

**NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading Learning Teams  
Meeting Four Summary Report  
December 8, 2016**



The NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading Learning Teams met for the fourth and final time on December 8<sup>th</sup> from 1-4 pm at MetLife in Cary.

**NC's Pathways to Grade-Level Reading Background**

Our vision is bold – all North Carolina children, regardless of race, ethnicity or socioeconomic status, are reading on grade-level by the end of third grade, so that they have the greatest opportunity for life success. Achieving it will take long-term commitment.

To get there, we need state and local policies and practices aligned around and actively advancing a common vision, shared measures of success and coordinated strategies that support children's optimal development beginning at birth.

The NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading initiative is creating partnerships among the state's early learning and education, public agency, policy, philanthropic and business leaders to define a common vision, shared measures of success and coordinated strategies that support children's optimal development beginning at birth.

NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading is powered by the NC Early Childhood Foundation (NCECF) in collaboration with NC Child, The North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc., and BEST NC.

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The Pathways Learning Teams were the second phase of the NC Pathways to Grade-Level Initiative. The first phase identified shared, whole-child [Measures of Success](#) that put children on pathway to grade-level reading. The process included a Data Action Team composed of 30 experts from North Carolina's leading universities, research institutes, government agencies, businesses and think tanks, working in concert with Pathways stakeholders representing government agencies, nonprofit organizations, the private sector, foundations, research institutions and members of the General Assembly. The Measures of Success are based on the research on what factors move the needle on third grade reading proficiency. The measures are whole-child, beginning at birth, and include the goal areas:

- Health and Development on Track Beginning at Birth,
- Supported and Supportive Families and Communities,
- High Quality Birth-to-Eight Early Care and Learning Environments, and
- Regular Attendance at Early Learning Programs and Schools.

In this second phase, three Learning Teams focused on Health, Education, and Families/Communities worked from August to December to answer the questions:

- How are North Carolina's children (and families) doing on the Pathways Measures of Success?
- Where should we start first to move to action?

To answer these questions, Learning Teams analyzed the trends, inequities, patterns and connections in the North Carolina data and identified data gaps. They used this information to identify 12 measures from the Measures of Success Framework that showed high need, high disparities, and impact on the other measures. The goal of this final meeting was to bring all three Learning Teams together to make recommendations to the larger stakeholder group on a limited number of Measures of Success to start moving to action.

*See Appendix A for a listing of Learning Team Members.*

The summary reports and presentations from all the Learning Team meetings, including the data reviewed, are online at <http://buildthefoundation.org/learning-teams/>.

More background on the NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading Initiative is online at [www.buildthefoundation.org/pathways](http://www.buildthefoundation.org/pathways).

### **Meeting Four Summary**

Learning Team members from all three Learning Teams (Health, Families/Communities and Education) were asked to find a seat at the table with the Literacy Milestone they worked with or were most interested in, ensuring that each table included members from all three Learning Teams:

- Children's language skills on track at 24, 36, and 48 months
- Children developmentally on-track at kindergarten entry
- Children meeting expected growth in reading (K-3)

Tracy Zimmerman, NCECF Executive Director, welcomed nearly 50 Learning Team members and celebrated two major achievements of the Learning Team process:

- (1) Choosing 12 measures of success to consider as our starting point. Learning Team co-chairs presented the chosen measures and the reasoning behind the choices, including:

- **Health Learning Team.** Co-Chair Meghan Shanahan presented:
    - Healthy Birthweight
    - Development (Early Intervention)
    - Physical Health
    - Social-Emotional Health
  - **Families & Communities Learning Team.** Co-Chair Tamika Williams presented:
    - Safe at Home (No Child Maltreatment)
    - Positive Parent and Child Interactions
    - Social Supports for Families
    - Reading with Children
  - **Education Learning Team.** Co-Chairs Terry Stoops and Khari Garvin presented:
    - High Quality Birth to Eight Education
    - Summer Learning
    - Promotion to Next Grade
    - Regular Attendance
- (2) An evolution of the Pathways to Grade-Level Reading Framework (included as Appendix B) that reflects the Learning Teams' work. Though adjustments will continue to be made and NCECF will have a graphic designer design the final framework, Learning Team members gave the framework a thumbs-up.



