

Pathways to Grade-Level Reading Initiative Design Teams Description

The Pathways to Grade-Level Reading Initiative's 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 this vision will take long-term commitment. To get there, we need state and local policies and practices aligned around and actively advancing this common vision, shared measures of success and coordinated strategies that support children's optimal development beginning at birth. To accomplish that, Pathways is creating partnerships among the state's public agency, policy, philanthropic, business and birth-to-third grade leaders.

Phase I identified shared, whole-child Measures of Success that put children on a pathway to grade-level reading. Phase II considered the NC data behind the Measures of Success and recommended seven measures to collectively move to action on first. Design Teams will be Phase III of the Pathways work.

Design Teams Purpose and Scope of Work:

The purpose of the Design Teams will be to create policies, practices, and programs and capacities agendas to advance the measures of success in North Carolina. What needs to change in our state to see shifts in children's outcomes? Policies, practices, programs and capacities are defined as follows:

- Policies: Federal, State Legislative, State Departmental, and local policies.
- Practices: Protocols in place to implement the policies, some of which might be driving good outcomes, and some of which might be obstacles to improving outcomes.
- Programs and Capacities: Provider capacity, parent capacity, public understanding and will-building, and array of quality programs to improve the indicator(s).

Policies, practices, program and capacities agendas will serve as Pathways' platform for progress on grade-level reading. Pathways will work to implement the recommendations through the state's public, nonprofit and private sectors as appropriate and will seek the creation of a birth-to-eight grade-level reading task force.

Design Teams will be professionally facilitated through a process to create agendas for their relevant Measures of Success. Three Design Teams will each meet five times over the course of one year: May 2017 through May 2018. Design Team members will be asked to commit to:

- Attend five Design Team meetings and one statewide Summit between May 2017 and May 2018;
- Gather policy, practice, program, and capacity information and data as needed between meetings; and
- Participate on Design Team workgroups if/as needed.

Design Teams will have resources relevant to their measures, including but not limited to:

- **Current NC data** on the measures, as available.
- A **policy matrix** cross-referencing birth-through-age-eight policies, practices, programs and capacities recommended by national researchers and advocacy organizations.
- A **brief compendium** of evidence-based policies, practices, programs and capacities for each of the relevant measures of success, which will include why the measure is relevant for third-grade reading, relevant policies, practices, programs and capacities that have been proven to impact the measure, and strategy examples from NC and other places that have successfully impacted the measure.
- **Feedback from Community Conversations** that will be held around the state with early childhood providers, local leaders, and families. Community members will be asked what state-level policies, practices, programs and capacities support, get in the way of, or are needed for them to be able to make improvements locally on the measures.
- **Existing strategic plans** or action plans on the measures that are relevant to the Design Teams' work.

Design Team Member Characteristics:

Pathways is designed to address racial inequities through disaggregation of data and intentionally choosing strategies to reduce disparities. We are committed to engaging the diversity of North Carolina's people, especially the voices of people of color.

Design Team members should:

- Understand the challenges around the measures of success on the state and local levels;
- Be in a position to implement the strategies recommended by the Design Team; and/or
- Have already undertaken work in North Carolina on the relevant measures of success.

Overarching characteristics for Design Team members include:

- A commitment to being data- and research-driven.
- A willingness to engage people with different policy perspectives with an open mind.
- An ability to look at early literacy development through a multi-dimensional systems lens and an understanding of how early literacy is impacted by a child's developmental trajectory, within the context of his or her family and community.
- An understanding of the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) on child development and reading proficiency.
- A commitment to acknowledging and eliminating systemic inequities and racial, ethnic and socioeconomic disparities in early childhood experiences, opportunities and outcomes.
- An eagerness to think outside the box of what the state currently does and imagine the possibilities.
- A commitment to action, and to finding a good – even if imperfect – starting place for the work.

Design Teams should include representatives from the following categories of stakeholders:

- **Early childhood policy experts and advocates outside state government** who think on a systems-level, understand the multi-dimensional aspect of early literacy and child development, know North Carolina's early childhood history, and are eager to build on that knowledge to move the state forward.
- **Early childhood policy experts inside state government agencies** who understand the big picture and are committed to "getting to yes." These leaders will be asked to help the group better understand the constraints and limitations the state struggles with and play an inside role in carrying the work forward beyond the Design Team phase and into implementation.
- **Early childhood implementers** at the state, county and/or community level who are able to look at the work to improve early literacy through a systems lens. They will be asked to share their experiences with implementing early childhood policy and to highlight both the policies that support their work and those that can get in the way of improving outcomes for children and families.
- **Families representatives** who will use their experiences to help identify what obstacles families face in ensuring early school success for their children, and which policies work for families and which do not.
- **Funders in the early childhood space** who would like to see the birth-to-eight community in North Carolina align around a common goal, shared measures of success and coordinated strategies for taking action on early childhood investments, and who can bring their experiences from working across the state in diverse communities to bear on the Design Team work.
- **Business leaders** who understand the critical importance of the early years and can serve as ambassadors for the work and key influencers with policymakers and other leaders.