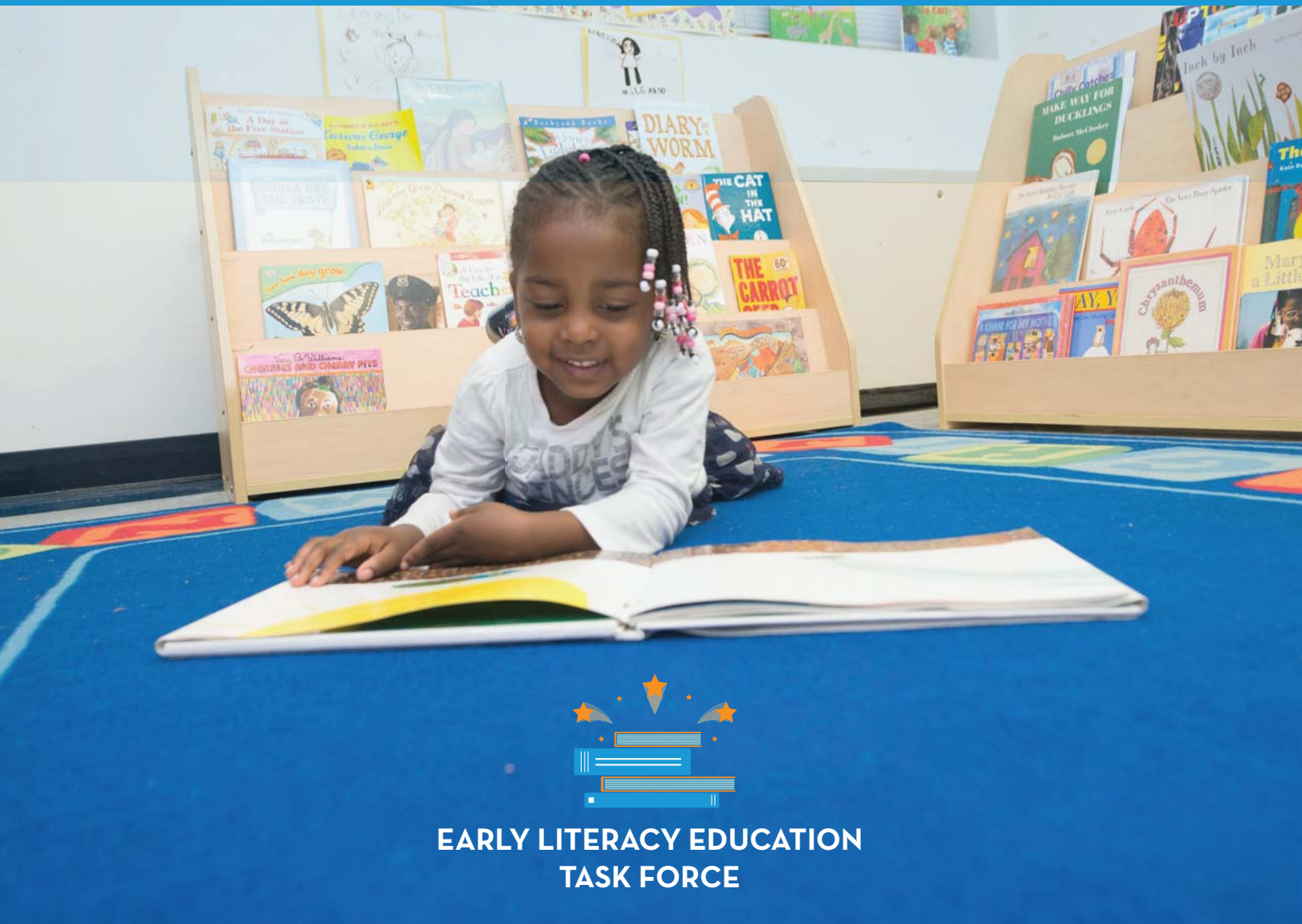




Office of the State Superintendent of Education



EARLY LITERACY EDUCATION
TASK FORCE

Recommendations for Structured Literacy Instruction in the District of Columbia

Prepared by the Early Literacy Education Task Force

SEPTEMBER 2023



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LETTER FROM THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT



Dr. Christina Grant

The Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) was honored to lead the Early Literacy Education Task Force for the District of Columbia. As the state education agency, OSSE is committed to advancing excellence for all students by improving literacy instruction. The work of the Early Literacy Education Task Force is an exemplary representation of what can happen when stakeholders across the District come together to engage on literacy, which matters not only for student learning, but also for student lives.