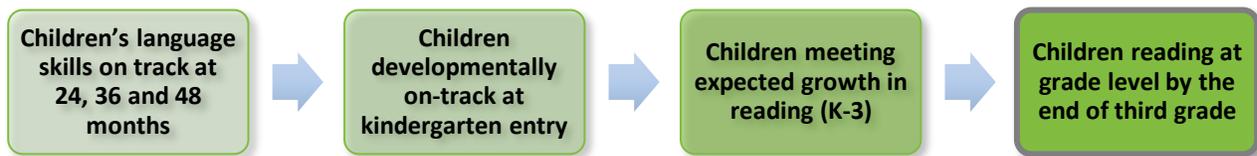
NCECF Policy and Practice Leader Mandy Ableidinger then reminded the team of the work they did during the first three meetings of the Learning Team process, including:

- **Meeting 1.** Considering Equity for each measure: What disparities exist for children based on race/ethnicity, income, age, and geography?
- **Meeting 2.** Considering Need for each measure: How many children are affected, how is NC doing compared with other states, and what does the trend look like?
- **Meeting 3.** Considering connections among the measures: Which measures are the most likely to move the needle on other measures that matter?

Mandy shared the goals of Meeting 4, which included:

- **Recommend measures of success to first focus on for action:** For each of the three Literacy Milestones, choose the three measures that, working together, could best move the needle. Note rationales.
- **Give input into the Design Team process:** Phase 2 of the Pathways work is to create policies, practices and capacities agendas outlining what needs to change in North Carolina to create movement on the prioritized measures. Design Teams will start this work in the spring of 2017.

Groups were organized around the Literacy Milestones because these represent the developmental progress that needs to occur for children to be reading proficiently by third grade. The work we are doing should create shifts along this pathway.



If we aim to create this trajectory for each child, which measures should we start working on first? We want to focus on measures that would start in the next three to five years to create the state-level conditions needed for each child to successfully move through this pathway and be reading on track by third grade.

Mandy offered the team some guidelines for prioritization, which included:

- **Cross-Sector Focus:** The three measures should represent cross-system work. They should be pulled from at least two of the four goal areas.
- **Synergy Potential:** The three measures should work together to create a larger effect than any one of them could achieve individually.
- **Powerful:** The three measures should be able to make a real difference in your Literacy Milestone (early language skills, school readiness, or K-3 reading growth).
- **Feasible:** The three measures should be ones that NC can make some progress on over the next three to five years to build momentum and lay the foundation for additional work.



The process for prioritizing measures included three steps:

- **Step 1: Individual work.** Each team member selected the three measures (s)he would choose to prioritize for the Literacy Milestone her/his table was assigned. Each team member noted her/his votes with sticky dots on a chart at the table.
- **Step 2: Small group work.** Each table discussed the votes and chose the three measures that, working together, would best support the Literacy Milestone they

were assigned. Each table developed the rationale of why they chose the measures they chose. Each group noted their chosen measures on a large chart at the front of the room.

- **Step 3: Full group work.** Each group presented their recommendations and rationales to their colleagues for discussion and reflection.

Pathway partners Michelle Hughes of NC Child and Donna White of the North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc./Smart Start helped facilitate the groups.

The groups recommended prioritizing the following measures. Rationales are included as Appendix C.

- **Children’s language skills on track at 24, 36, and 48 months:**
  - Healthy Birthweight
  - Social Supports for Families
  - Positive Parent and Child Interactions
  
- **Children developmentally on-track at kindergarten entry:**

This group voiced their support for either of two “tracks,” one highlighting the outcomes we want to see for children and families, and the other highlighting the strategies for getting there:

Outcome Track:

  - High Quality Early Care and Education
  - Social-Emotional Health
  - Positive Parent and Child Interactions

