiative, schools diagnose reading challenges, create individualized Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plans and provide intensive reading interventions starting in kindergarten.

## Regional Literacy Network

To focus on sustainability and scale-up, staff from Ohio's 16 state support teams and 52 educational service centers were invited to participate in a blended learning training for Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS). The series includes a hybrid of online units and face-to-face sessions conducted by national or in-state trainers. Participation in the LETRS professional learning series is a complimentary component to the Regional Professional Learning Series in Literacy. Staff participating in the regional series are developing the capacity to provide the following supports outlined in Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement:

- Support data-driven decision making through engagement in the Ohio Improvement Process (specific to literacy);
- Support local education agencies in developing sustainable evidence-based language and literacy plans aligned to the state plan and the overall district improvement plan; and
- Support the fidelity of implementation of evidence-based language and literacy practices.

## SSIP Stakeholder Team

Input from the SSIP Stakeholder Team guided the development of the SSIP Theory of Action, Logic Model, evaluation questions, state-identified measurable results and targets. Department staff, regional early literacy specialists, pilot school teachers and administrators and the external evaluation team presented to the SSIP Stakeholder Team on March 1, 2019 (see Appendix W). The team spent the day:

- Reviewing the pilot’s role in Ohio’s Strategic Plan for Education and specifically strategy 9, developing literacy skills through Ohio’s Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement;
- Discussing the most recent evaluation results and updated school data profiles (Appendix V); and
- Discussing literacy practices used in five of the pilot buildings that address the needs of students with disabilities and facilitate progress.

Administrators, regional early literacy specialists, district coaches and teachers from five of the pilot buildings presented successful practices used in their schools. Themes from these presentations included:

- Extended literacy blocks that integrate intervention within the general education classroom;
- Leadership support for instructional coaching;
- Leadership commitment to systemic change;
- Administrator and educator buy-in; and
- A cultural shift in perspective to educators taking ownership and responsibility for the education of *all* students (from “your” kids to “our” kids).

Stakeholders provided very positive feedback on the pilot activities, recognizing primarily teacher empowerment and strong leadership. Stakeholder recommendations and the Department’s plan to address each recommendation are listed in table 7.

Table 7. SSIP Stakeholder Team recommendations and the Department’s plan to address them

Stakeholder Recommendation	Department plan
All districts should receive this training and level of support.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The Department continues to scale up components of the Early Literacy Pilot with districts receiving Striving Readers subgrants and districts engaged with the State Personnel Development Grant. Specialists in all 16 state support teams are now certified to facilitate LETRS training.</li> <li>2) The Department and in-state experts are developing a more sustainable model of instructional coaching to build capacity of educators without relying on a full-time literacy coach or literacy specialist. The peer coaching framework is being rolled out under the State Personnel Development Grant. Professional learning is currently being offered to districts engaged in the State Personnel Development Grant and SSIP.</li> </ol>
The Early Literacy Pilot information and evaluation should be shared more widely.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The Department shares a masked version of the external evaluator’s annual report with the State support teams and pilot participants.</li> <li>2) The Department shares a masked version of the annual report to the Office of Special Education Programs with the state support teams and pilot participants and posts on the Department’s website.</li> <li>3) The Department shares evaluation highlights and building success stories in a bi-weekly newsletter to the State Literacy Team.</li> <li>4) The Department is working to create more opportunities for sharing information regarding Early Literacy Pilot activities and alignment across state initiatives.</li> </ol>
Principals need training in instructional leadership and foundations of literacy and a roadmap for how all the state literacy initiatives align.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Central office staff and building administrators engaged with the State Personnel Development Grant and SSIP receive training on instructional leadership and the foundations of literacy through the LETRS Administrator professional learning series. The online series became available in fall 2018, and SSIP administrators will complete the training by July 2019.</li> <li>2) Ohio’s Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement describes how all the state literacy initiatives align; the Department is also developing a one-page infographic to depict the alignment of the State Personnel Development Grant and SSIP.</li> </ol>
Encourage family outreach and be transparent with caregivers.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The State Personnel Development Grant is funding the family and community engagement component of the Early Literacy Pilot, which began in fall 2018 for all Cohort 1 buildings. Data will be available for Cohort 1 districts in spring 2019. Cohort 2 districts will begin implementing this component in fall 2019.</li> </ol>

The SSIP Stakeholder Team will continue to review evaluation data and provide guidance to the Department in line with 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 2017-2018, Department staff presented Early Literacy Pilot evaluation report highlights. An ad hoc committee reviewed the Sit Together and Read (STAR) parent engagement pilot and offered recommendations for full implementation in 2018-2019. Specific recommendations include increasing the length of time families have to interact with each book from one to two weeks and adding additional ways for families to interact with the teacher, such as through an application on a smartphone. The Department used the suggestions from this group when creating the STAR implementation plan for Cohort 1.