The “Structured Literacy Action Plan Act of 2022” (DC Official Code § 38-2263) established the Early Literacy Education Task Force (“Task Force”). Beginning in November 2022, members of the Task Force convened on a regular basis to share their expertise and insights, engage in deliberative conversations and work cooperatively to develop specific and actionable recommendations as outlined in the following report. The Task Force was made up of an interagency group of representatives from OSSE, District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), the District of Columbia Public Charter School Board (DC PCSB), the State Board of Education (SBOE), the Office of the Deputy Mayor of Education (DME) and a representative appointed by the Chairman of the DC Council. I am deeply grateful to the members of the Task Force, each of whom committed significant time to this work and who continue to advocate for literacy education across the District. OSSE is proud to have led the work of the Task Force and will continue to lead in this space as these recommendations are considered and implemented.

The Task Force recommendations touch upon several critical levers which need to be pulled to meet the needs of our students and to ensure our educators are fully equipped with the knowledge and skills they need in the classroom. I am pleased that the Task Force’s recommendations attend to both training on the science of reading and on-the-job support for teachers and school-based administrators, which demonstrates the Task Force’s understanding that both learning opportunities and consistent support are necessary for educators in their role as stewards of young minds. The Task Force has brought forth creative, evidence-based solutions to on-the-job supports, including an innovative pilot coaching program and the development of a tool that will enable regular feedback for structured literacy classroom instruction. Furthermore, the Task Force recommends a review of curricular materials to provide local education agencies (LEAs) with information about high-quality curricula that is rooted in the science of reading.

The terrific work of the Task Force, culminating in these thoughtful recommendations, sets the foundation for a system-wide commitment to improving literacy instruction. This will require deep investment and ongoing commitment, which OSSE is proud to lead on behalf of Mayor Muriel Bowser’s administration.

As Frederick Douglass said, “Once you learn to read, you will be forever free.” I could not agree more with this sentiment, as I believe that literacy is essential for the future success of our students. Thank you to each of the members of the Task Force for their participation and ongoing leadership. I look forward to working with stakeholders from across the District to help ensure that our educators are well-prepared and our students are provided with all they need to become life-long readers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christina Grant'.

Dr. Christina Grant
State Superintendent of Education

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Early Literacy Education Task Force (“Task Force”), created by the Council of the District of Columbia through the “Structured Literacy Action Plan Act of 2022” (“Act”) and convened by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (“OSSE”), developed this report outlining recommendations for implementing expanded structured literacy training in the District of Columbia over the next four years. The Task Force, composed of education stakeholders and representatives from relevant government agencies, met every six weeks during the 2022-2023 school year to create recommendations for improving literacy in the District of Columbia.

The Act instructed the Task Force to consider how to best provide structured literacy training to elementary school teachers, administrators, and instructional coaches; track the completion of training; ensure access to expert-reviewed, culturally responsive, high-quality instructional materials; and provide on-the-job support to teachers.

Research demonstrates the importance of structured literacy for teaching literacy skills. Structured literacy incorporates evidence-based practices that explicitly teach foundational skills and improve reading outcomes for all students, particularly those at risk of literacy difficulties such as students with disabilities and English learners. Significant advancements have been made at the national, state, and local levels to prioritize structured literacy and several states have implemented policies and initiatives to enhance literacy outcomes.

In recent years, the District of Columbia has allocated substantial funding towards science-based literacy training programs and developed a [comprehensive literacy plan](#). This report builds on the foundation of the literacy initiatives that are currently underway at OSSE and across DC’s local education agencies (LEAs).

The recommendations outlined in this report result from extensive collaboration and reflect the commitment of the Task Force to improving literacy instruction across the District to ensure that all students have the necessary skills to succeed academically. Through the implementation of the four recommendations from the Task Force, the District will address literacy challenges and provide the foundation for academic success. By adopting these recommendations and investing in structured literacy training and instruction, particularly for our elementary learners, the District can make significant progress in improving literacy outcomes and equipping educators with the necessary tools and strategies to support all learners effectively.

EARLY LITERACY EDUCATION TASK FORCE PRIMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: The Task Force recommends that DC strengthen literacy instruction* by mandating competency in structured literacy instruction for all: Grade K-5 general education teachers**; K-5 reading specialists and interventionists; K-12 special education teachers; and K-5 English learner teachers.

Recommendation 2: The Task Force recommends that DC mandate specialized structured literacy training for school-based administrators who are responsible for evaluating or supporting K-5 teachers and instructional coaches working in public elementary schools across DCPS and DC public charter schools.

Recommendation 3: To provide on-the-job support to educators working in public elementary schools, the Task Force recommends that OSSE develop a walkthrough, structured literacy tool and pilot direct coaching support.