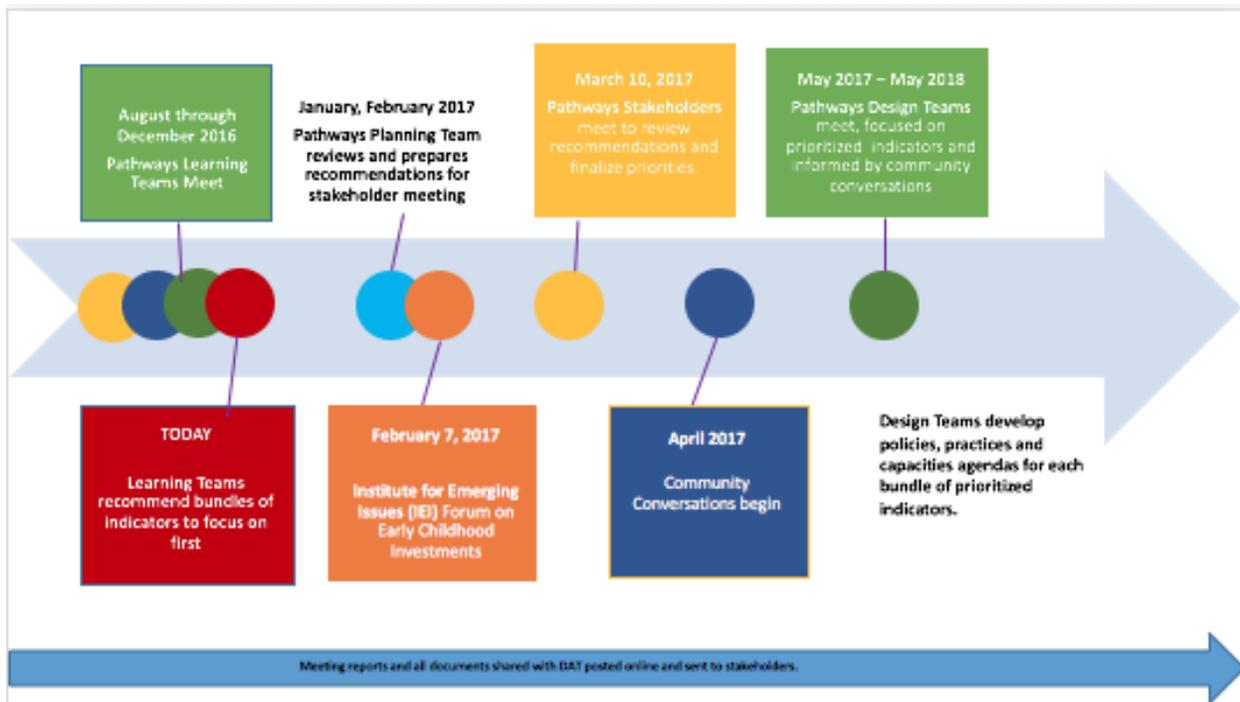
Strategy Track:

  - High Quality Early Care and Education
  - Development (Early Intervention)
  - Social Supports for Families
  
- **Children meeting expected growth in reading (K-3)**
  - Social Supports for Families
  - High Quality Early Care and Education
  - Regular Attendance

This group added that Social-Emotional Health is a critical factor in each of the measures they chose and that the Design Teams should include strategies to address social-emotional health as they design strategies for the other chosen measures.

The team discussed what excited them about this group of measures. Responses included:

- Consistency among the three groups.
- Social-emotional health is a consistent theme throughout the groups. Shows that we’re making progress on understanding the importance of brain development and toxic stress on children’s school and life success.
- Kudos on the process. It was well facilitated.
- Choosing just a few things masks the fact that they are all important and all interconnected. We can’t forget that when we focus on just a few things.
- We should remember that the Pathways goal is alignment of work around factors that move the needle on third grade reading proficiency and child well-being. The work is broader than what the Design Teams will work on next spring.



Tracy then walked the group through next steps for the Pathways work. The graphic above outlines the major steps, including:

- December 8: Learning Teams recommend the starting measures of success for action, to be considered and finalized by the larger stakeholder group.
- February 7, 2017: Institute for Emerging Issues Forum (IEI) on Early Childhood Investments. IEI has kicked off a two-year focus on early childhood investments and will hold this “mini forum” in February to introduce the work to a broader set of stakeholders.
- **March 10, 2017: Pathways stakeholder meeting. Stakeholders will meet to finalize priorities, with the added lens of momentum, and kick off the Design Team work. Mark your calendars!**
- April 2017: Community Conversations begin. The Design Team process will be informed by a community feedback loop. We will be working with our partners – Smart Start, IEI, NC Child – to host community conversations with parents, local leaders, and service providers to learn more about how state policies, practices and capacities support or get in the way of communities being able to make progress in these areas.
- May 2017: Design Teams launch. Throughout 2017, Design Teams will be hard at work identifying the policies, practices and capacity agendas needed to advance the prioritized measures.
- During the Design Team process, Pathways will continue to build alignment and will start building support for a state-level body like a Birth-to-Eight Grade-Level Reading legislative task force as one means of moving the agendas forward.