This year, Department staff have reviewed with the panel evaluation data and highlights from the first two years of implementation, including teacher knowledge data from LETRS pre- and post-tests, coaching framework and frequency data and student outcome improvements that show promising improvements for pilot schools. The panel also took part in an in-depth review and discussion of the parent focus groups conducted as part of the external pilot evaluation.

## Overall Stakeholder Involvement

Table 8 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 8. 2017-2018 SSIP stakeholder involvement

Stakeholder Group	Meeting Topics	Future Involvement
Ohio’s State Literacy Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review progress on implementation activities of Ohio’s Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement</li> <li>Develop overarching Theory of Action and a Logic Model for each age band</li> </ul>	This group will continue to convene on a yearly basis to review progress (state, regional and local) and revise Ohio’s plan as needed.

Stakeholder Group	Meeting Topics	Future Involvement
<p>SSIP Stakeholder Team</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review implementation progress (state, regional and local)</li> <li>• Review evaluation data, including implications and lessons learned</li> <li>• Provide input on specific plan components and overall implementation</li> </ul>	<p>This group will review evaluation data and support the Department in making modifications based on the data at least annually.</p>
<p>State Advisory Panel for Exceptional Children</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review evaluation data, including implications and lessons learned</li> <li>• Provide input on plan components, particularly family and community engagement</li> </ul>	<p>This group meets four times per year. The SSIP is a standing agenda item for this group.</p>
<p>State support team directors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide input on SSIP activities, assist with district implementation and identify district and regional needs</li> <li>• Communicate with district administrators about the District Partnership Agreement and alignment between Ohio’s Early Literacy Pilot and other state initiatives</li> <li>• Oversee day-to-day operations of regional early literacy specialists, OIP facilitators and other staff involved in SSIP implementation</li> <li>• Establish regional literacy networks to sustain and scale up learning from SSIP pilot districts</li> </ul>	<p>This group meets monthly and will continue to discuss SSIP activities, review data and make data-based decisions at the regional level.</p>

Stakeholder Group	Meeting Topics	Future Involvement
Regional early literacy specialists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and discuss implementation activities and data</li> <li>• Provide feedback on all aspects of program content and implementation</li> <li>• Share experiences and provide input on the design and role of the regional early literacy specialist position</li> <li>• Provide feedback on issues that impact systems-level (district/building) implementation</li> <li>• Support implementation of Ohio’s coaching framework</li> <li>• Participate in interviews with Department staff to gather individual feedback on implementation activities (practice-to-policy feedback loop)</li> <li>• Participate in/lead regional literacy networks</li> </ul>	<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>
Administrator forums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in and provide administrator feedback on language and literacy leadership professional learning</li> <li>• Build systems-level language and literacy content to support teacher professional learning</li> <li>• Review and discuss implementation activities and data</li> <li>• Build capacity for principals as instructional leaders</li> </ul>	<p>These forums will continue quarterly with administrators from pilot schools.</p>
Various stakeholder groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Literacy Pilot information was shared with the following stakeholder groups: Dean’s Compact on Exceptional Children, Ohio Association of Pupil Service Administrators and as part of Ohio’s Special Education Leadership Conference</li> </ul>	<p>Department staff will continue to present updates and solicit feedback from these groups through 2021.</p>

