

Setting the Table: Advancing Literacy in DeKalb Together – Hosted by DeKalb Schools Educational Foundation

Please sign in by the topic that aligns with your interest, expertise, or organization's focus.

Please choose a table by topic.

If you have print information you wish to distribute, please place on the tables by topic.

Goals: Build shared understanding, identify assets and resources, opportunities and needs, and commitments for collaboration and engagement for literacy across all ages.

Focus Areas:

- Birth through PreK
- K–8
- High School & Career Transitions
- Adults & Community Supports



Welcome & Introductions

Dr. Norman
Sauce III, Acting
Superintendent

Becky Evans,
GA Reads
Ambassador



DeKalb Schools Educational Foundation, Inc.

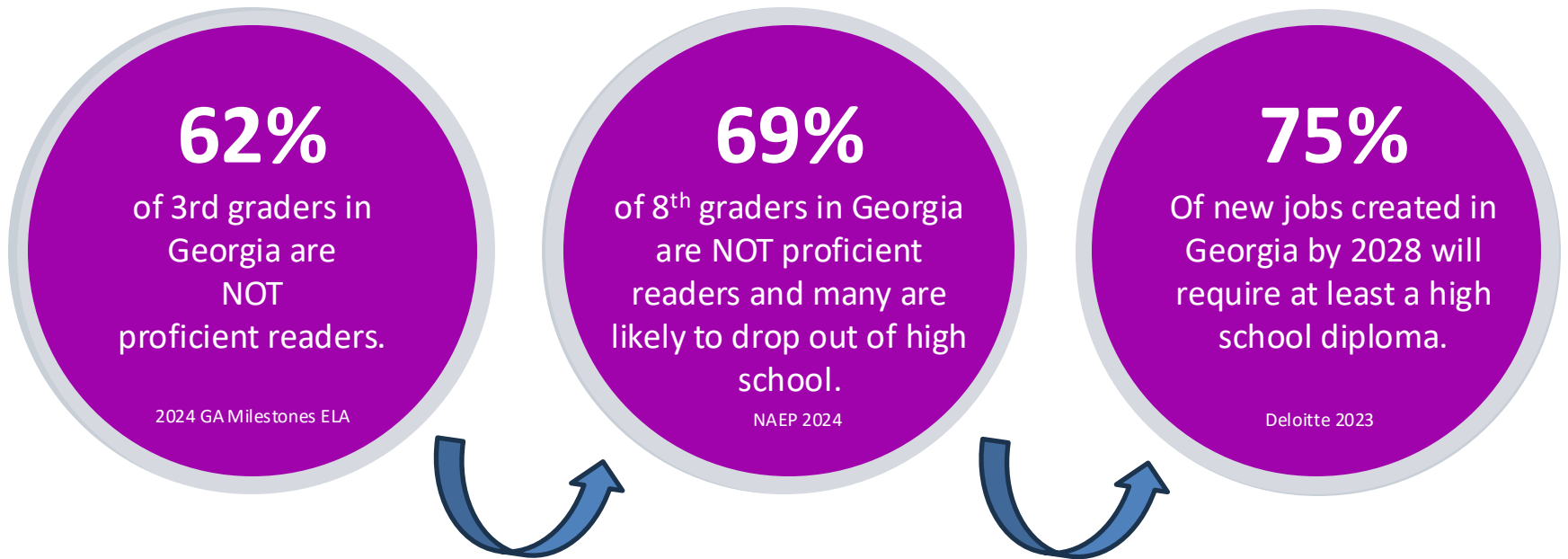
The Why

800,000 Georgians lack basic literacy skills.

That's 1 in 10 adults in Georgia

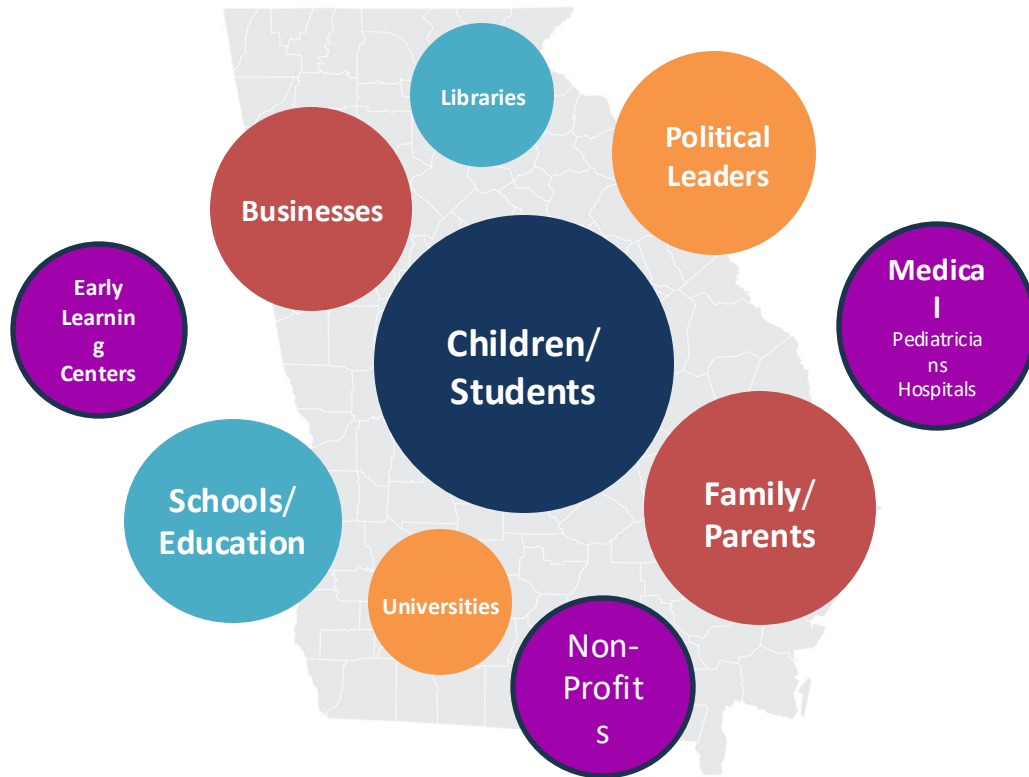
Deloitte, The State of Literacy in Georgia, October 2023

Literacy Conditions Data



Education Ecosystem

Georgia's Fragmented Literacy Ecosystem



Setting the Table



Deb Page, President, The Institute for Performance Improvement.
Certified Performance Technologist and Certified Performance Improvement Facilitator.



Why we're here: Literacy is the foundation for a thriving community and strong economy, and collaborative improvement, innovation, and implementation is required to achieve it.



Today's conversations will raise awareness and share expertise concerning assets, resources, needs and opportunities.

This is a complex performance challenge: a “Big Rock” to move together.

- Improving literacy in DeKalb County is not the job of one program, school, or organization.
- Results depend on how many different parts of the “system” work together.
- You touch literacy from different angles — early childhood, K–12, higher education, workforce, community, and others.



This is a significant start.

- Success will require understanding and breaking down the “Big Rock” together, over time.
- People and processes must align for sustainable solutions for literacy from birth through life.
- People from different roles, goals, expertise, experiences, and incentives must collaborate.

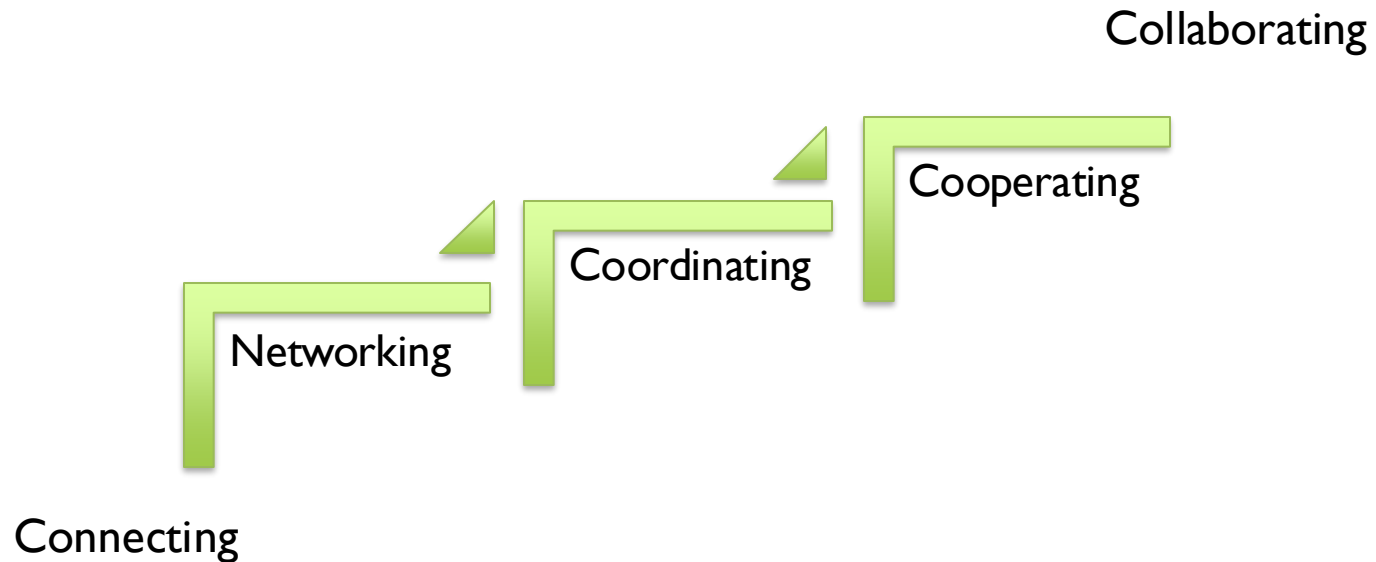


How is
collaboration
different
than working
together?

How is collaboration
different than
working together?

Collaboration requires
setting and meeting
shared goals!

At which level is DeKalb County's Literacy Efforts today?



State Literacy Efforts

- Stacey Lutz – Governor’s Office of Student Achievement
- Nik Philmon – Georgia Department of Education & Overview of Georgia’s structured literacy initiatives.
- Support for schools and communities to align and amplify impact.



THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE *of*
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

State Literacy Plan and Council Structure



DeKalb County Literacy Coalition
October 30, 2025

SB 48

2019

- Defines dyslexia in legislation
- Establishes *Dyslexia Teacher Endorsement*
- Mandates screening for grades K-3 beginning 2024-2025

Appropriation

SB 211

2023

- Establishes the Georgia Council on Literacy
- Establishes the Georgia Literacy Coach role at GOSA
- Limited approved screeners

Key 2024 Council Recommendations

- Combine existing legislation for implementation clarity
- Provide oversight for literacy coach coordination between RESAs and DOE

\$1 million

HB 538

2023

- Mandates
 - Use of High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM)
 - Universal screeners for all K-3 students
 - Tiered Interventions for identified students
 - Professional learning in Science of Reading for all K-3 teachers
 - Teacher preparation alignment
- Appropriates funding for statewide literacy coaches
- Appropriates funding for universal screener development and implementation

\$11.2 million

HB 307

2025

- Consolidates previous literacy legislation
- Bans use of three-cueing model
- Establishes the Georgia Literacy Coach Coordinator role at GOSA
- Establishes the Georgia Literacy Coach Coordinating Committee
- Continues appropriation for literacy coaching
- Continues funding for universal screener implementation

\$ 24 million

Council Structures

Full Council

Executive
Committee

Working Groups

Birth to Five

Barriers to
Learning

Community

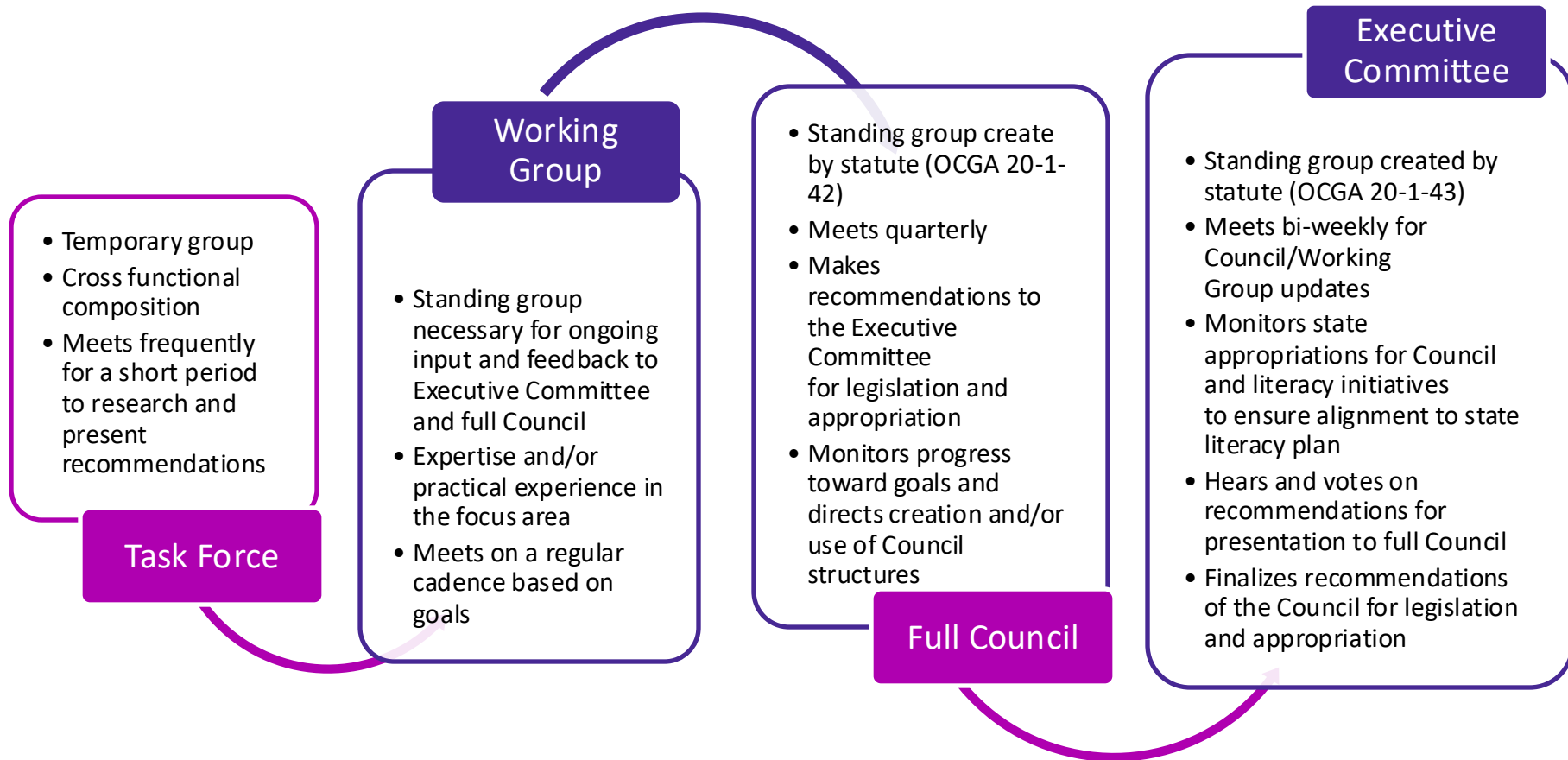
K-12

School
Leadership

Teacher
Preparation
and
Professional
Learning

Task Force

Interaction of Council Structures



Georgia's Literacy Plan: Vision 2030

1 Every child a reader

Every child in Georgia will be a proficient reader by the end of third grade.

Students beyond third grade will continue to enhance their literacy skills with increasingly rigorous and complex materials.

Children entering kindergarten will have a foundation of skills essential for language and literacy learning.



2 Every educator prepared

Educators will have the knowledge and skills to effectively teach all students to read.

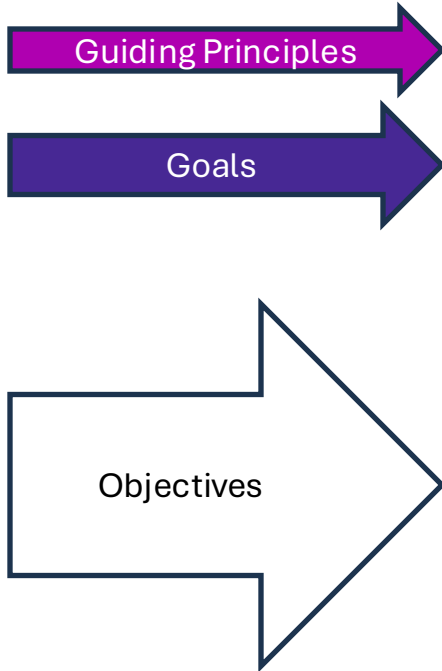
Educational leaders will have the knowledge and skills to support educators in implementing effective literacy instruction for all students.

3 Every community supported

Families and communities will have access to knowledge and resources to actively engage in literacy.

Every adult in Georgia will possess literacy skills essential for the workforce and daily life.

Plan Structure

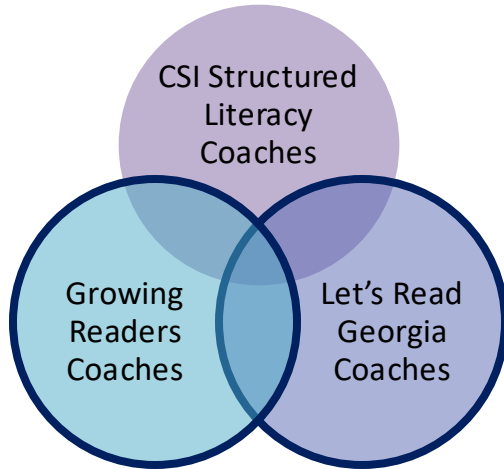


Every Child a Reader	Every Educator Prepared	Every Community Supported
<p>1.1 Children entering kindergarten will have a foundation of skills essential for language and literacy learning.</p> <p>1.2 Every child in Georgia will be a proficient reader by the end of 3rd grade.</p> <p>1.3 Students beyond 3rd grade will continue to enhance their literacy skills with increasingly rigorous and complex materials.</p>	<p>2.1 Educators will have the knowledge and skills to effectively teach all students to read.</p> <p>2.2 Educational leaders will have the knowledge and skills to support educators in implementing effective literacy instruction for all students.</p>	<p>3.1 Families and communities will have access to resources and know how to utilize those resources in ways that result in active engagement in all aspects of family literacy.</p> <p>3.2 Every adult in Georgia will possess literacy skills essential for the workforce.</p>
<p>All pre-school children will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have access to high-quality early learning environments and programs providing instruction supporting language and literacy learning. • have access to a systematic early screening and intervention program (e.g., language, vision and hearing). • demonstrate the foundational skills essential for language and literacy learning upon entrance to compulsory education. <p>All early learning centers will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide developmentally appropriate instruction by effectively teaching the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS). <p>All schools will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implement effective screening, data review, and intervention processes (K-3 and K-12). • implement a systematic support system to ensure student achievement by addressing school climate, attendance, and whole child well-being characteristics. • provide developmentally appropriate instruction by teaching the new K-12 ELA standards through the effective implementation of HQIMs (K-3) and appropriate resources (K-12). 	<p>All preservice educators will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • receive high-quality preparation appropriate for their field of certification grounded in the science of reading and evidence-based instructional practices. <p>All educators will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have access to a comprehensive system of support to ensure high-quality instruction in every classroom. • have access to appropriate and ongoing professional learning to build knowledge and skills to implement high-quality classroom instruction. <p>All leaders will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have access to a high-quality system of support to develop the necessary skills to implement a comprehensive, evidence-based schoolwide literacy plan. • have the knowledge and skills to implement a comprehensive school-wide, evidence-based literacy plan. • have access to ongoing high quality professional learning to build knowledge and skills sufficient to develop and implement school-wide literacy plans. 	<p>All families will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a community-based support system to ensure their children's language and literacy development (e.g., medical care, library access, appropriate screenings, etc.). • have the knowledge, tools, and resources to ensure children's language and literacy development including parent and caregiver awareness and engagement initiatives. <p>All communities will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implement a comprehensive literacy strategy that results in public and private partners collaboratively engaged to improve literacy outcomes for children and adults. <p>All adults will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have access to knowledge, tools, and resources that support the development of essential literacy necessary to engage in meaningful employment.