Tracy shared several examples of state and local alignment with Pathways and the measures of success framework to plan and organize around third-grade reading and child well-being. A few examples:

- The NC Legislature mentioned Pathways by name in the budget this year.

1 education. In collaborating in this effort, the agencies shall develop a comprehensive approach to  
2 early childhood education, birth through third grade, including creating cross agency  
3 accountability with a comprehensive set of data indicators, including consideration of the NC  
4 Pathways to Grade-Level Reading, to monitor and measure success of the early childhood  
5 education systems.

- Smart Start will align the PBIS measurement system with the Pathways measures of success.
- A collaborative is forming in Charlotte to use the Pathways measures to create a State of the Child report for Mecklenburg County.
- The NC Public School Forum’s recent study group report, “Expanding Educational Opportunity in North Carolina” called out the Pathways initiative while underlining the Forum’s support for a comprehensive, data-driven approach to investing in early childhood programs.
- Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina will align outcomes in community child abuse prevention plans with the Pathways framework.
- The NC Perinatal Health Strategic Plan formally recommended support of the Pathways initiative’s recommendations.
- Several local Smart Start partnerships are aligning their work with the Pathways measures.

Finally, Tracy asked team members to share their thoughts on how best to organize the Design Team work in the spring. Ideas included:

- Organize around audience – NC Legislature, other state actors, local government/schools, nonprofits, people in supportive role or direct service role (pediatricians, etc.), and general population (parents, community). Where is the work happening at each level?
- Cross-sector composition of work (across Health, Education, Families/Communities) is unique and is an important element.
- How we did it today by age, because it crosses measures and systems and includes everyone who touches a given age group.
- Three buckets: (1) policies (all sectors/all ages – legislative and maybe local), (2) programs (staff development, program development, best practices around training, etc.), (3) outreach and advocacy (marketing/communications, public service announcements). And a data group.
- Until a task force can be created, we need to quickly put in place a group charged with filtering proposed policy against the Pathways goal – both proactive policy to advance the goal and policies that might roll back work already done.
- Organize around high-level actions: (1) Supporting families and communities, (2) Reforming our systems, and (3) Innovation. There would also need to be a communications framework embedded to help policymakers understand how these three move the needle to get results.
- Somehow need to include parent voice, those doing work on the ground, and more diversity – real people, families, those with a stake in what we’re trying to do.
- Need to think about connectivity and how we will achieve progress – not just policy/practice/program strategies, but how will systems interact with each other to collectively achieve these. Things like cross sector data sharing undergird the ability to do something this bold in a system that has lots of boundaries.

## **Final Reflections**

Tracy invited final reflections at the end of the meeting. A few notes are below, with full comments included as Appendix D.

- This was a very thoughtful and adaptable/responsive process.
- Hope everyone will continue to be involved. We need the continuity and thought leadership of people who have been here all along.
- Loved not just the breadth of knowledge and expertise but people's dedication and passion.
- Need to be very intentional about increasing diversity and holding up race and poverty in this work. This room is not very diverse.

The PowerPoint presentation for the meeting is available online at

<http://buildthefoundation.org/learning-teams/>.