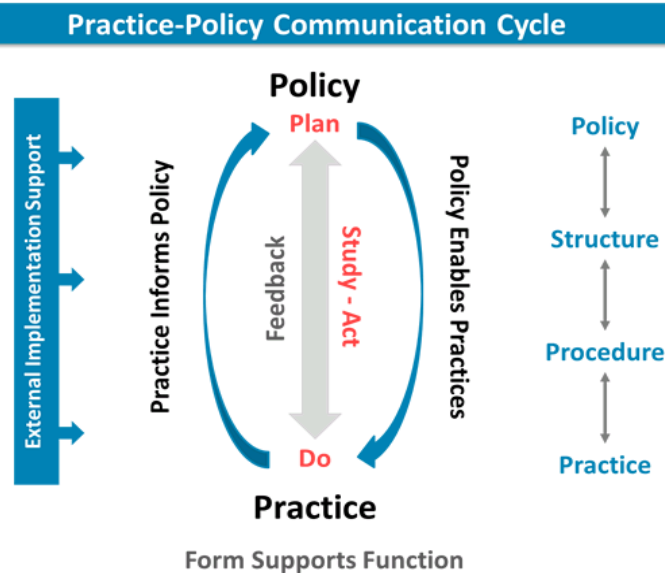


All the stakeholder groups listed in Table 8 have had frequent opportunities to learn about implementation activities, ask questions about the pilot and offer insight on how best to implement this multifaceted and important plan. The Department developed a newsletter to inform stakeholders about implementation, 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 4

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 23 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 23. 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 promote effective implementation and what aspects should be modified to address barriers and challenges to regional, district, school, 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 X for interview questions);
3. Implementation progress reports, submitted by each pilot school two times per year, to gauge adherence to the partnership agreement and identify progress, barriers and needed supports.

Practice-to-policy feedback loops are providing a mechanism for the Department to continuously engage with stakeholders at multiple levels and 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. Additionally, feedback loops revealed the need for more structured coaching support and professional learning for both regional early literacy specialists and district coaches. As a result, the Department is providing more focused support, including an e-course on Jim Knight's instructional coaching framework (see Appendix Y). During 2018-2019, the district coaches and regional early literacy specialists will partner to complete the 13-module course and related assessments (approximately 30 hours). The Department will offer direct and peer-to-peer support for this professional learning as part of the monthly literacy network meetings.

## Transferring Knowledge to Practice

The Department worked closely with the Voyager Sopris Learning team to refine two observational tools to capture implementation of evidence-based practices, with one designed for preschool teachers and the other for teachers of kindergarten and grades 1, 2 and 3 (LETRS Application of Concepts; Voyager Sopris Learning, Inc., 2018). These tools are intended to: 1) provide an indication of the extent to which knowledge gleaned from professional development is being applied in the classroom; and 2) be used as part of the ongoing instructional coaching cycle as a checklist of "look-fors" and feedback meant to be collaboratively reviewed with the teacher following observation, to show strengths, identify areas of support and set goals with the teacher. Before implementing the tools, regional early literacy specialists and district coaches participated in a 10-part online learning series developed by Voyager Sopris Learning, detailing what to look for with each section of the tool and where in the LETRS professional learning series the practice is learned (see Appendix Z). Classroom observations will begin in winter/spring 2019. Data from the observational tool

will be collected by regional early literacy specialists and district coaches through the data dashboard, with the first collection period ending June 3, 2019.

## Supporting Instruction

### Implementation of Evidence-based Language and Literacy Practices

The Department held the second annual two-day Literacy Academy in March 2019 to support districts, community schools and early childhood programs in implementing evidence-based language and literacy practices. The Literacy Academy offered instruction by national experts, including Dr. David Dickinson and Dr. Lisa Lenhart (emergent literacy), Dr. David Kilpatrick, Dr. Mary Dahlgren, Dr. Steve Dykstra (early, conventional and disciplinary literacies), and Dr. Timothy Shanahan, Dr. Mel Riddile and Dr. Anita Archer (adolescent literacy). Regional early and adolescent specialists also led sessions aligned to Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement. To allow wider access, the Department recorded sessions for posting on its [website](#).

Additionally, the Department is offering eight regional adolescent literacy meetings in 2019 to explore the adolescent practices outlined in Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement. The expansion into adolescent literacy is a direct result of requests for support by districts and schools for their students reading below grade level in grades 4 through 12. Led by the regional adolescent literacy specialists, participants explored the definition of adolescent literacy and how to create a culture of learning to promote increased literacy outcomes for all adolescent learners. The meetings focus on an overview of content area literacy strategies, disciplinary literacy and individualized intensive intervention.

### Differentiating Assessment and Instruction for Students with Disabilities

Feedback regarding the LETRS content indicated coaches and teachers would benefit from additional support in differentiating targeted assessment and language and literacy instruction for students with disabilities. The Department partners 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 the needs of 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. Through this targeted effort, four literacy network meetings in 2018-2019 were dedicated to building the disposition and resources available to regional early literacy specialists for supporting students with complex needs. The principles of this focus on disposition and integration are captured in Figure 24.