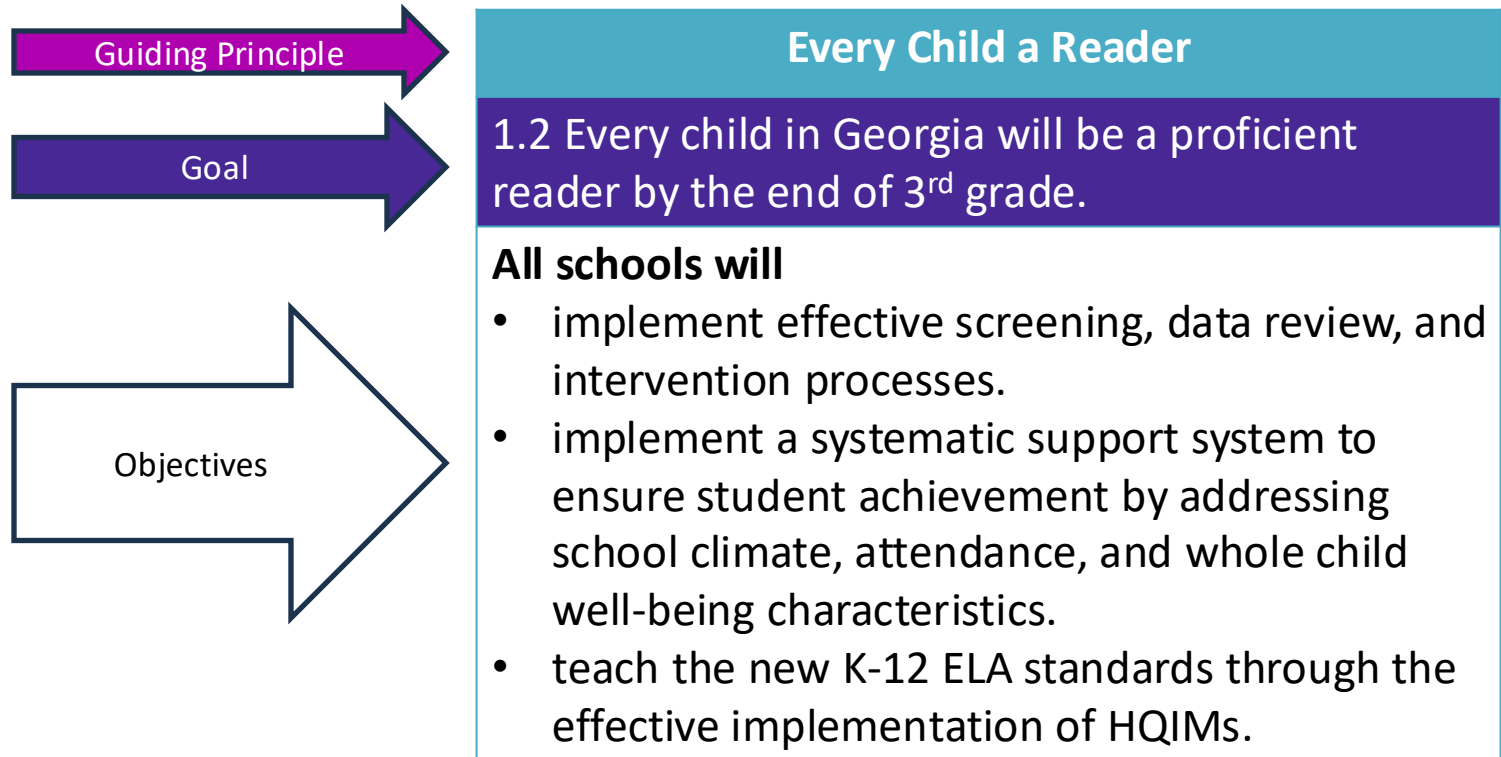
COMMITTEE PURPOSE AND CHARGE

The Literacy Coach Coordinating Committee will ensure collaboration and continuity of Georgia's coaching systems by

- Participating in regular committee meetings to
 - Create and maintain continuity of coaching systems, and
 - Share data and structures that are unique to coaching systems to improve overall practice and implementation;
- Making recommendations relevant to the statewide literacy coaching system to the Executive Committee of the Georgia Council on Literacy for action by the full council



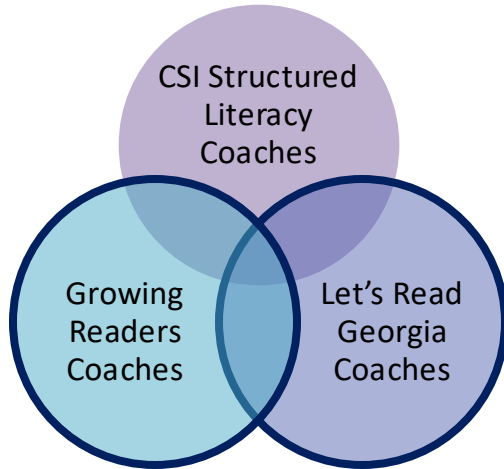
Updated Plan Structure



COMMITTEE PURPOSE AND CHARGE

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Literacy and Dyslexia: From Policy to Practice

Fall 2025

The GaDOE Literacy and Dyslexia Team



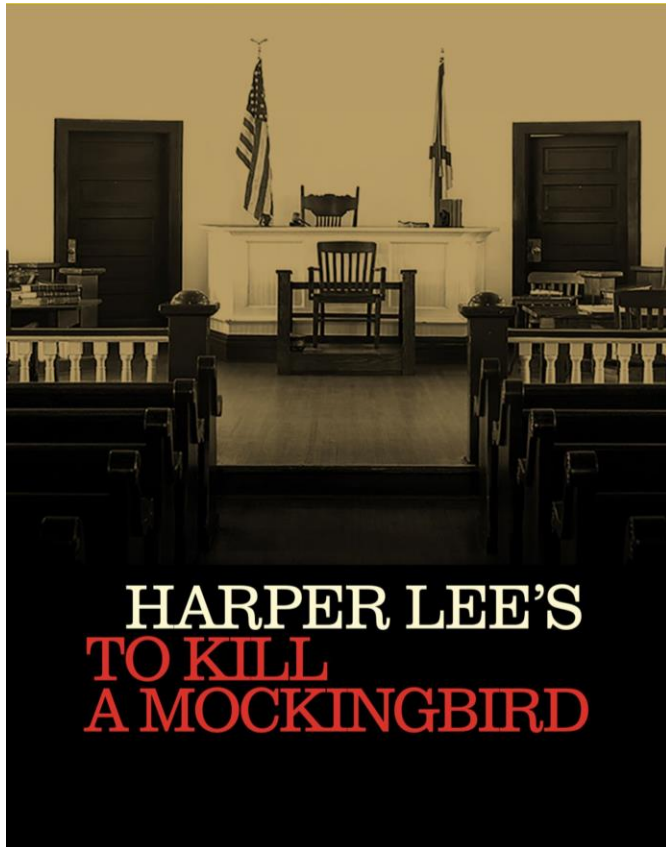
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nik.philmon@doe.k12.ga.us



“

Back then, I imagined we were being summoned to do more than just stand. I imagined when the bailiff called, 'All rise' that ***something large*** was required of us. Something ***stunning, magnificent***, and ***rare***.
~Jean Louise Finch (Scout)

”

Georgia's Literacy Timeline

Staying the path and continuing forward



2025-26

First year that:

- New teachers have been prepared to provide evidence-based literacy instruction
- Current teachers have completed science of reading training

Second year of:

- HQIM for reading in K-3
- Universal reading and dyslexia screening
- Literacy coaches in the highest need schools

2024-25

First year of:

- HQIM for reading in K-3
- Universal reading screening
- Dyslexia Screening
- New educator preparation content standards for literacy
- Teacher training on the science of reading
- Literacy coaches placed in the 60 highest need schools

2023-24

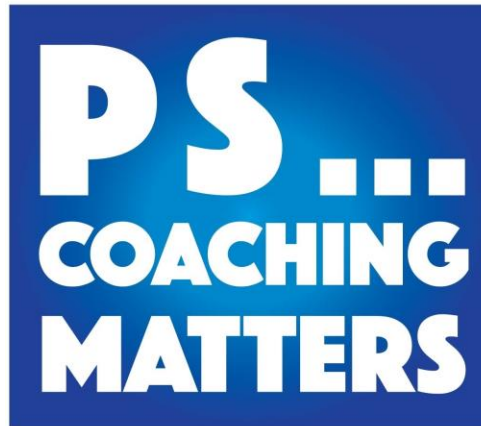
- High-quality instructional materials (HQIM) for K-3 approved
- Universal reading screeners and dyslexia screeners approved
- Senate Bill 464 passed (screeners, executive committee for Georgia Council on Literacy)

2022-23

- Passage of House Bill 538 – Georgia Early Literacy Act
- Passage of Senate Bill 211 – Established Georgia Council on Literacy

2019

- Passage of Senate Bill 48 – Georgia's Dyslexia Legislation
- Dyslexia Pilot Program begins

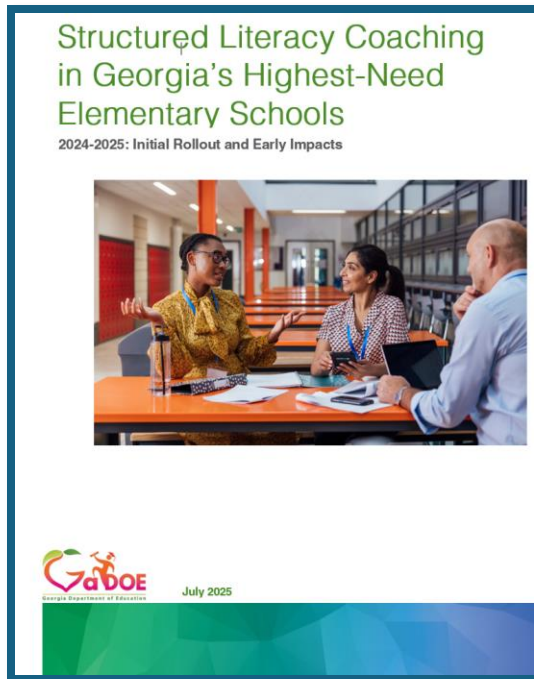


- 220 (2)(A) Each public school and local school system shall provide instructional support
221 for kindergarten through third grade teachers that shall include:
- 222 (i) Onsite teacher training on the science of reading, structured literacy, foundational
223 literacy skills, and evidence based decision making;
 - 224 (ii) Demonstrated lessons; and
 - 225 (iii) Prompt feedback for improving instruction.