**Appendix A: Learning Team members who attended at least one meeting.**

**Health and Development  
on Track Beginning at  
Birth Learning Team Co-  
Chairs**



**Jennifer  
Zuckerman**  
BlueCross Blue  
Shield of North  
Carolina  
Foundation



**Meghan  
Shanahan** UNC  
Gillings School of  
Global Public  
Health



**Amy Hawn  
Nelson**  
UNC Charlotte  
Urban Institute



**Tamika Williams**  
The Duke  
Endowment



**Terry Stoops**  
John Locke  
Foundation



**Khari Garvin**  
Great Expectations

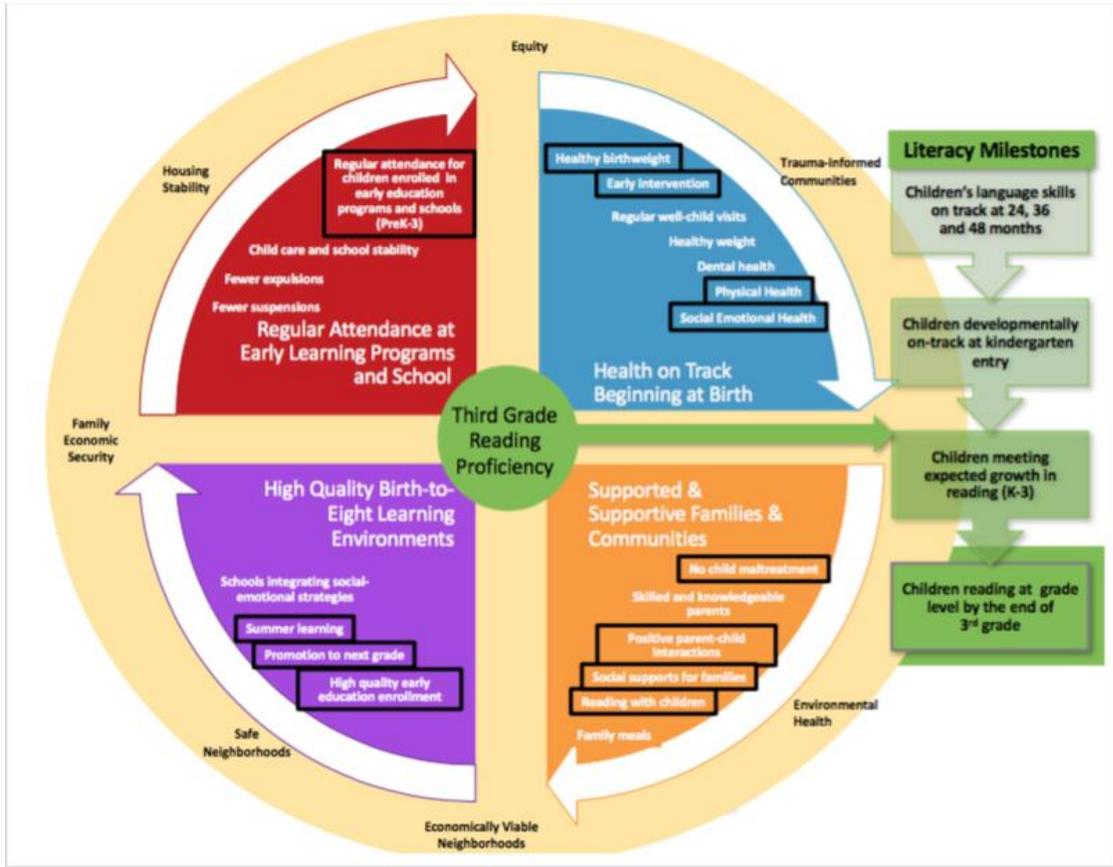
**Supported and Supportive  
Families and Communities  
Learning Team Co-Chairs**

**High Quality Birth-to-Eight  
Education Learning  
Team Co-Chairs**

First Name	Last Name	Organization	Learning Team
Pattie	Allen	Down East Partnership for Children	Education
Rocio	Anderson	March of Dimes	Health
Anita	Barker	United Way of North Carolina	Education
Laila	Bell	NC Child	Health
Rachael	Burrello	Ready for School, Ready for Life	Health
Kevin	Cain	John Rex Endowment	Health
Anna	Carter	Child Care Services Association	Education
Karla	Casteen	NC DPI/K-3 Literacy	Education
Carolyn	Dickens	Motheread, Inc.	Education
Richard	Edwards	Benchmarks NC	Families/Communities
KC	Elander	NC DPI	Education
Hardin	Engelhardt	Marbles Children's Museum	Families/Communities
Kelly	Evans	Duke Center for Child and Family Policy	Families/Communities
Anne	Foglia	NC Institute of Medicine	Families/Communities
Janice	Freedman	North Carolina Healthy Start Foundation	Health
Rachel	Galanter	Exchange Family Center	Families/Communities
<b>Khari</b>	<b>Garvin</b>	<b>Great Expectations - Kate B. Reynolds Trust; Save the Children</b>	<b>Education</b>
Susan	Gates	SAS	Education
Carolyn	Guthrie	NC DPI	Education
<b>Amy</b>	<b>Hawn Nelson</b>	<b>UNC Charlotte Urban Institute</b>	<b>Families/Communities</b>
Michelle	Hearon	Partnership for Children of Cumberland County, Inc.	Education
Mary	Herbenick	Ready for School, Ready for Life	Education
Sharon	Hirsch	Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina	Families/Communities
Cedric	Johnson	NC Budget and Tax Center	Families/Communities
Melissa	Johnson	NC Infant & Young Child Mental Health Association	Health
Mary	Jones	Nash/Rocky Mount Public School District	Education
Phillip	Lampron	Down East Partnership for Children	Education
Debra	Lanham	Down East Partnership for Children	Education
Elizabeth	Levene	Helps Education Fund	Education
Betty	Liverman	Shaw University	Education
Stephanie	Lormand	Parent Representative	Education
Sharon	Loza	Children's Places and Spaces/Marbles Kids Museum	Families/Communities
Victoria	Manning	Skeebo Foundation	Health
Norma	Marti	NC Division of Public Health, Children & Youth Branch	Health
Easter	Maynard	ChildTrust Foundation	Education