Figure 24. Building a disposition to improve literacy achievement

## Professional Learning Plan to Build Regional Capacity

Each Child: Advocacy Through Action



- 3 **Integrated Content Specific Resources:** All resources are developed to meet the full range of learners in every content area.
- 2 **Integrated System of Support:** All levels of the state-system of support are responsible to meet *all* learners needs, including learners with the most complex needs.
- 1 **Foundational Values, Beliefs, and Disposition:** All professionals are responsible to meet *all* learners' needs, including learners with the most complex needs.

As regional early literacy specialists and district coaches complete Jim Knight's *Instructional Coaching e-course*, they will implement a bridge-to-practice component designed to support at least one teacher of students with complex needs from each pilot school. The Department intends to use internal and external expertise to not only support regional and district coaches but also support the Department in providing guidance on language and literacy development for all learners.

## Family and Community Engagement

Family and community engagement are integral components of the early literacy pilot during implementation years 3 through 5. The Department is collaborating with the Crane Center for Early Childhood Research and Policy at The Ohio State University to implement [Sit Together and Read \(STAR\)](#), an empirically tested preschool print referencing intervention, within the Early Literacy Pilot. STAR is comprised of intentional read-aloud practices and scaffolding strategies to encourage and strengthen children's knowledge and awareness of print (OSU, 2017). STAR typically includes two components, one in the classroom and one at home, that both include 30 books. Teachers and caregivers, respectively, read one book twice per week with their students, using the cards and prompts provided as part of the program.

In the spring of 2018, pilot schools had the option of implementing a shortened version of STAR within their classrooms. Seventeen educators in Cohort 1 took the opportunity to begin implementation and determine whether the full implementation was feasible in their classrooms in the following year. This shortened version included five books for STAR in the classroom. Using feedback from pilot teachers who engaged with STAR in the spring, non-pilot schools who engaged in a separate STAR pilot in spring 2017 (Tambyraja, 2017) and

SAPEC stakeholders, the full 30-book program was condensed to include only eight books for use at home.

In the fall of 2018, Cohort 1 pilot buildings introduced the 30-book model of STAR in the classroom, along with an eight-book version of [STAR at Home](#) to 51 preschool teachers for 925 students. Seven of the eight districts are implementing the at-home component in their classrooms, and one district is only utilizing the classroom component. There are several cross-grade classes utilizing the program with both preschool and kindergarten students. Cohort 2 buildings will begin another variant of STAR implementation in fall 2019.

## Partnerships for Literacy

The Department intentionally delayed implementation of the family engagement component of Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot until year 3 to allow educators time to complete the intensive, two-year LETRS professional learning series before introducing additional pilot activities. Ohio's Statewide Family Engagement Center at Ohio State University has partnered with the Department to design and support the family and community engagement for early literacy component, *Partnerships for Literacy* (see Appendix AA). The Ohio State University's Statewide Family Engagement Center is providing leadership and expertise for development and implementation of professional development and resources for supporting family and community engagement in early literacy. *Partnerships for Literacy* provides a systematic approach to family and community engagement that is sustained over time, goal-oriented and develops the capacity of both educators and family members. Teams of parents and caregivers and school personnel will create continuity from school to home for students and families, develop relationships with community partners to support early literacy, and systematically embed effective family and community engagement in the Ohio Improvement Process within the school. Ohio's regional family engagement leads will provide schools with coaching support to implement family and community engagement practices with a focus on language and literacy. Focused attention will be given to developing knowledge, skills and dispositions supporting meaningful and effective partnership between teachers and families of students with disabilities, English learners and families living in poverty.

The intended result is improved home and school supports and resources for language and literacy development for young students through:

- The implementation of a locally developed plan based on an inventory of current practices and priorities, aligned with the school's focused plan and linking to community resources;
- A sustainable, representative, family-teacher team that is linked to the school's building leadership team and focuses on the needs of all families through family and community engagement practices;
- Teachers who practice more effective family engagement; and
- Teams that develop and expand strategic linkages with community resources to address identified needs of families in the community to support literacy at home, school and community settings.

Cohort 1 family engagement leads began implementation of *Partnerships for Literacy* in the 2018-2019 school year; Cohort 2 will engage beginning in fall 2019.