GaDOE's Structured Literacy Coaching Report

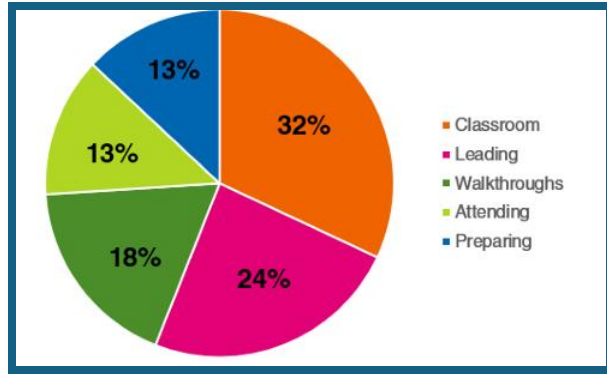


<https://url.gadoe.org/jgj4a>

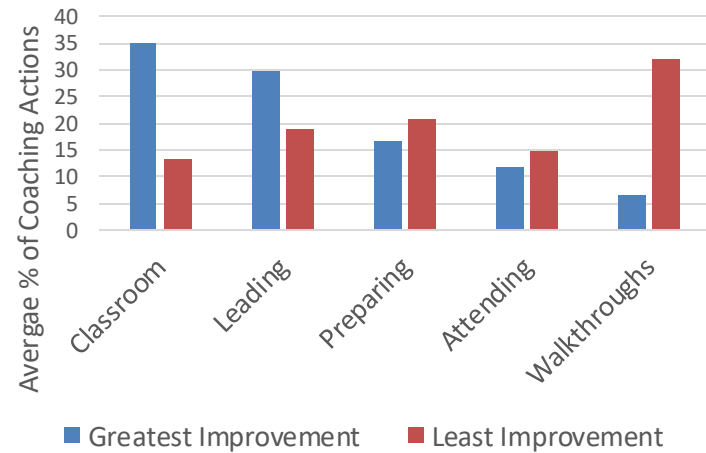


- 60 coaches. 24 districts. Nearly 18,000 students.
- **Job-embedded coaching** aligned with HB 307.
- Promising **reductions in students at risk** of not reading on grade level.
- Teachers say, "Coaching made all the difference."
- Schools with **higher levels of structured literacy implementation and more direct coaching support** saw the ***greatest student gains***.
- Statewide model that is already creating ripple effects beyond CSI schools.

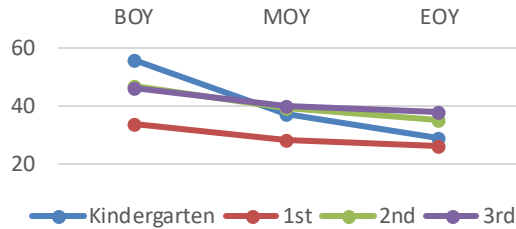
GaDOE's Structured Literacy Coaching Report



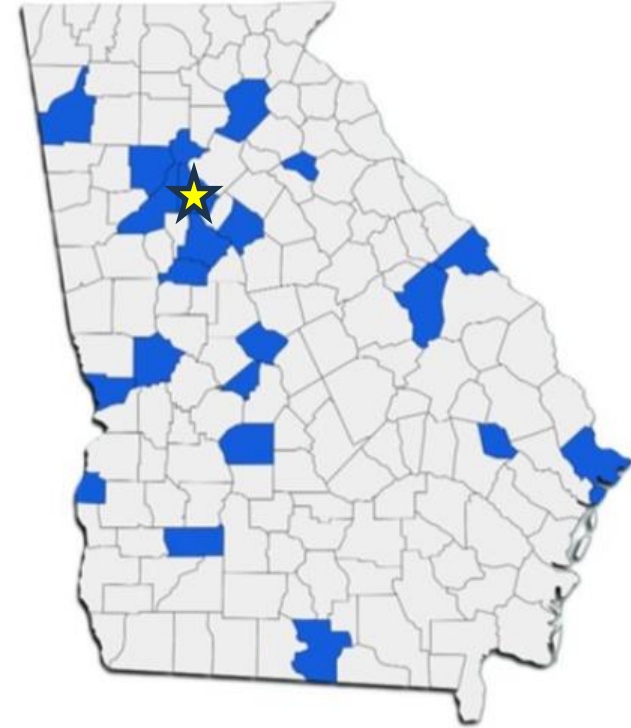
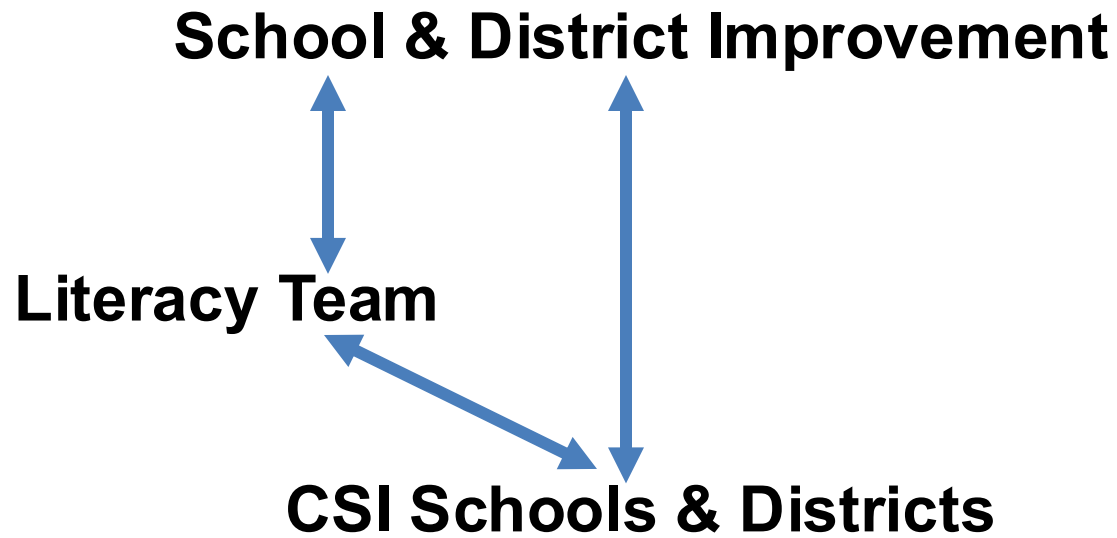
At Risk Improvement Relative to Coaching Actions