Recommendation 4: The Task Force recommends that OSSE collect and publish the ELA instructional materials LEAs are using in DC’s schools and create and publish a list of high-quality instructional materials rooted in the science of reading.

**This recommendation intends to improve instruction across tier 1, tier 2, and tier 3 instruction. Tier 1, tier 2, and tier 3 instruction refers to the instructional practices and interventions implemented in a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS). Tier 1 refers to general classroom instruction, Tier 2 refers to targeted small group instruction, and Tier 3 refers to intensive, individualized intervention (National Center on Intensive Intervention).*

***LEAs with departmentalized K-5 teachers exclusively teaching subjects other than English, English Language Arts (ELA), humanities, reading or an equivalent subject may request a limited waiver of this requirement for those specific K-5 teachers who are responsible for instruction in subject areas other than literacy.*

INTRODUCTION

The Early Literacy Education Task Force was established through the enactment of the “Structured Literacy Action Plan Act of 2022” (D.C. Official Code § 38-2263). The Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) assembled a collaborative team composed of individuals from diverse fields and areas of expertise who came together to address the charge established in the legislation. OSSE is deeply committed to this work and explicitly named “Improve Literacy Instruction” as an initiative within the *Advance Excellence* priority area of the [2023-2025 OSSE Strategic Plan](#).

This report outlines a set of recommendations which respond to the charges set forth in the Act and proposes strategies for implementation across four years that seek to meet the needs of educators and students across the District.

The Task Force convened seven sessions from November 2022 to August 2023 to develop, review, and revise the recommendations outlined in this report. Each recommendation addresses the Task Force’s charge to develop an actionable four-year literacy plan. The Task Force engaged experts and stakeholders to inform the final recommendations by hosting expert presentations during meetings and through a survey that collected responses from a broad range of community stakeholders.

EARLY LITERACY EDUCATION TASK FORCE

The Act outlined the composition of the Task Force, including representatives from the following District government agencies:

- Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE);
- District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS);
- DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB);
- DC State Board of Education (SBOE); and
- Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME).

With the addition of a Council representative appointed by the Chairman of the Council, the Task Force brought together a diverse range of practitioners, school and District leaders, and government officials. Meeting over seven sessions from November 2022 to August 2023, the Task Force leveraged its members’ collective expertise and perspectives, fostered collaboration, and broke down traditional silos to come to consensus on recommendations to advance literacy instruction in the District. Delving into the complexities surrounding structured literacy training implementation, the Task Force engaged in robust discussions to develop a series of recommendations designed to enable all DC students to become competent, confident, and joyful readers.

In developing recommendations for the structured literacy training plan, the Task Force, in addition to their own experience, sought insights from various external sources. Members tapped into the knowledge of experts in the field, reviewed legislation and experiences from other states that have implemented structured literacy initiatives, and conducted a survey to gather input from local stakeholders and constituents. Through this process, the Task Force has ensured that the recommendations encompassed in this report are well-informed and aligned with the needs of the District. The recommendations reflect a comprehensive and thoughtful approach to implementing structured literacy training in the District over the next four years.

CHARGE OF THE TASK FORCE

The Act states that the Task Force is responsible for presenting a report on literacy education to the Mayor and the Council by September 30, 2023 (D.C. Official Code § 38-2263(b)). This report outlines recommendations for an actionable literacy plan for the next four years. The report addresses the following objectives, as defined in legislation:

- Provide at least 45 hours of structured literacy training over two years to all public elementary school general education teachers, special education teachers, English Language Learners (EL) teachers, and librarians;
- Provide EL teachers serving public elementary school students the option to receive bilingual structured literacy training;
- Provide structured literacy training to public elementary school administrators, instructional coaches, and EPP faculty responsible for evaluating or supporting general education teachers, including the option for specialized training for administrators;
- Establish a monitoring system for identifying and tracking structured literacy training completion;
- Ensure elementary schools have access to culturally responsive, high-quality, standards aligned instructional materials reviewed by an expert review organization; and
- Provide elementary school teachers on-the-job support from an expert in structured literacy training.

STRUCTURED LITERACY

The science of reading is an interdisciplinary body of research about how individuals learn to read, including research from the fields of education, neuroscience, and cognitive and developmental psychology (The Reading League [TRL], 2022). While the research base for learning how to read has become better understood, research regarding effective approaches for reading instruction has also evolved. Research shows that effective reading instruction incorporates five essential components: phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000).

