

NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading

Learning Teams Survey Results

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INTRODUCTION

The **NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading (Pathways) initiative** is bringing together diverse leaders working across disciplines – health, family and community support, and early learning and education; across sectors – government, policy, private and nonprofit; across systems – birth-through-age-five and kindergarten-through-third-grade; and across the political aisle. These leaders are asking what is possible.

What would be possible if . . .

- We adopted shared, whole child, birth-through-age-eight measures that put children on a pathway to grade-level reading?
- We aligned policies and practices that were rooted in how children develop?
- We coordinated strategies to support children's optimal development beginning at birth?

The Pathways vision is bold. All NC children, regardless of race, ethnicity or socioeconomic status, are reading on grade-level by the end of third grade – and all children with disabilities achieve expressive and receptive communication skills commensurate with their developmental ages – so that they have the greatest opportunity for life success.

The first phase of the Pathways work was to create a set of shared measures of our state's progress towards this common vision. Pathways Partners – a group 150 strong and growing – tasked a Data Action Team of 30 experts from North Carolina's leading universities, research institutes, government agencies, businesses and think tanks with identifying the research-based factors that matter for moving the needle on third-grade reading. The Pathways Measures of Success Framework resulted from their work.

After endorsing the work of the Data Action Team, Pathways Partners launched Learning Teams to review the North Carolina data behind the Measures of Success. Learning Teams identified gaps in data availability, made sense of trends, highlighted inequities among different child populations (i.e., by race/ethnicity or socioeconomic status), lifted up patterns and connections, and made a recommendation for which areas to move to action on first. There were three Learning Teams: 1) Health and Development on Track Beginning at Birth, 2) Supported and Supportive Families and Communities, and 3) High Quality Birth-to-Eight Learning Environments with Regular Attendance. Each Learning Team comprised content experts, data experts, and policy thinkers. The teams met individually three times, then held a final meeting together, to recommend measures to act on first.

This report presents results of surveys that were completed by Learning Team members after each meeting. The surveys were designed to determine members' knowledge and support of the Pathways agenda, elicit suggestions for improving the process, and learn about members' experiences with the Pathways initiative. The knowledge and support items are presented first, followed by participants' responses to questions designed to elicit ideas to improve the process. Some participants also highlighted successes of the Learning Teams when responding to these items. The table below presents the survey response rates. Survey questions are located in Appendix A.

For more information on the NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading initiative, please visit www.buildthefoundation.org

SURVEY	NUMBER OF COMPLETED SURVEYS	SURVEY RESPONSE RATE
Meeting 1	24	44%
Meeting 2	18	39%
Meeting 3	20	44%
Meeting 4 (joint meeting of all three Learning Teams)	24	34%

KEY FINDINGS

Overall, Learning Team members reported positive experiences as members of the Pathways initiative.

- All, or nearly all, **members understand the Pathways initiative** and the purpose of the Learning Teams.
- The **percentage of members who feel that Learning Team meetings are productive increased** from 83% after the first meeting to 96% after the final meeting.
- Most members feel that **other team members value their contributions**.
- Many **members understand the initiative's next steps** and support the prioritization of decisions that have been made.

While their experiences were positive, members made suggestions for improving the Learning Teams.

- To improve the Learning Team process, **members suggested changing aspects of the meeting format**, providing materials prior to meetings so members can prepare for the meetings ahead of time, focusing on data collection, and continuing the collaborative approach.
- Materials can be improved by **improving the organization of the materials notebook** and providing clearer explanations of the data provided.
- While many members understand the purpose of the Pathways initiative, to make members' experiences successful, some members suggest providing a **better explanation of the project's next steps**, as well as continued cross-team sharing, member diversity, and effective leadership.

Members value the diversity of representation and expertise on the Learning Teams, members' focus on a common goal, and the usefulness of the project for other agencies and organizations in North Carolina.

Members understand the purpose of Pathways and the Learning Teams.

I understand the purpose of the Pathways to Grade Level Reading initiative.



Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Meeting 3 Final Meeting

I understand the purpose of the Learning Teams.



Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Meeting 3 Final Meeting

After each Learning Team meeting, all, or nearly all, members understood the purpose of the Pathways initiative. The percentage of members who agreed that they understood the initiative was consistently high (ranging from 90% to 100%) after each meeting of the Learning Teams.

In addition, most members understood the purpose of the Learning Teams. The percentage of members who agreed that they understood the purpose of the Learning Teams increased from 92% after the first meeting to 100% after the final meeting. These data suggest that the collaborative has been highly successful in facilitating and supporting members' understanding of the overall project and their roles as members of the Learning Teams.

Members reported that meetings were productive and that their contributions were valued.

I feel like this meeting of the Learning Team was productive.



Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Meeting 3 Final Meeting

I feel like my contributions are valued.