Decrease in At-Risk Percentage on Universal Screeners

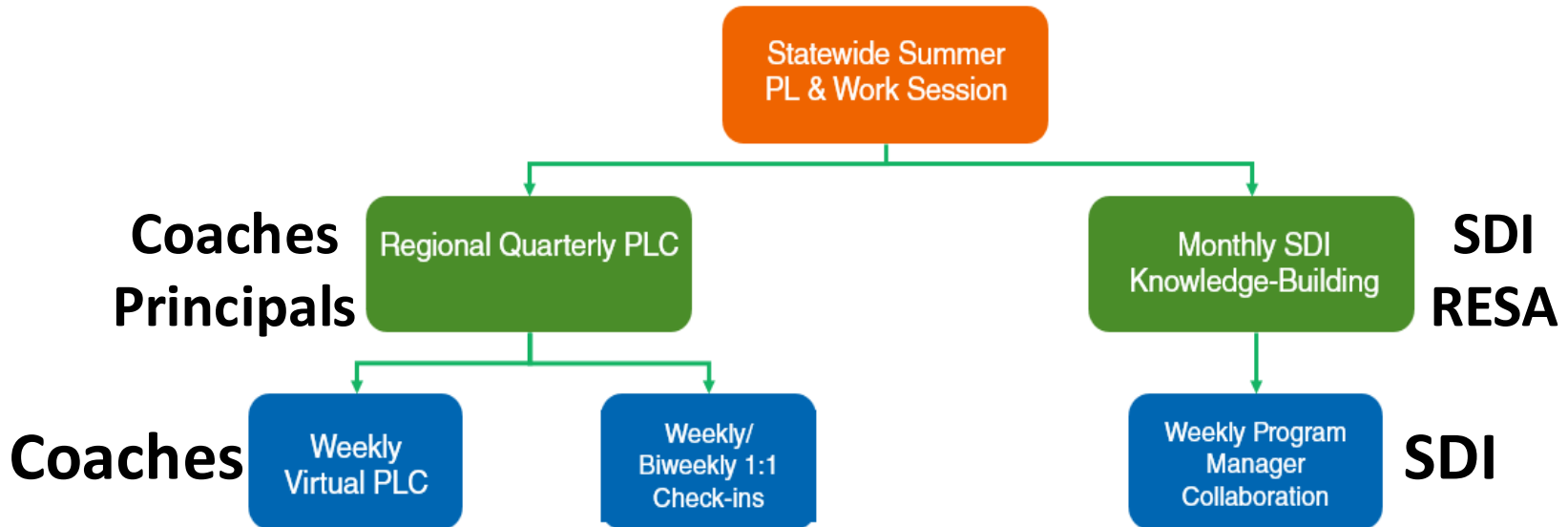


A New Layer in an Existing System



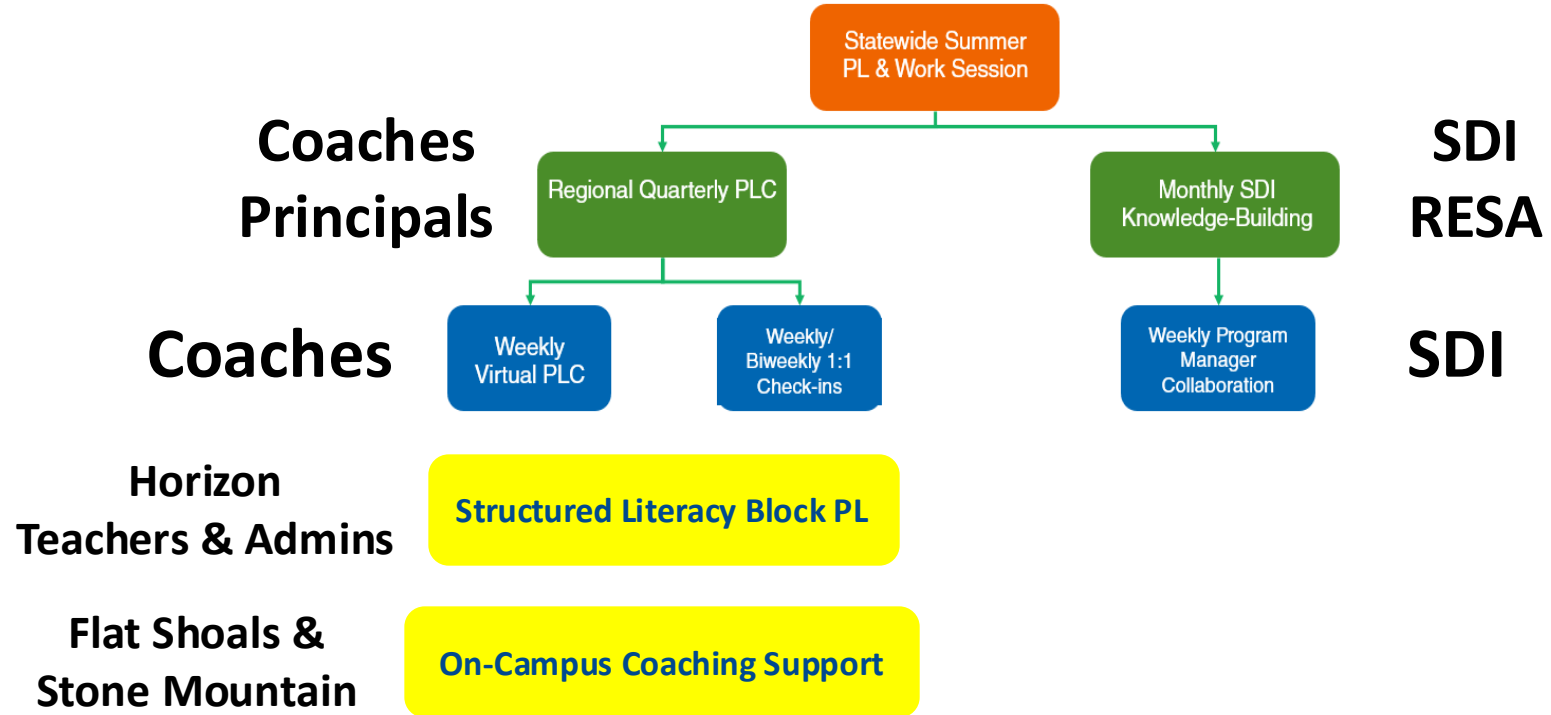
Tiered, On-going, Differentiated Support

All Stakeholders



Tiered, On-going, Differentiated Support

All Stakeholders



Comprehensive Structured Literacy Block Indicators

1. Teacher facilitates relevant phonemic awareness activities that follow a logical sequence ([isolation](#)-> [blending](#)-> [segmenting](#))
2. Teacher [models](#) and students [practice decoding](#) and [encoding](#) a combination of familiar and unfamiliar words with letter tiles, [sound boxes](#), [phoneme-grapheme mapping](#), etc.
3. Students identify and decode words in [sentences and passages](#) that include current and previously taught spelling patterns (i.e., controlled [decodable texts](#))
4. Students are exposed to [rich vocabulary](#) and [complex syntax](#) both orally and written to deepen understanding of academic language and comprehension of complex texts
5. Teacher addresses [word meaning](#) through [visuals](#), [pictures](#), [gestures](#) and props when possible
6. Teacher considers [linguistic differences](#) among languages (vocabulary, letter sounds) and dialects
(pronunciation, syntax) when planning words and activities to do with students
7. Students use [writing](#) to express their own ideas and their [understanding of texts](#) (complex and controlled)
8. Teacher integrates ELA standards and strategies into [comprehension instruction](#) so that students can explore literary genres and content topics through authentic texts

Language Comprehension

Background Knowledge
(facts, concepts, etc.)

Vocabulary
(breadth, precision, links, etc.)

Language Structures
(syntax, semantics, etc.)

Verbal Reasoning
(inference, metaphor, etc.)

Literacy Knowledge
(print concepts, genres, etc.)

Word Recognition

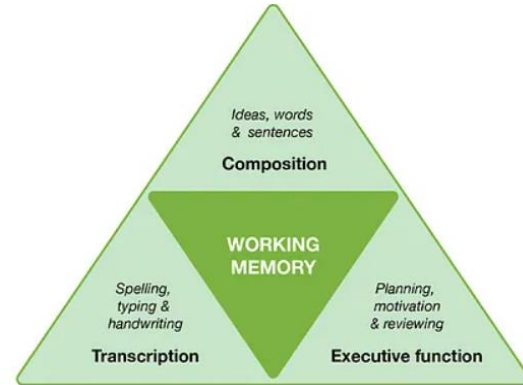
Phonological Awareness
(syllables, phonemes, etc.)

Decoding (alphabetic principle, spelling-sound correspondences)

Sight Recognition
(of familiar words)

increasingly strategic →

increasingly automatic →



**Literacy puts our students
on a path to success...**



but only if their shoes are tied!

How Humans Learn to Read



Rollins Center
for Language & Literacy

COX Campus

A Program of the Atlanta Speech School

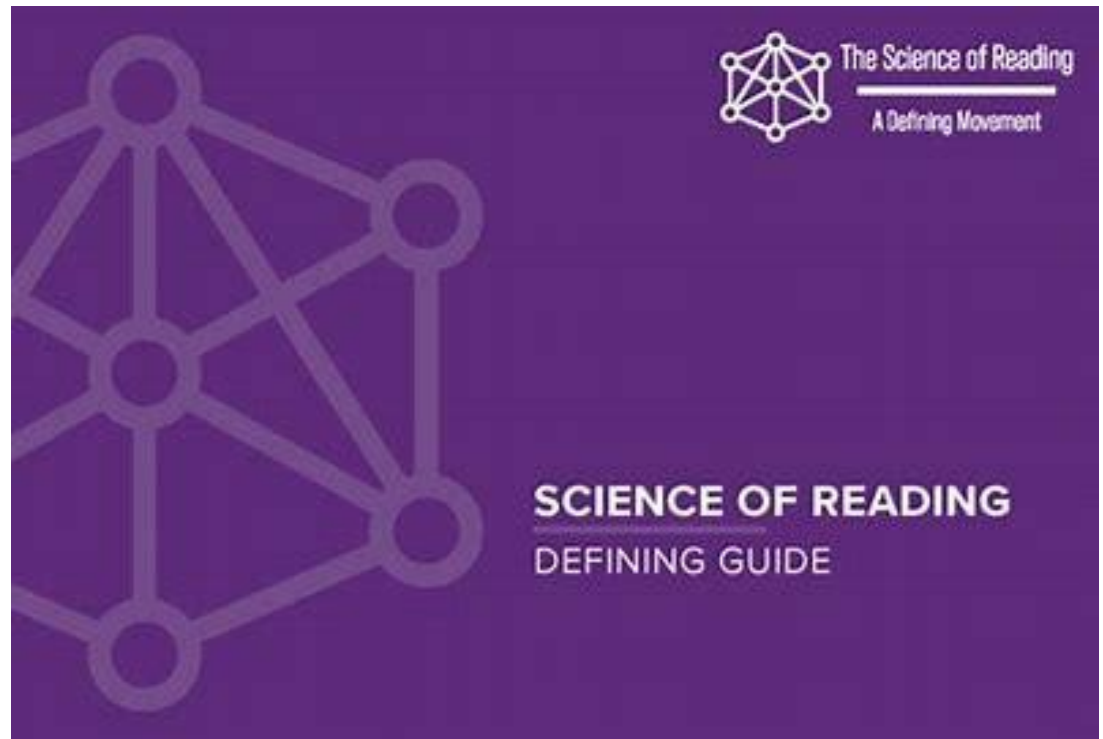
- Speaker: Stacey Wallen, Rollins Center for Language and Literacy
- Key research on the science of reading and practical applications across all ages.

**“Human beings were never
born to read.”**

– Maryanne Wolf

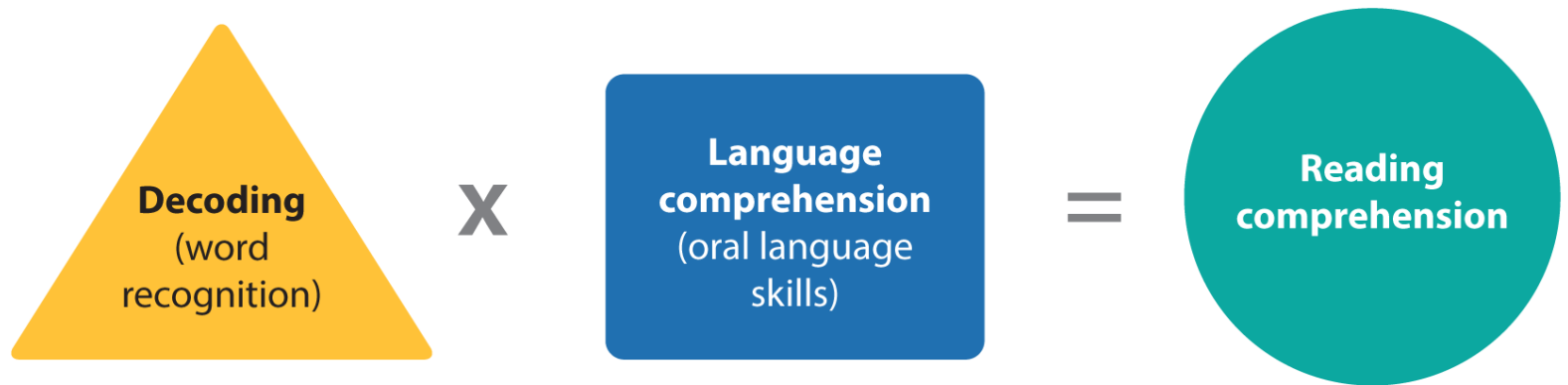
Science of Reading

“The science of reading is a vast, interdisciplinary body of scientifically-based research about reading and issues related to reading and writing.” (TRL, 2022)