Structured literacy is an approach to literacy instruction rooted in the science of reading that emphasizes highly explicit and systematic teaching for the critical components of literacy, including both foundational skills and high-level literacy skills (Spear-Swerling, 2019). In a structured literacy approach, teachers utilize a comprehensive and explicit framework to provide explicit instruction on skills such as decoding and encoding, while also providing opportunities for students to strengthen their comprehension skills. Structured literacy is an instructional approach that supports all learners but is especially beneficial for individuals at risk of literacy difficulties and those learning English (Ray, 2020). This approach emphasizes fostering literacy skills such as phonemic awareness, letter-sound correspondences, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (Ray, 2020).

STRUCTURED LITERACY POLICY

Structured Literacy has gained momentum nationally, with several states implementing policies and initiatives to improve literacy outcomes. Examples of states that have passed legislation around literacy instruction include Georgia, Virginia, Utah, Tennessee, Colorado, and Rhode Island. In addition to legislating literacy instruction, some states have also specifically legislated retention for students at certain grade levels based on reading performance. For example, Mississippi passed the [Literacy-Based Promotion Act](#) in 2013 to retain students who are not reading on grade level by the end of third grade, along with a variety of additional supports and interventions, including intensive reading instruction and intervention for students exhibiting a substantial deficiency in reading in kindergarten through third grade. Research regarding student retention more broadly is mixed, as research indicates that third grade retention can improve student performance in later years, including evidence that students retained in third grade based on reading test scores were better prepared for high school (West, Schwerdt and Winters, 2017) while some research indicating that retention in middle or high school has little to no impact on academic achievement and causes higher levels of student disengagement (Özek and Mariano, 2023).

In the District, Mayor Bowser, the Council, the State Board of Education (SBOE), and other key stakeholders have demonstrated a shared commitment to advancing literacy outcomes. Through strategic investments and supports, DC governmental agencies have committed both federal and local dollars towards improving literacy instruction by equipping educators with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively teach reading and to support LEAs with implementing evidence-based reading instruction. For example, OSSE secured a five-year, \$16 million federal Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) grant to provide funding directly to LEAs and community-based

organizations (CBOs) to improve literacy instruction, as well as to provide high-quality professional development opportunities for educators across the District. OSSE has also [leveraged more than \\$3 million from Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief \(ESSER\) funds to offer professional development in the science of reading](#). By incorporating evidence-based practices and investing in professional development, the District aims to address literacy challenges and foster a strong foundation for academic success among its students.

As part of the CLSD grant project, OSSE assembled a group of stakeholders to develop the District's [comprehensive literacy plan \(CLP\)](#), which established a vision and guiding principles for improving literacy in DC. The CLP encompasses a range of strategies and resources to support structured literacy instruction across schools. By prioritizing evidence-based and inclusive practices for diverse learners, providing targeted professional development opportunities for educators, building a comprehensive assessment system for literacy, and using a multi-tiered system of support for literacy, the District aims to equip teachers with the necessary skills to teach literacy to their students effectively.

The District has also allocated funding for a pre-K through grade 3 educator workforce to complete literacy trainings. Recently, OSSE provided \$1,200 stipends to educators who enrolled in and successfully completed Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) training. OSSE has also made stipend funding available to the first 1,000 educators who complete the recently introduced *Science of Reading* course on OSSE's Learning Management System (LMS). These stipends are designed to attract educators to this critical coursework and incentivize coursework completion. OSSE's LMS is a resource available to all DC educators that enables them to enroll in a variety of professional learning coursework and track their progress across their tenure as a DC educator. These initiatives reflect the District's commitment to enhancing literacy instruction and providing foundational literacy skills to all District students. Through these investments and the comprehensive literacy plan, the District is taking actionable steps to address literacy challenges and cultivate a strong foundation for academic success.

With support and collaboration from local and national literacy experts, OSSE developed its Educator Preparation Provider (EPP) [science of reading standards](#) during fall 2021 and spring 2022. These standards were incorporated into OSSE's final EPP and Subject Area Program Approval [regulations](#) in June 2022, and OSSE is currently reviewing DC EPPs against these standards. OSSE's regulations require EPPs that are preparing candidates in subject area programs where their primary responsibility is direct literacy instruction (e.g., early childhood education, elementary education, reading, special education and any other subject area program as determined by OSSE) to demonstrate candidate competency in each of the five components of scientifically based reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

OSSE's Division of Teaching and Learning (TAL) provided robust training and technical assistance to support EPPs in meeting the new science of reading requirements during spring 2022. During the 2023-2024 school year, EPPs may request targeted, ongoing technical assistance from OSSE TAL instructional specialists, including instructional specialists that specialize in literacy and reading difficulties.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The Task Force was charged with developing implementable steps to accomplish several key actions related to literacy instruction. Through the meeting and deliberation process, the Task Force determined four primary recommendations, which are summarized within the following section. The Task Force further advised that full implementation of these recommendations will require legislative actions.