Kim	McCombs-Thornton	The NC Partnership for Children/Smart Start, Inc.	Families/Communities
Mark	McDaniel	UNC Chapel Hill	Education
Carolyn	Merrifield	Reach Out and Read	Families/Communities
Beth	Messersmith	MomsRising	Families/Communities
Suzanne	Metcalf	Prevent Child Abuse NC	Health
Bruce	Mildwurf	NC School Boards Association	Education
Karen	Mills	Partnership for Children of Johnston County	Education
Tazra	Mitchell	NC Budget and Tax Center	Families/Communities
Jane	Morrow	Smart Start of New Hanover County	Families/Communities
Duncan	Munn	NC Early Childhood Foundation Board of Directors	Health
Karen	Patch	SAS	Education
Ellen	Peisner-Feinberg	FPG Child Development Institute	Education
Danya	Perry	Communities In Schools NC	Families/Communities
Sydney	Phillips	Down East Partnership for Children	Health
John	Pruette	NC DPI/Office of Early Learning	Education
Libby	Richards	Triangle Community Foundation	Health, Education
Michelle	Ries	North Carolina Institute of Medicine	Health
Katie	Rosanbalm	Center for Child and Family Policy, Duke University	Families/Communities
Nina	Sazer O'Donnell	NSO Associates	Families/Communities
Melinda	Schlesinger	Wake County Smart Start	Health
Candy	Scott	Partnership for Children of Cumberland County	Health
<b>Meghan</b>	<b>Shanahan</b>	<b>UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health</b>	<b>Health</b>
Cyndi	Soter O'Neil	ChildTrust Foundation	Education
Barbara	Still	Project Enlightenment Foundation	Health
Rachel	Stine	Book Harvest	Education
<b>Terry</b>	<b>Stoops</b>	<b>John Locke Foundation</b>	<b>Education</b>
Keith	Sutton	BEST NC	Education
Sarah	Sydney	Parent Representative	Families/Communities
Tony	Troop	NC Division of Public Health, Children & Youth Branch	Health
Tom	Vitaglione	NC Child	Families/Communities
<b>Tamika</b>	<b>Williams</b>	<b>The Duke Endowment</b>	<b>Families/Communities</b>
Laurie	Williamson	United Way of the Greater Triangle	Education
Ginger	Young	Book Harvest	Families/Communities
Adam	Zolotor	NC Institute of Medicine	Education
<b>Jennifer</b>	<b>Zuckerman</b>	<b>Blue Cross Blue Shield NC Foundation</b>	<b>Health</b>

## Appendix B: Measures of Success Framework



## **Appendix C – Rationales for Prioritized Measures**

### **Children’s language skills on track at 24, 36, and 48 months**

- Healthy Birthweight
- Social Supports for Families
- Positive Parent and Child Interactions

Healthy birthweight has high-quality data, and it is a sensitive measure of the kinds of supports available to women and their families, like health insurance, health care, addiction services, etc. Healthy birthweight has a significant impact on health and development broadly defined. It reflects maternal and paternal health prior to a baby’s birth and relates to equity, poverty, and environmental health issues that affect both the parents and the child. North Carolina struggles with disparities on this measure.

Supports for Families was defined broadly as parental leave, the Family Medical Leave Act, transportation, and other supports without which parents have a hard time. There are many ways to improve policies to support families, and we are defining this to include information, referral, resources, housing, transportation, income supplements, etc.