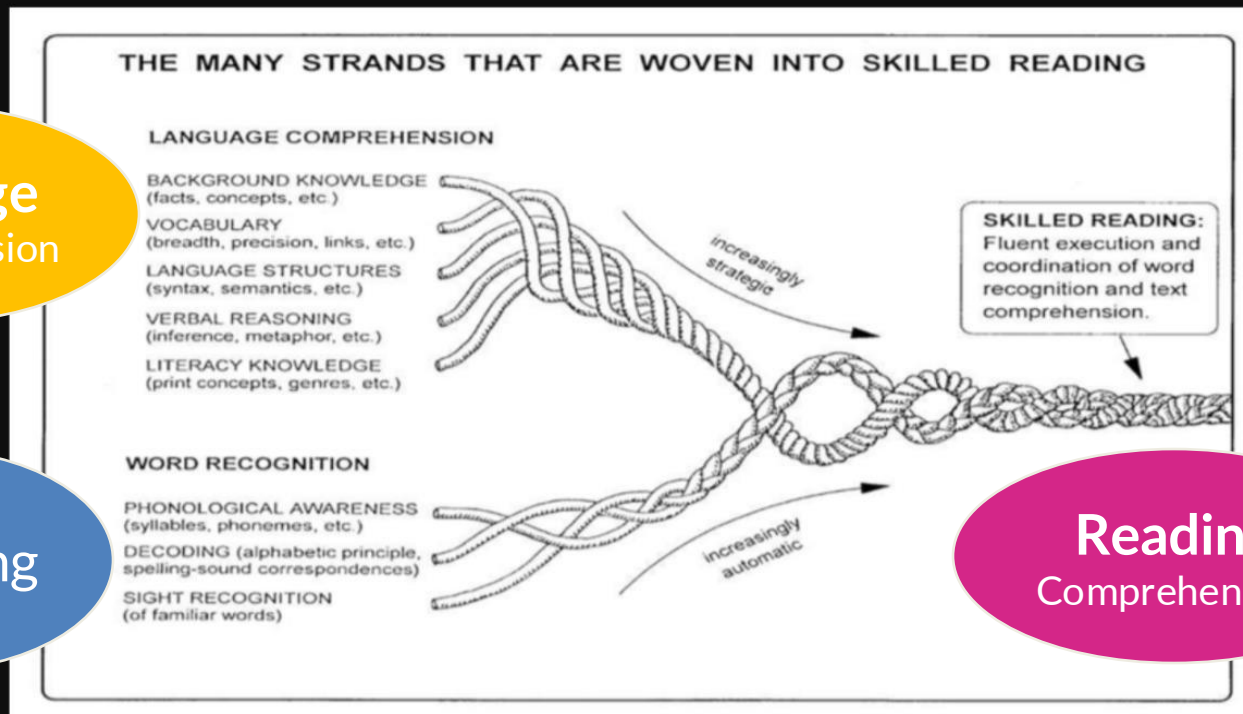
Simple View of Reading

Hoover & Gough (1990)



Reading comprehension is the product of both decoding and linguistic comprehension

Scarborough's Reading Rope (2001)



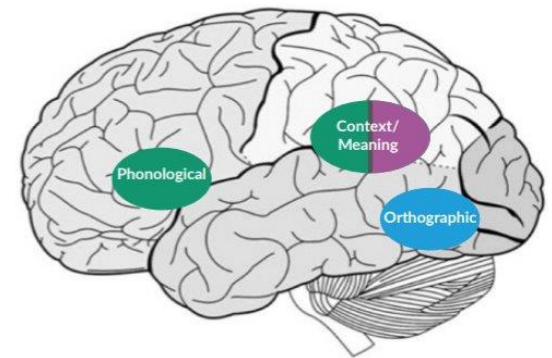
Language
Comprehension

Decoding

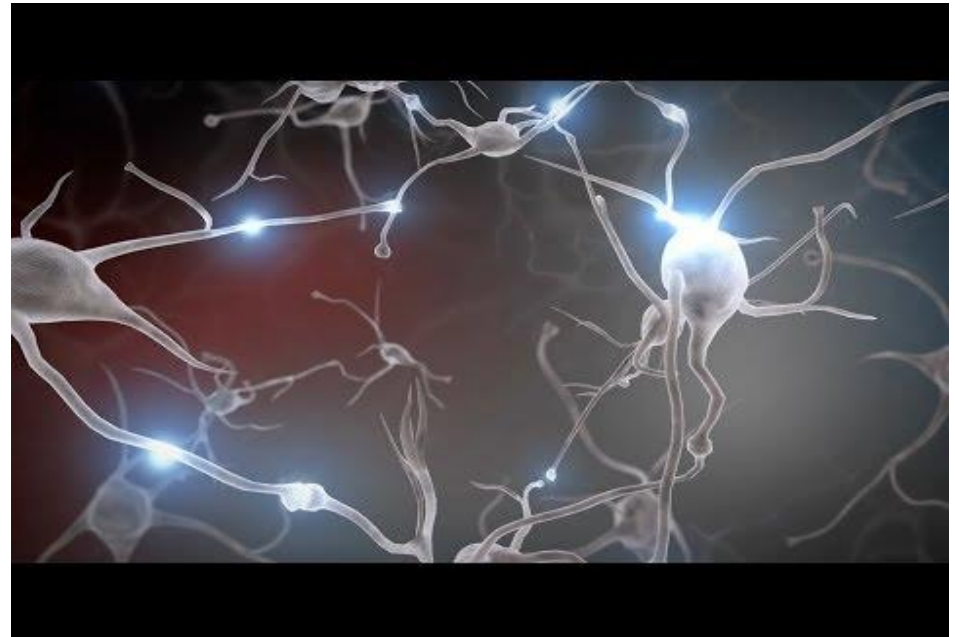
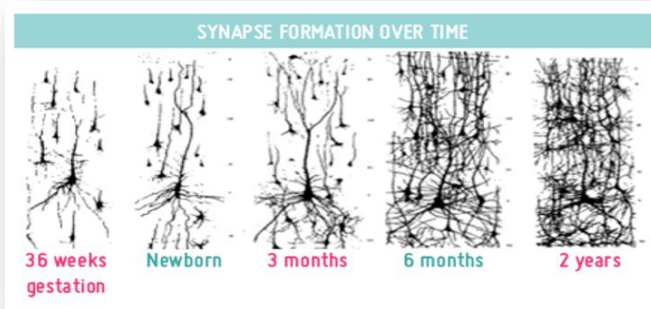
Reading
Comprehension

Oral Language is the Foundation

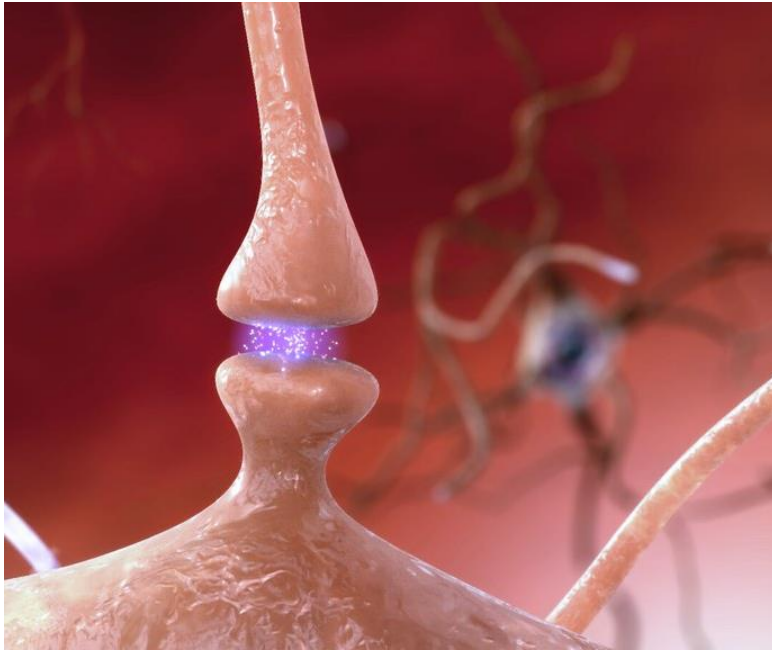
- Reading is not a natural process in the brain.
- Our brains are wired for language.
- The reading circuit is built upon the existing language circuit.
- Language development depends on inputs.



EARLY BRAIN DEVELOPMENT



Brain Development from Birth to 5



80-85% of a baby's brain development occurs between the 3rd trimester and 3 years of age.

"Serve and return" interactions between adults and children form and strengthen neural connections that build a foundation for all future learning and behavior.

Healthy brain development can be derailed when a child experiences conditions that trigger the stress response too frequently/or for long periods of time.

- Responsive caregivers and teachers can act as a buffer!

Serve and Return

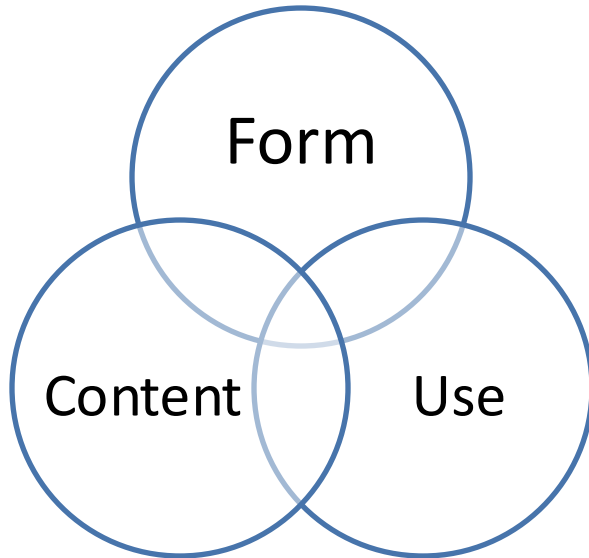


Oral Language is the throughline



Oral Language

What is a language?