Recommendation 1: The Task Force recommends that DC strengthen literacy instruction by mandating competency in structured literacy instruction for all: Grade K-5 general education teachers; K-5 reading specialists and interventionists; K-12 special education teachers; and K-5 English learner teachers.

The Task Force was asked to identify and recommend implementable steps to provide all public elementary school general education teachers, special education teachers, EL teachers and librarians, at least 45 hours of structured literacy training over two years (D.C. Official Code § 38–2263(b)(2)(A)). The legislation defined “structured literacy training” as professional development instruction on:

- (A) Effective and systematic instructional practices in reading, including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension; and
- (B) The use of empirically validated instructional methods that are appropriate for early, emergent, and struggling readers.

In response to this element of the legislation, the Task Force recommends a structured literacy competency mandate for all kindergarten through grade 5 general education teachers, all K-12 special education teachers, all K-5 reading specialists and interventionists, and all K-5 English learner (EL) teachers. LEAs with departmentalized K-5 teachers exclusively teaching subjects other than English, ELA, humanities, reading or an equivalent subject may request a limited waiver of this requirement for those specific K-5 teachers who are responsible for instruction in subject areas other than literacy.

The central objective of this recommendation is to ensure teachers responsible for reading instruction have the requisite knowledge and skills to provide critical instruction grounded in the science of reading across tier 1, tier 2, and tier 3 instruction. Tier 1, tier 2, and tier 3 instruction refers to the instructional practices and interventions implemented in a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS). Tier 1 refers to general classroom instruction, tier 2 refers to targeted small group instruction, and tier 3 refers to intensive, individualized intervention (National Center on Intensive Intervention). By building the capacity of educators, instruction across all three tiers will be improved across the District and help to level the playing field such that all students routinely experience high-quality teaching in reading. The Task Force recommends that these trainings occur within the routine professional duties of educators and be scheduled to be completed within existing professional development days.

Recommendation 1.1: The Task Force recommends that educators mandated to demonstrate competency in structured literacy do so through one of three pathways (proof of prior training, completion of training, or competency assessment) across a four-year implementation period.

Mandating competency in structured literacy is an important step to improve literacy outcomes throughout the District. To ensure all teachers are equipped with the skills required to teach reading effectively, the District should require that educators demonstrate competency in structured literacy in one of three pathways detailed below. By recommending multiple pathways for educators to demonstrate structured literacy competency, the Task Force recognizes and accredits the significant steps many DC educators have already taken to become proficient in structured literacy, while simultaneously reinforcing the importance of ensuring that all K-5 literacy teachers (including general education, special education, and EL teachers) are proficient in structured literacy.

Pathways to structured literacy competency:

- **Pathway 1: Completion of an approved structured literacy training during the appropriate phase of implementation based on grade level and professional role.**
This pathway would likely be the most utilized by DC educators and would require completion of an approved structured literacy training. To qualify as an approved training, it must be included by OSSE on the approved training list following a review process. Teachers across the District would be required to successfully complete their LEA-selected training to demonstrate competency in structured literacy as part of their professional duties and within existing professional development time.
- **Pathway 2: Proof of prior completion of an approved structured literacy training within the last five years.**
This pathway would require educators to submit proof of completion of an approved training (i.e., certificate of completion) to their LEA. The decision to accept training from five years prior was determined by the Task Force to be the appropriate time frame to be considered competent in structured literacy. Additionally, the Task Force recognizes that OSSE has leveraged federal funds to provide structured literacy training to educators, including coursework on OSSE's LMS and Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) training, and it is important to create a pathway to recognize and account for recent completion of coursework for educators who served as "early adopters" and engaged in intensive, high-quality literacy training in advance of an explicit requirement to do so.
- **Pathway 3: Receipt of passing score on structured literacy competency assessment.**
This pathway would first require OSSE to identify or develop an assessment that would provide a measurable way for educators to demonstrate their competency in structured literacy. This assessment would then be utilized in the future to demonstrate ongoing competency by educators on a five-year cadence. Implementation of this pathway will be dependent on the availability of the competency assessment and a standardized process for administering this assessment to ensure teachers are fully demonstrating knowledge in structured literacy.