Positive Parent and Child Interactions is ultimately related to so many other things on the list. Without positive parent and child interactions, we will not see social-emotional health. This measure is something we can address and people “get it” – it implies a lot of things that are critical to children’s well-being and success. We know that the amount of talk predicts third grade reading scores, and that children need buffers from toxic stress. Positive parent and child interactions support social-emotional health.

### **Children developmentally on-track at kindergarten entry**

This group voiced their support for either of two “tracks,” one highlighting the outcomes we want to see for children and families, and the other highlighting the strategies for getting there:

#### **Outcome Track:**

- Social-Emotional Health
- Positive Parent and Child Interactions
- High Quality Early Care and Education

Kindergarten teachers will tell you that social-emotional health is the top factor that predicts whether children will be ready to succeed in kindergarten. We know the two main actors that can help ensure social-emotional health for young children are parents/caregivers and early care and education teachers. We need to see positive parent and child interactions, where parents are coaching and supporting their children at home, and high quality early care and education environments, where teachers are supporting children’s social-emotional development during the school hours.

#### **Strategy Track:**

- Development (Early Intervention)
- Social Supports for Families
- High Quality Early Care and Education

Social-emotional health is key to ensuring that children are ready for kindergarten and reading on grade level by third grade. There are concrete strategies that can get us there. We can provide early intervention services to track and measure children's development and intervene early when needed. We can provide social supports for families in order to enable them to invest in positive parent and child interactions, which we know are critical for brain development and social-emotional health. And we can ensure that all our children have access to the high quality early care and education that we have developed in North Carolina, which also prepares children for kindergarten and strengthens critical social-emotional skills.

#### **Children meeting expected growth in reading (K-3)**

- Social Supports for Families
- High Quality Early Care and Education
- Regular Attendance

This group added that Social-Emotional Health is a critical factor in each of the measures they chose and that the Design Teams should include strategies to address social-emotional health as they design strategies for the other chosen measures.

All children need access to high quality early care and education to ensure they are reading on grade level in K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Social supports for families, interpreted broadly, are critical to address the socioeconomic and other life factors that can limit children's success in school and in life. Attendance was included because it meets all the criteria – it's feasible that we could make strides in this area, there is good synergy with the other chosen measures, it incorporates factors from different sectors, and we know it impacts reading proficiency. We selected a combination of upstream and downstream measures. Social-emotional health is a critical piece of all the measures we selected, so the Design Teams should include a focus on strategies that impact social-emotional health. Because there is not good statewide data on social-emotional health, we propose it as the top priority for the Data Development Agenda.

## Appendix D – Full Final Reflections

- Thoughtful process and adaptable. Suggested changes were incorporated. Follow up after meetings was good.
- I would love to see everyone who is here back in 2017 to participate in some form or fashion. This work has been complex and challenging, and we have done a great job, AND moving from identification of measures to actually identifying strategies and implementing them is challenging too, and we need all hands on deck.
- We also need the continuity and thought leadership in the room. There is a high level of deep thinking that you have brought, and we don't want to lose that.
- I have loved not just the breadth of knowledge and expertise but the dedication and passion in the group. And bring back the superhero stickers!
- Can we share emails of the people on the teams? Email Mandy if you don't want to be included on the list.
- We must be sure we are including as part of the discussion how race and poverty are included in the work. This group is not very diverse. We need to be very intentional about that happening. One of the guidelines for prioritization was around disproportionality, so I know you are thinking about it. Maybe we need a race and poverty task force or group that is part of the work. I'm not sure what the answer is, but we shouldn't just recognize it and embed it in the work. It's not just your responsibility; it's all of our responsibility.
  - Yes. Absolutely. A few notes: Equity/disparity was one of the criteria to get a measure to this point, so it has been considered from the beginning. In addition, every Design Team will be tasked with creating strategies that reduce race and income disparities. We welcome your thoughts on how to build that in more before March so that attendance at the next stakeholder meeting reflects our state better. We will send you a survey to get your thinking around this.
- Those of us connected with families in our work can connect with you to work with them.
- Foundation of Pennie Foster-Fishman's work is talking with parents and real people. Lots of us can begin to talk with them and get input even if it is not formal.
- Align with the Public School Forum's Top ten education issues if possible.
- We need to align with groups that will help us reach broad sectors and faith communities.