**Bloom & Lahey,
1989**

- Language is a **symbol system**
- Language is **generative**
- Language is **oral, written, nonverbal**
- Language is **rule-governed**
- Language is **ever-evolving**

Form

Phonology, morphology, syntax

Content

Semantics

Use

Pragmatics



Structured Literacy

The WHAT



Oral & Written



The HOW



Rollins Center
for Language & Literacy

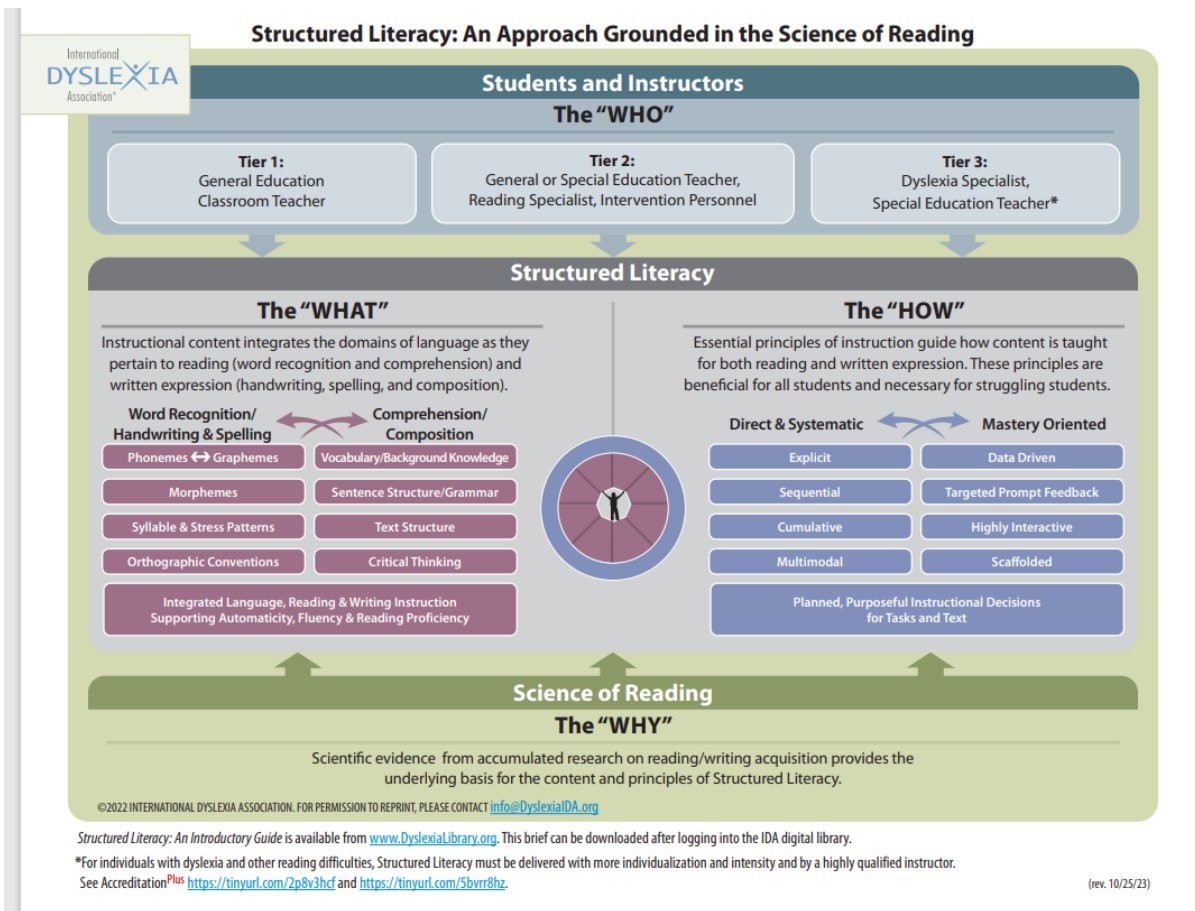
COX Campus
www.coxcampus.org

A Program of the Atlanta Speech School



www.coxcampus.org

Structured Literacy



The State of Literacy in DeKalb

- Dr. Penny Mosley,
Chief Academic
Officer, DCSD
- DeKalb literacy
data, trends, and
partnerships.





Learn4Life Bright Spots
DeKalb Literacy Commission
October 30, 2025

Dr. Rebecca Parshall
rparshall@l4lmetroatlanta.org

Learn4Life's Theory of Action

Engage partners



Create shared understanding (of data)



Amplify Bright Spots



← Close opportunity gaps & advance equity →

L4L engages in its work through three Change Action Networks

Early Literacy



Kindergarten
Readiness



3rd Grade
Reading
Proficiency

8th Grade Math



8th Grade
Math
Proficiency



High School
Graduation

Postsecondary Success



Postsecondary
Enrollment



Postsecondary
Completion

Early Grade Literacy Proficiency Factors



Children's Mental Health
Early Childhood Education
Physical Health
Student Engagement
Teacher Preparation

Adult Literacy
Attendance
Birth Outcomes
Language Development
School & Classroom Climate
Social-emotional Competence
Summer Learning Loss



CHANGE ACTION NETWORK
FOCUS AREAS

Early Childhood Education



Current service in DeKalb

- 23 pediatric offices
- Serves 25,000 children annually
- Last year, provided 34,752 books to children with guidance to parents

Mission

To strengthen families with young children with guidance from trusted pediatricians about nurturing relationships through shared reading.

Model

At routine health visits from 0-5, ROR trained providers talk with parents about reading, show them how to talk about books, encourage them, and provide free books to take home.

Student Engagement



Model

Arts integration is designed to be a joyful, active, and memorable learning experience. Incorporating the five recognized arts disciplines — visual arts, dance, theatre, music, and digital media — along with common core standards and fine arts standards, the arts become an approach to teaching, as well as a vehicle for learning.

Results

- 95% of teachers reported that ArtsNOW significantly impacted students' level of engagement.
- 90% of of educators reported that ArtsNOW has a positive impact on their excitement about teaching.
- 93% of educators reported that ArtsNOW helped students feel more comfortable experimenting with new ideas.

Teacher Preparation

Nonprofits extend training in the science of reading beyond the classroom



- The science of reading shows how the brain builds literacy using research-based methods
- Nonprofits extend this work through after-school and community programs
- These adults need training to support classroom educators

KSU Literacy Microcredential for readers



By generating awareness of the science of reading in a 20 min video, volunteers can:

- Ensure volunteer time is **aligned with classroom instruction**
- **Equip volunteers with proven instructional strategies** to enhance read alouds
- **Provide confidence** to volunteers that they are providing a high-quality experience for their students



Physical Health

Uncorrected vision challenges impede learning; the Atlanta Vision Project will provide...



165,000
Vision Screenings



58,000
Eye Exams



47,000
Glasses



The Atlanta Vision Project Delivery Model



Vision Screening

Students receive a quick vision scan to determine whether a doctor exam is required.

Historical failure rate: 40%



Eye Exam

Students who fail the screening are examined by an optometrist on a mobile clinic.

90% of children are prescribed glasses



A few weeks later: Glasses

Students select frames from a wide choice of styles and receive glasses.

Lost or broken glasses are replaced for free for one year

Atlanta Vision Project Kickoff - Nov 3



Please join Vision To Learn, Lions Lighthouse, Prevent Blindness and Learn4Life as we celebrate the kick off of The Atlanta Vision Project in an event hosted by the Atlanta Hawks.

The Atlanta Vision Project Kick Off Celebration

November 3, 2025 | 12:00pm - 2:00pm
Finch Elementary School
114 Avon Ave SW
Atlanta, GA 30310



Breakouts: Moving Our Big Rocks

Guiding Question: How can we **collaborate** to improve literacy for all?

Big Rock Zones: Birth–PreK, K–8, High School & Career Transitions, Adults & Community Supports.

Facilitator Roles:

1. Guide introductions & discussions
2. Capture assets & expertise
3. Record commitments & contacts
4. Identify potential Big Rocks for collaborative efforts





Table Discussion Prompts

1. What are the biggest challenges and opportunities for literacy?
2. What assets and partnerships exist?
3. How can your or your organization help?
4. What commitment can you make?
5. Who else should join this effort?
6. Your reflections on what has been shared today?

Sharing Out

Table Facilitators Report By Topic (Nominal Group Process)