The mandate for structured literacy competency will be implemented across a four-year period. Each phase describes when individuals in certain professional roles will be required to utilize one of the available pathways to demonstrate their competency in structured literacy. The four-year approach will provide LEAs with time and space to ensure educators are internalizing the content knowledge and implementing what they have learned within the classroom environment. By grouping teachers by grade level and subject area, cohorts can be formed to encourage professional relationships and improve overall school climates while also building capacity. As new teachers are hired across this four-year period, they will either be trained along with their assigned grade and subject area if training has not yet been completed, or they will complete training in their first year of hire. However, LEAs, schools and individual teachers may **opt to complete training earlier** than the year assigned to them in the phased approach. All DC educators working in public schools have access to no-cost, on demand, high-quality training in the science of reading via the [OSSE LMS](#). Educators may opt to complete this training immediately to build their individual capacity.

SUMMARY OF FOUR-YEAR PHASED IMPLEMENTATION OF STRUCTURED LITERACY COMPETENCY REQUIREMENT

YEAR 1	All K-2 general education teachers*, all K-5 reading specialists/interventionists, all K-12 special education teachers and all school administrators with responsibility for evaluating K-5 literacy teachers (general education and special education) and instructional coaches shall be required to satisfy the pathway requirements for structured literacy training
YEAR 2	All grade 3 general education teachers* and K-5 EL teachers working in public elementary schools receive structured literacy training shall be required to satisfy the pathway requirements for structured literacy training
YEAR 3	All grade 4 general education teachers* working in public elementary schools shall be required to satisfy the pathway requirements for structured literacy training
YEAR 4	All grade 5 general education teachers* working in public elementary schools shall be required to satisfy the pathway requirements for structured literacy training

**LEAs with departmentalized K-5 teachers exclusively teaching subjects other than ELA, reading, and humanities may request a limited waiver of this requirement for those specific K-5 teachers who are responsible for instruction in subject areas other than literacy.*

Recommendation 1.2: The Task Force recommends that OSSE research available options and generate a list of approved vendors for structured literacy trainings. The Task Force further recommends that LEAs be required to select a training for their teachers from the approved list.

The Task Force carefully considered the merits of identifying one literacy training program vendor to provide training for all DC educators. However, given the rich diversity of DC LEAs, the Task Force recommends that DC LEAs select an approved literacy training from an OSSE-developed list of approved vendors. To operationalize this recommendation, OSSE would create a publicly available list of approved vendors, and each LEA would be charged with selecting a training from the list that best meets the needs of their educators and students.

The Task Force reached this recommendation due to the wide array of LEA needs across the District. Prescribing only one vendor for structured literacy training could have negative impacts if the training is too time consuming, not relevant, or otherwise not effective to meet a particular LEA’s needs. Therefore, by creating an opportunity for LEAs to choose among approved vendors, structured literacy training will be more effective and resources will be more efficiently utilized. This recommendation will allow for existing, locally-led trainings, such as the [DC Reading Clinic](#) or the Science of Reading course available on OSSE’s LMS, to be reviewed for the approved vendor list.

To implement this recommendation, OSSE would establish a process for structured literacy training review, approval, and publication. The Task Force recommends that OSSE release the list of approved vendors prior to the 2024-2025 school year to provide LEAs time to select and secure an approved structured literacy training.

Recommendation 1.3: The Task Force recommends that OSSE create and publish on its LMS a structured literacy competency assessment and related professional development modules on vocabulary, reading comprehension and writing.

The Task Force recognizes the need for a structured literacy competency assessment and recommends that OSSE identify potential assessments and/or develop such an assessment if a high-quality competency assessment is not available in the current marketplace. Ideally, this assessment would live on OSSE's LMS and therefore be accessible to DC educators well beyond the four-year scope of these recommendations.

The Task Force further identified gaps across available structured literacy training options in their coverage of vocabulary, reading comprehension, and writing. To address these gaps, the Task Force recommends that OSSE generate training modules for these topics and make them publicly available on OSSE's LMS. These modules would be freely available and accessible to all educators in the District, including those in the grade bands and subject areas explicitly included in Recommendation 1 of this report.

Recommendation 1.4: The Task Force recommends that additional structured literacy training options be made available, including bilingual structured literacy training, training for early childhood educators, training for adolescent educators (grades 6 – 12), training for middle and high school administrators, and training for school-based librarians.

In alignment with recommendation 1.2, the Task Force recommends that OSSE research additional specialized training options in structured literacy that will meet the needs of additional groups of teachers, including early childhood educators, adolescent educators, and special education teachers working in tier 2 and tier 3 environments. Furthermore, the Task Force affirms that bilingual structured literacy training options should be provided, as available and relevant to the DC market. Although focusing on foundational literacy in the elementary grade levels is the priority of this report, the Task Force affirms that structured literacy training should be made available on an optional basis for early childhood educators, teachers working with students in grades 6-12, middle and high school administrators and school-based librarians.