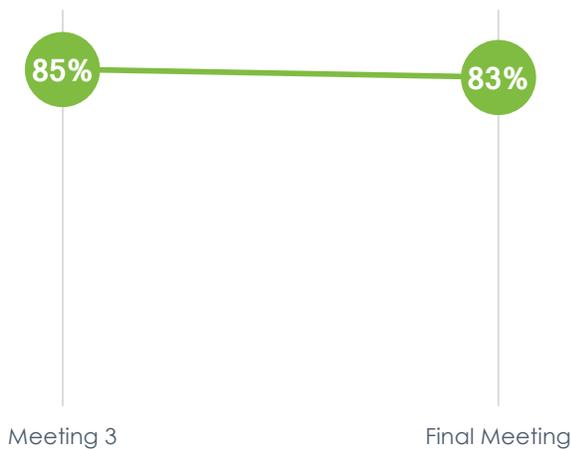
Meeting 1 Meeting 2 Meeting 3 Final Meeting

Having productive Learning Team meetings is important; more productive meetings lead to efficient decision making and help propel the Pathways' agenda forward. As shown above, most members agreed that their team meetings were productive; 83% of members reported that the first meetings were productive and that percentage increased to 96% after the final meetings.

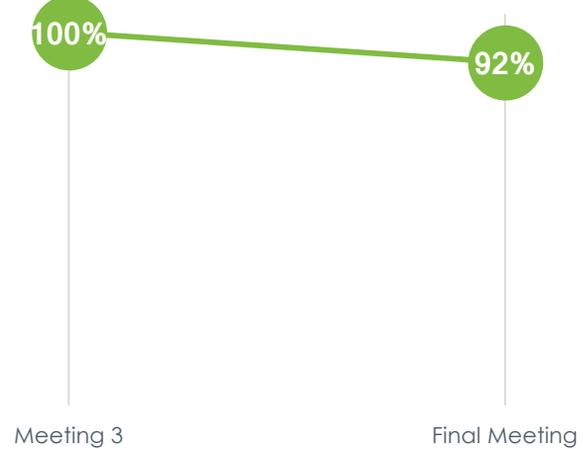
Similarly, it is important that team members feel like their contributions are important and valued by other members of the team. At all meetings of the Learning Teams, most members reported that their contributions were valued by the other team members. The highest percentage was reported after the first meeting.

Most members understand the next steps of the initiative and support the prioritization decisions that were made.

I understand the next steps of the Pathways initiative.



I support the prioritization decisions made by my team during this meeting.



While most members of the Learning Teams reported that they understood the purpose of Pathways (see page 4), a smaller percentage reported understanding the next steps for the project. As shown above, 85% of Learning Team members agreed that they understood the next steps after the third meeting and that percentage dropped to 83% after the final meeting. These data suggest that a small group of members may need more information to fully understand the project's next steps.

All, or nearly all, members reported that they support the prioritization decisions that were made. After the first three meetings, each Learning Team prioritized measures to focus on within their own Learning Team. All members reported that they supported those decisions. In the fourth meeting, members prioritized measures together across all three Learning Teams, making the final decisions by consensus across the teams. After the final meeting, 92% supported the prioritization decisions.

Members described **what they value about the initiative** and their experiences as stakeholders.

Theme (10 members commented)	Members Said...
<p>Diversity of Membership (n=4): Comments focused on the benefits of a diverse membership.</p>	<p>"I appreciate that the NC Pathways process is bringing together diverse expertise and experiences to try to turn data into action steps."</p> <p>"I also appreciate that we were able to recognize that family voice is important and we need more diverse representation among the stakeholders."</p>
<p>Other Comments (n=4): Comments addressed a variety of topics, praising the project's leadership, expertise, management, and usefulness to agencies and organizations throughout the state.</p>	<p>"Great staff leadership and community expertise."</p> <p>"From my first interactions with the initiative I have been impressed with the planning and execution of all steps involved in the process. Throughout, communication was clear, participants were engaged, and facilitation was skilled."</p> <p>"The Pathways indicators will be usable to a variety of agencies, communities and initiatives to measure success for children and families -- providing common language, understanding and commitment to move the needle on child well being -- health, safety, education and more. While the target is grade-level reading, the ripple effect will be positive for child welfare, public health, education, criminal justice and future worker productivity. Participation is win-win-win for agencies, funders and families."</p> <p>"Follow-up email 'discussion' was productive and showed that Pathways is open to hearing different ideas from participants."</p>
<p>Focus on a Shared Outcome (n=3): Comments focused on the value of having members who are focused on a common goal.</p>	<p>"I appreciate the bringing together a diverse group of individuals who maintain their focus on third-grade reading proficiency."</p> <p>"I value the experience collaborating with other committed members, dedicated to addressing birth to eight year old reading progress in North Carolina."</p> <p>"The NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading initiative is unique in that it pulled together stakeholders from a wide variety of perspectives who may not often work together but who share a common goal of moving our state's children forward."</p>

Members made suggestions to improve the Learning Team process.