## Updating Evaluation Questions

All evaluation questions will remain constant. However, the Department acknowledges that evaluation questions seven and eight were written prior to the development of the family and community engagement components. Clarification of measurements tools will allow the Department to assess implementation of the Partnerships for Literacy component. Therefore, moving forward these questions will be as follows:

- 7) To what extent did the school increase family engagement in language and literacy development (in years 3-5 of the project), as assessed by the Partnerships for Literacy Family and Community Engagement for Early Literacy Inventory (FACE)?
- 8) 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 for support for language and literacy (in years 3-5 of the project), as assessed by the Partnerships for Literacy Family and Community Engagement for Early Literacy Inventory (FACE)?

## Sustainability and Scaling up

### Ohio LETRS Facilitators

Implementation science research guided the development of the Early Literacy Pilot, with the Department intending to scale up implementation throughout the state over time. Information on scale-up plans is included in the District Literacy Agreements (see Appendices F and G) 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 took place in June 2018 for units 1-4 of *LETRS 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*. Potential facilitators were required to 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.

The second Ohio facilitator training will take place in June 2019 for units 5-8 of *LETRS 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*. The above criteria continue to apply.

## State Scale-Up

As previously described, the Department and its stakeholders revised the state literacy plan in October 2017. Four objectives 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 overall school improvement efforts. The plans should be sustainable and 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 allowed for the scale up of some components of the Early Literacy Pilot by giving “priority preference points” to subgrantees. Larger pilot districts proposed to expand the pilot to additional elementary buildings. Smaller districts proposed to expand what they have learned across age bands (birth to age 5 and middle/high school). Two pilot districts (both from Cohort 1) were awarded subgrants to scale practices to additional grade levels, and two pilot districts (one from each cohort) were included as consortium members in awarded subgrants to educational service centers scaling practices to additional elementary buildings. The Department will track Striving Readers subgrantees who are SSIP pilot districts to monitor the effectiveness of scaling up activities within those districts. Ohio's State Personnel Development Grant also allowed for scale up in three pilot districts (one from Cohort 1 and two from Cohort 2).

## Implementation Barriers and Limitations

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

### **Evaluation Question 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?**

**Barrier:** The LETRS publisher created the online modules with an ambitious schedule for implementation of Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot. Schools in both cohorts report a subset of teachers who are not completing LETRS online modules on pace. Teachers in the focus groups indicate more time is needed to complete the modules, process their learning and apply new concepts.

**Recommendation:** The completion of four LETRS units in one school year remains a rigorous undertaking for teachers. Schools may help teachers keep pace with module completion by offering substitutes and release time for teachers or stipends for completing modules. Pilot districts have also provided collaborative work formats and after-school module sessions. Schools may adjust the rigorous professional development schedule from the two-year schedule set out by the LETRS publisher to three years. Several schools engaging in expanding the literacy work of the pilot through the State Personnel Development Grant have adjusted in this manner.

**Barrier:** Teachers, leaders and coaches identified a misalignment with district-level literacy program and LETRS principles. Some teachers reported a need for more emphasis on the fundamental principles within district-adopted curriculum (Dariosis et al., 2018a).

**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.

**Barrier:** Teachers identified challenges with completing the bridge-to-practice component of the LETRS modules. Teachers in the focus groups noted difficulties, such as selecting appropriate students for a case study at the start of the school year, students leaving the district during the school year and insufficient time to complete the activities.

**Recommendation:** While student mobility continues to be a barrier, schools may support teachers in the appropriate selection of students by assisting teachers to analyze available beginning-of-year student literacy data and coaching them to determine which students would benefit most from the bridge-to-practice work. Schools may assist teachers with time constraints by providing a suggested schedule for the work with an overview of the tasks involved.

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

**Barrier:** The *LETRS Application of Concepts* tools were not fully developed and coaches and regional early literacy specialist were unable to assess the implementation of early language and literacy core instruction using the tool.

**Recommendation:** Voyager completed the *LETRS Application of Concepts* tools in the fall of 2018 and developed 10 training webinars (four for preschool and six for kindergarten-grade 3) to assist coaches and regional early literacy specialists in utilizing the tool. Data collection for Cohort 1 began in January 2019.

### **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 instructional strategies, data analyzation and interpretation, and the use of



assessment for planning as helpful. Others perceived instructional coaching as ineffective due to lack of coaching availability. Examples include insufficient time for coaching; poor relationships between teachers and coaches; and unclear role definitions and expectations of coaches and 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 continue to 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 spring 2017 to spring 2018, with the most progress noted in the *Resources* subscale. Both cohorts 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 4: 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 (district leadership teams, building leadership teams and teacher-based teams), as assessed by the Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory?**

**Barrier:** Related to the implementation of early language and literacy core instruction and intervention, the *Teams* and *Implementation* R-TFI subscales from both cohorts showed increases from spring 2017 to spring 2018. Shared leadership structures are a strength of Cohort 2 schools; however, schools in both cohorts have room to improve toward reaching the 80 percent benchmark for each subscale.