Recommendation 1.5: The Task Force recommends that LEAs track educators' completion of required structured literacy training and report completion data to OSSE for compliance purposes.

Tracking the completion of requirements for the structured literacy competency mandate will require coordination between LEAs and OSSE. The Task Force recommends LEAs track structured literacy competency for all teachers working within their schools and report this data to OSSE at least annually. To the extent possible, OSSE will work to align this reporting with existing reporting requirements, including the requirements of [DC Law 23-191](#), the "Addressing Dyslexia and Other Reading Difficulties Amendment Act of 2020," to reduce the burden on LEA staff.

OSSE will explore options to streamline tracking of structured literacy competency, as the Task Force recognizes that teachers change grade levels, subject areas, and school settings, and this may impact their training given the phased roll-out. Examples could include collecting prior completion data for all K-5 teachers in year one rather than on a rolling basis or utilizing OSSE's LMS to give individual teachers a profile that can move with them across grade levels, subjects, schools, and LEAs.

Recommendation 1.6: The Task Force recommends that all teachers required to complete training under Recommendation 1.1 demonstrate ongoing competency in structured literacy every five years.

The Task Force determined that ongoing training is a key component to ensuring lasting improvements in literacy instruction across the District. Therefore, the Task Force recommends an assessment for structured literacy competency be completed by all grade K-5 general education teachers, K-5 reading specialists and interventionists, K-12 special education teachers and K-5 English learner teachers working in DC public schools who are required to complete structured literacy training on a five-year cadence. This assessment will include critical content knowledge and skills necessary for the teacher to deliver effective reading instruction. All teachers will be required to earn a passing score on the assessment to demonstrate ongoing competency. Teachers who do not earn a passing score on the assessment will be required to complete coursework on the LMS to refresh their knowledge of structured literacy.

Recommendation 2: The Task Force recommends that DC mandate specialized structured literacy training for school-based administrators who are responsible for evaluating or supporting K-5 teachers and instructional coaches working in public elementary schools across DCPS and DC public charter schools.

For teachers to be well-supported by school administrators who understand science-based reading instruction and skill development in students, all school-based administrators responsible for the evaluation and support of general and special education K-5 teachers, as well as all instructional coaches with responsibility for supporting educators identified in Recommendation 1, will be required to complete specialized structured literacy training. Training teachers alone without also training administrators could create a serious gap in school climate and negatively impact reading instruction. This requirement will ensure the leaders most directly working with teachers have the appropriate knowledge and skills to improve literacy instruction, and therefore student outcomes, in DC's schools. Because LEAs and schools define leadership roles differently, the Task Force emphasizes the importance of requiring this training for leaders directly evaluating and supporting classroom teachers. The Task Force also recognizes that there are many types of school leaders and recommends that school leaders who are specifically focused on other aspects of school management (i.e., business managers) should not be required to complete structured literacy training.

The Task Force's recommendation that school leaders responsible for working directly with kindergarten through fifth grade teachers to support literacy is designed to be consistent with Recommendations 1.1 and 1.2. For both teachers and school leaders, OSSE will establish pathways to compliance that enable educators to demonstrate compliance by completing high-quality training identified by OSSE; providing proof of successful completion of training within the past five years; or through a passing score on a high-quality structured literacy competency assessment. In addition to the required specialized training for administrators, the Task Force further recommends that all K-5 school-based leaders have the option to complete specialized training in structured literacy, even if they are not directly responsible for the evaluation or support of literacy teachers. Furthermore, the Task Force recommends that all school-based administrators and instructional coaches also be given the option to complete the same structured literacy training as teachers in addition to the specialized administrator training, if interested.

The legislation establishing the Task Force specifies that EPPs receive training in structured literacy. The Task Force recommends that EPPs with program faculty who are instructing future teachers who will have primary responsibility for literacy instruction have the opportunity to engage in training on the [OSSE Science of Reading Standards](#). To date, OSSE has provided training to EPP administrators responsible for demonstrating that their programs meet the OSSE Science of Reading Standards. During the 2023-2024 school year and subsequent school years, OSSE will provide additional training to EPP administrators and interested program faculty in the science of reading. OSSE will further ensure that all faculty teaching DC students through dual enrollment programs have consistent access to high-quality science of reading training.

Recommendation 3: To provide on-the-job support to educators working in public elementary schools, the Task Force recommends that OSSE develop a walkthrough, structured literacy tool and pilot a direct coaching support program.