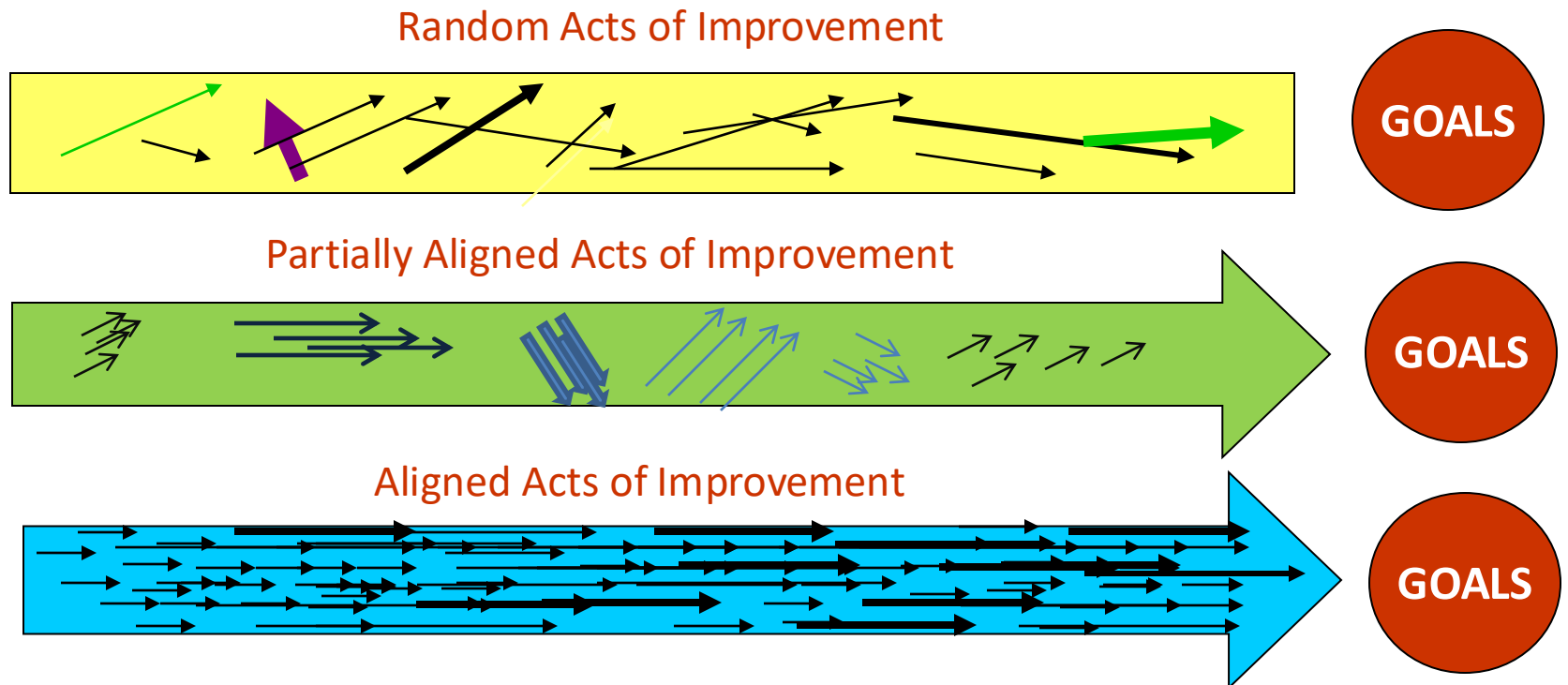
Outputs

Outputs: Key assets/resources

Outputs: Discovered
challenges/needs/collaborative
opportunities

Outcomes: Commitments and
Additional People & Organizations

Aligning Educational Strategies for Collective Impact



GPEE – The Economics of Education
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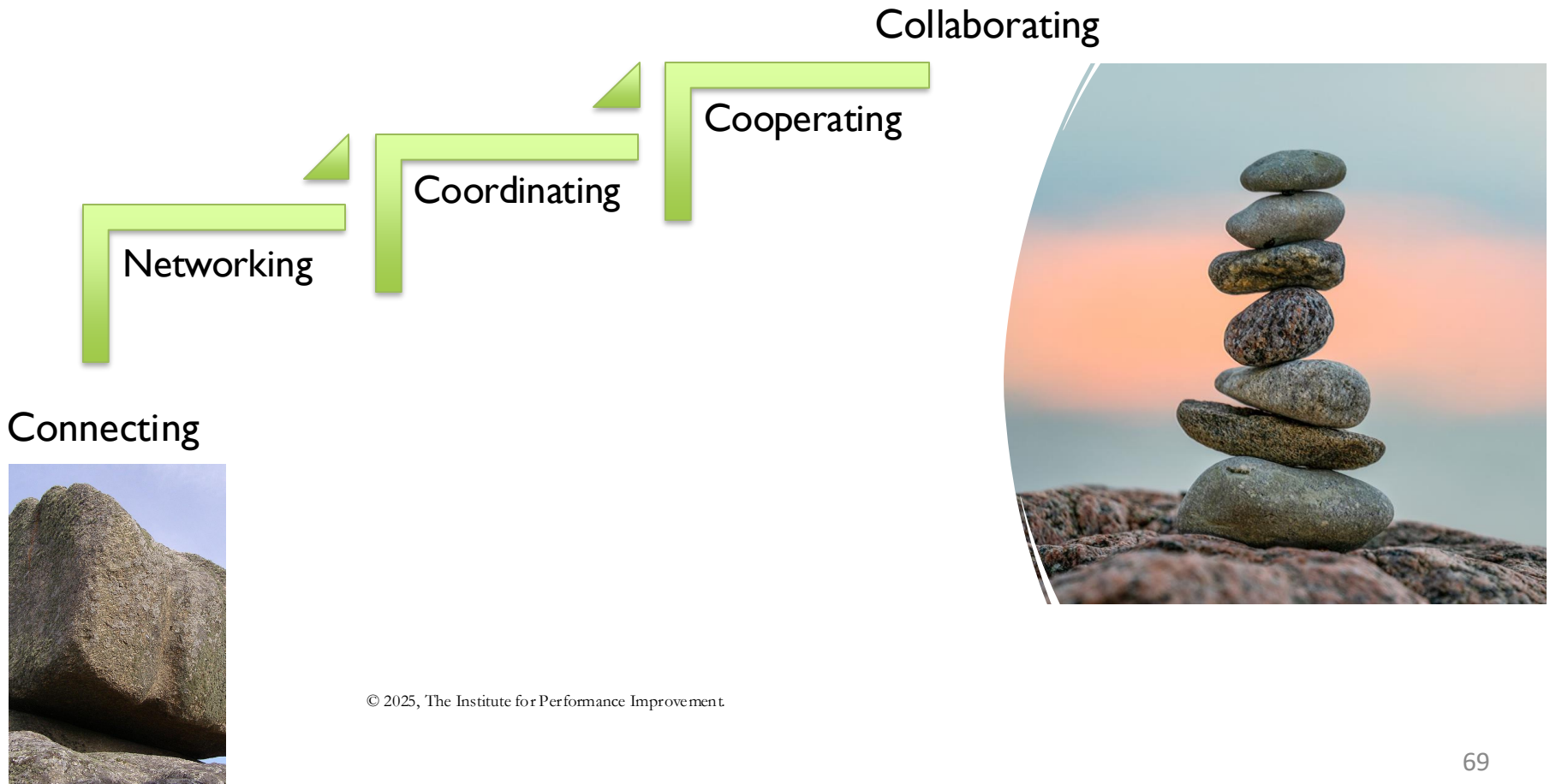


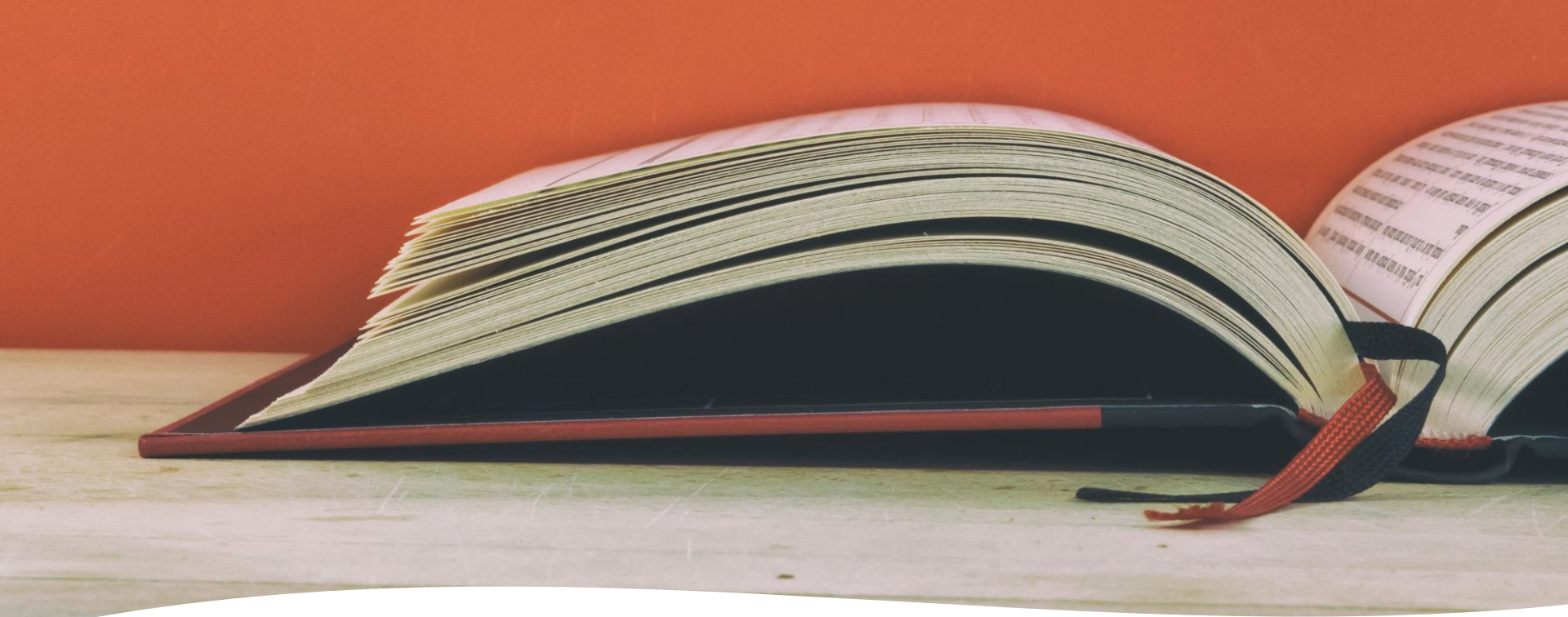
Call to Action



- Use the QR code to share your commitments and recommendations.
- Becky Evans & Munir Meghjani
- Sustain the momentum through framing, forming, and growing a DeKalb Literacy Collaborative network with connected Community Coalitions:
 - Birth-PreK
 - K-8
 - High School & Career Transitions
 - Adult/Community/Workforce
- Recruit and equip allies across all sectors.
- Next steps: DeKalb Literacy Collaborative

At which level is your part of DeKalb County's envisioned literacy collaborative efforts?





The Future Story- Deb Page

Imagine DeKalb in 2032.

Every learner reads with confidence and purpose.

Families, schools, and organizations align to support literacy.

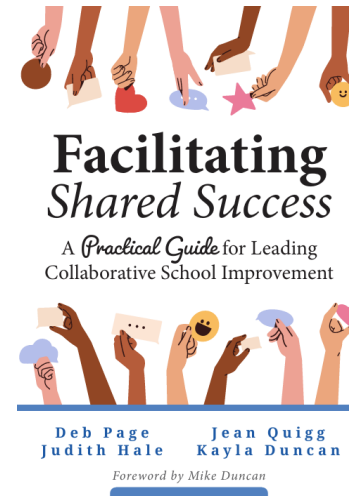
Literacy drives economic and community success.



- We equip professionals across all sectors to guide collaborative analysis, planning, co-creation, and successful, sustainable implementation.
- We train and certify Performance Facilitators to support organizations, communities, and stakeholders to set and meet shared goals.
 - Applying proven practices and tools, achieving a common language, overcoming pitfalls, and achieving success for all

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Your Commitment

- Please submit your information via the QR code OR complete your Commitment & Contact Form and return to your facilitator.



Closing & Next Steps



- Next Steps: Frame our shared Dekalb Literacy Initiative and a network of community coalitions.

Thank You

Contact: Becky@BeckyEvans.com

DeKalb Schools Educational
Foundation

The Institute for Performance
Improvement

Each and every one of you!