Theme (22 members commented)	Members Said...
<p>Meeting Logistics and Format (n=8): Comments focused on how to improve the productivity of meetings, including more breaks during meetings, more discussion time, and greater focus on actions needed.</p>	<p>“Build in a break or breaks between segments - it’s a lot to take in, especially during the data work.”</p> <p>“Even though each group had their work summarized by the sticky notes on the windows, it was difficult to hear. I also think each group should have had a recorder to report out that was more familiar with the discussion of the group.”</p> <p>“More time to overview and answer questions on how the recommendations of each team will be integrated and incorporated into the final report.”</p> <p>“Small group discussion was productive (and enjoyable) since different members bring different expertise/perspectives to the table, but in hindsight I wonder if the time we spent ‘figuring’ out who is affected the most/least was worth devoting so much time. Seems like it could have been synthesized and presented to us - with the group having more time to discuss the ‘WHY’ and ‘What can be done’...such as adopting short-term action steps to approach the new administration and the General Assembly.”</p>
<p>Explanation of Next Steps (n=6): Comments focused on members needing a better understanding of the purpose of the Learning Teams, particularly how the work produced by the Learning Teams will be used moving forward, and how the data collected will be used.</p>	<p>“I think that the work of the learning teams could have been explained better-particularly how it fits within the previous and next steps, and what our end goal is.”</p> <p>“Include a discussion to gather ideas from team members on how to best disseminate the report recommendations, including roles for team members.”</p> <p>“I think you did this, but it was good to get reminders of what our task was (i.e. don’t talk about the why, just talk about the what)...it’s easy for a group of people to get off task.”</p> <p>“I think I am still a bit vague about next steps - will this generate outcomes that state agencies and nonprofits will agree to contribute towards (aligned contributions), in state policies that promote the attainment of these outcomes or programs that should lead to these outcomes or all of the above? Similarly, is the audience for this policy makers, funders, service providers, general public or all of the above?”</p>

Members made suggestions to improve the Learning Team process. (continued)

Theme (22 members commented)	Members Said...
<p>Preparation Before Meetings (n=3): Comments focused on the desire to receive materials prior to meetings so that members are prepared for discussions during meeting time.</p>	<p>"The members of the learning team could have easily taken a look at the data presentation before the meeting and come prepared for a significantly higher level conversation."</p> <p>"Copies of information e-mailed a little farther in advance."</p>
<p>Data Issues (n=2): Comments focused on supporting the continued collection of data.</p>	<p>"Continue to gather data to help in the decision making process. Reach out to 'partners' for data sharing."</p> <p>"Each metric could go super deep on the data -- but what are we really trying to understand/gauge with the data? How deep do we need to go to have enough for the next steps? That isn't clear to me."</p>
<p>Collaboration (n=2): This comment focused on the need for continued collaboration.</p>	<p>"Continue collaboration and team approaches."</p> <p>"Process was good -- maybe force us to mix up our tables next time so that we continue to hear different voices."</p>

Members made suggestions to improve the materials provided.

Theme (32 members commented)	Members Said...
<p>Data Needs (n=12): Comments focused on the need for more detailed data, broken down by demographic categories and correctly identified as state- or national-level.*</p>	<p>“It would be great to see the data over time -- are we improving or are things getting worse? Some of the labels for the data points were difficult to understand and getting an explanation took a lot of time.”</p> <p>“More detailed data would be beneficial; especially broken down by gender and ethnicity.”</p> <p>“There were some details that people noted regarding missing information about the data presented such as the denominator for rates, whether the data was national or state specific, etc.”</p>
<p>No Changes Needed (n=8): Comments focused on the quality and usefulness of the materials.</p>	<p>“I thought the materials were great. Clear, high quality, and helpful to guide discussion.”</p> <p>“Materials are great -- very helpful to have all the data and resources readily available for the discussions.”</p>
<p>Notebook Organization (n=6): Comments focused on suggestions for improving the organization and readability of the materials notebook, including page numbers and section dividers.</p>	<p>Most participants praised the use of the notebooks, but had minor suggestions to improve functionality such as tab dividers or color-coded paper to separate the sections to allow for easy referencing, as well as adding page numbers.</p> <p>“Please put supplemental data right behind the NC data to avoid having to flip back and forth.”</p> <p>“The binders are a great idea but I find myself fumbling to get to what I need. I know tabs are costly but having more might help.”</p>
<p>Other Comments (n=3): Comments focus on providing copies of PowerPoint presentations, having more time to review materials, and the desire for a summary timeline of the project.</p>	<p>“Maybe a copy of any PPT would be helpful to have during the meeting.”</p> <p>“My group was little frustrated in not having more time to review the materials and ask questions for understanding of the way certain data was presented.”</p> <p>“Materials/binder has been great, but perhaps provide a summary/timeline sheet -- to show (concisely) the process to this point, how we’ve gotten to this point, and what the end goal is -- at every meeting, in addition to the agenda.”</p>

*Because the Data Action Team was encouraged to choose the best measures for understanding how children are doing, not just ones for which there were data available, there were several measures for which data could not be provided to the Learning Teams. In those instances, national or proxy data was provided if available.