**Recommendation:** The implementation stage of shared leadership structures varies among schools and further emphasis on these OIP systems is needed.

### **Evaluation Question 5: To what extent did students in kindergarten-grade 3 show gains in 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 in both cohorts for curriculum-based measurements in phonemic awareness constructs (Phoneme Segmentation Fluency and Nonsense Word Fluency) and Oral Reading Fluency at some grades, but not all. Cohort 1 showed gains in phonemic awareness for kindergarten but not grade 1, and in Oral Reading

Fluency for grade 1 but not grades 2 and 3. Cohort 2 showed gains in phonemic awareness constructs in kindergarten and grade 1, but only grade 2 showed gains in Oral Reading Fluency. 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) for both cohorts, except for grade 1 Oral Reading Fluency.

**Recommendation:** Though it is too early to expect increases across grade levels, schools can continue to 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 remained consistent for Cohort 1 schools from baseline to project year 1. There was an increase in scores for Cohort 2 schools.

**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 use 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 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.

See Appendix BB for a complete list of technical assistance accessed in 2018.

### **Technical Assistance Needed**

The Department actively engages help from all the sources described in Appendix BB during the ongoing 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 it consists of practices that are shown to be effective in improving instruction and student outcomes. Data from the first two years of implementation suggested a need for additional, more targeted and intentional

support for district administrators, which the Department is addressing through an online instructional coaching course and supported bridge-to-practice activities.

The Department continues to consider principles of implementation science (Fixsen, Blase, Horner, & Sugai, 2009; Fullan & Quinn, 2016) in the use of practice-to-policy feedback loops to identify progress, barriers and needed supports for implementation of Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot. Additional technical assistance needs include:

- Implementation of family and community engagement activities;
- Support for teachers in analysis and use of data to inform literacy instruction and intervention; and
- Building a common disposition to raise literacy achievement for all learners in Ohio, including students with complex needs.

The Department will continue to use feedback loops and evaluation data to identify technical assistance needed for successful implementation.

## Conclusion

Through effective application and evaluation of the Early Literacy Pilot, Ohio is on track to achieve three major 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.

An informal poll was conducted in the most recent Administrator Forum webinar, asking participants to identify whether their buildings have made progress on any of these three goals. Nine of the 15 districts had representatives on the webinar and 13 people participated in the poll. Seven individuals (53.8 percent) indicated their buildings have made progress on two of the three goals; three participants (23 percent) indicated their buildings have made progress on all three goals; two participants (15.3 percent) indicated their buildings have made progress on one of the three goals; and one individual (7.7 percent) candidly acknowledged that their building has not yet made progress on any of the three goals, though the structures are in place. While each building is in a different place in terms of implementation and progress, when considered together, Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot is certainly making progress in each area. Aligned to the first two goals, key highlights from Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot include:

- a. Implementation of a Multi-Tier System of Supports for language and literacy has increased across two years of pilot implementation.
- b. Preschool through grade 3 educators have increased knowledge of evidence-based language and literacy instruction significantly through engagement with the pilot's professional development and coaching opportunities.
- c. Educators self-reported an increase in implementation of LETRS-related strategies in the classroom throughout the year.

Ohio is also seeing progress in student outcome measures (goal 3) earlier than anticipated, including:

- a. The percentage of students with disabilities scoring proficient or higher on Ohio's Third Grade English Language Arts Achievement Test increased 6.5 percent from baseline to year 2 for Cohort 1.
- b. The percentage of all kindergarten through grade 3 students who are on track for reading proficiency, as measured by state-approved diagnostic reading assessments, for both cohorts. Additionally, the percentage of students with disabilities on track for reading at grade level in Cohort 1 increased by 7 percent from baseline to year 2.
- c. Curriculum-based language and literacy measures showed increases in measures of phonemic awareness for students in kindergarten and grade 1.

This report illustrates the Department's commitment to successfully implement Ohio's State Systemic Improvement Plan: Early Literacy Pilot. The Department will continue to strengthen partnerships across agencies and with regional and local entities as we work together to improve outcomes for all Ohio's students.

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