Members identified ways to make their experiences on the Learning Teams successful.

Theme (17 members commented)	Members Said...
<p>Clear Plan (n=8): Comments focused on the need for more and clearer information on the project's processes and next steps.</p>	<p>"A better understanding of the concrete goals of the remaining three meetings."</p> <p>"Clear communication on next steps."</p> <p>"More clarity of our end product/goals and what it really takes to get there -- so we don't go down rabbit holes of wanting more and more info."</p> <p>"A comprehensive implementation plan and securing buy in from agency/business leadership for it."</p> <p>"Having a well thought-out agenda and process."</p>
<p>Cross-Team Sharing and Learning (n=3): Comments focused on the value of sharing and networking with other members of the initiative.</p>	<p>"Delivery and discussion of Health team recommendations to others so we support the Pathways effort."</p> <p>"I loved the fact that members from very different areas of expertise were represented. It helped me to better understand and think about how to tell the story of the impact of high quality early learning care. There was quite a discussion at my table as to why the data group included information on how many children attend child care programs and whether this was really relevant to the problem of grade level reading. Of course it is, but you do have to make the case for it to those who think of only K-12 years. The Learning Team is an opportunity to do this."</p> <p>"Networking, learning, helping to move the process along."</p>
<p>Other Comments (n=7): Comments focused on diversity, effective leadership, developing strategies for moving forward, and seeing recommendations being put into action.</p>	<p>"Getting the chance to work with such a diverse group of individuals and learning more about the work across communities and the state."</p> <p>"I feel the leadership is excellent. I hope some more of the policy leaders in our state will come to more meetings."</p> <p>"Perhaps the first meeting was a necessary right of passage, but it would feel more productive if we put less emphasis on refining the data and more on developing strategies to improve outcomes."</p> <p>"To see actions being taken throughout the state based on the team's input."</p>

SUMMARY

Results of the Learning Team surveys showed that **perceptions that Learning Team meetings are productive increased from 83% after the first meeting to 96% after the final meeting**. After each meeting, all, or nearly all, members reported that their contributions were valued by other members.

Members feel positively about the Pathways initiative, the Learning Teams, and their roles in the project. The percentage of members who understand the purpose of Pathways ranged from 90% after the third meeting to 100% after the first and final meetings. The percentage of members who reported understanding the purpose of the Learning Teams increased from 92% after the first meeting to 100% after the third and final meetings.

Most members understand the next steps of the project and support the prioritization decisions that have been made. However, several members commented on the **need for more information about next steps**; this may be an area for improvement.

Members suggested changing the Learning Team meeting format and logistics to improve the Learning Team process. Suggestions included scheduling breaks during meetings, providing meeting materials ahead of time so members can prepare for the meetings, and continuing to focus on collecting necessary data. While most members liked the materials notebook, they offered several suggestions to improve its organization and readability. For example, adding page numbers would make it easier to navigate the notebook, and organizing the contents using tabs or dividers would make it easier to locate and access information, and to identify different sections of the book.

Members praised the project for the diversity of the membership in terms of representation and expertise. They also value the fact that the project will provide useful information to many agencies and organizations in North Carolina.

APPENDIX A: LEARNING TEAM SURVEY QUESTIONS

On a scale of 1 (least) to 5 (most), please rate the degree to which you agree with the following statements.

- I understand the purpose of the NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading Initiative (asked after all meetings).
- I understand the purpose of the Learning Teams (asked after all meetings).
- I feel like this meeting of the Learning Team was productive (asked after all meetings).
- I feel like my contributions were valued (asked after all meetings).
- I understand the next steps of the Pathways initiative (asked after meetings 3 and 4).
- I support the prioritization decisions made by the team during this meeting (asked after meetings 3 and 4).

Open-ended Questions:

- What suggestions do you have to improve the process used at the meeting (asked after meetings 1-3)?
- What suggestions do you have to improve materials provided (asked after meetings 1-3)?
- What will make the experience of participating in the Learning Team successful for you (asked after meeting 1)?
- What suggestions do you have to improve the process for the Learning Team work (asked after meeting 4)?
- Please describe what you value about the NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading Initiative and your experience as an engaged stakeholder (asked after meeting 4).