The Task Force recommends that OSSE provide on-the-job support to educators working in public elementary schools through two means. First, the Task Force recommends that OSSE develop and share a walk-through tool for structured literacy to provide feedback and support to administrators, literacy coaches, and teachers in all public elementary schools (see Recommendation 3.1). Second, since there are schools lacking literacy coaches or who have literacy coaches tasked with additional duties and limited availability for direct literacy coaching support, the Task Force recommends that OSSE develop a pilot program for direct coaching support (see Recommendation 3.2). The Task Force notes that, for fidelity to implementation of structured literacy practices, these on-the-job support strategies will be necessary to create changes in practice and instruction.

The Task Force does not recommend review of reading specialist credentials or additional specialist credentials at this time. However, OSSE will continue to review the requirements for earning an OSSE reading specialist credential consistent with its regular review of all educator credential requirements and explore additional credential categories to ensure that meaningful guardrails are in place to reflect the range of literacy positions in DC.

Recommendation 3.1: The Task Force recommends that OSSE develop a walkthrough observation tool for structured literacy instruction to provide feedback as part of a cycle of continuous improvement for structured literacy instruction.

The Task Force recommends that OSSE develop a rubric or walkthrough tool to support the implementation of structured literacy in elementary classrooms. The walkthrough tool is not intended and will not be used for formal teacher evaluations; instead, it will be a tool designed to help ensure alignment and equity of structured literacy instruction across the District. The rubric or walkthrough observation tool will support sustainable, high-quality implementation of literacy instruction and improve student achievement in literacy. Furthermore, the tool will help enable collaborative learning, reflection, and dialogue among instructional leaders, coaches, and teachers. The development of the tool will consider external stakeholders who will be impacted by implementation of the tool. As part of the development, the rubric or walkthrough observation tool will be assessed by a third-party expert in structured literacy. Research demonstrates that walkthrough observation tools positively impact teacher time on task, understanding of curriculum gaps and instructional inconsistencies, improve student work products and outcomes, and help develop common language around instruction (Protheroe, 2009). Other states have deployed similar tools, such as the [New Mexico Structured Literacy Administrator Walkthrough Tool](#), which OSSE can build upon. To ensure the tool is used with fidelity and common purpose, instructional leaders and coaches will participate in intensive training and norming for alignment to research-based practices in structured literacy.

Recommendation 3.2: The Task Force recommends that OSSE develop a pilot program for literacy coaches to provide direct support to classroom teachers.

The Task Force recommends OSSE hire literacy coaches to provide direct support to LEAs and schools on a pilot basis. The coaches will be OSSE employees who receive science of reading training and will be deployed through regional clusters to strategically support literacy in the lowest performing schools across the District. Schools will be selected based off statewide assessment data and other relevant factors demonstrating need. Regional clusters will be created to effectively deploy and support literacy coaches in the implementation of structured literacy. Literacy coaches will manage a caseload of no more than five schools to allow for intensive literacy coaching at schools across the District. The purpose of this coaching will be to provide individualized feedback to teachers to support their use of new structured literacy instructional skills (Helf and Cooke, 2011; Kretlow and Bartholomew, 2010).

In year one, the Task Force recommends that OSSE pilot coaching support through regional clusters with a cohort of up to 50 schools and evaluate the impact of targeted literacy coaching. The Task Force recommends year one begin in the 2024-2025 school year with a robust structure of coaching, data analysis, feedback loops and evaluation of the coaching pilot. Upon completion of year one, the Task Force recommends evaluating the literacy coaching pilot using student performance data and other data metrics (e.g., pre- and post-tests of educator knowledge and skills, classroom observations) to determine the pilot's effectiveness and capacity to expand. Data and LEA input will determine next steps and what supports are needed to expand (or reduce or eliminate) the literacy coaching program across LEAs. In order to effectively implement the literacy coaching pilot, OSSE will need to recruit, onboard, and train literacy coaches in advance of fiscal year 2025. This will require OSSE to expedite hiring to ensure that the agency can competitively recruit and employ talented and skilled literacy coaches on timelines that will enable them to support schools, educators, and students in the 2024-2025 school year.

Recommendation 4: The Task Force recommends that OSSE collect and publish the ELA instructional materials LEAs are using in DC's schools and create and publish a list of high-quality instructional materials rooted in the science of reading.

The Task Force recommends OSSE collect and publish LEAs' adopted ELA/literacy curriculum materials. The collection will focus on instructional materials being implemented and not student data. The Task Force further recommends that OSSE create and publish a list of high-quality instructional materials and resources rooted in the science of reading and aligned to DC's state standards. Information gathered from LEAs and the list of high-quality instructional materials will provide transparency for District families to understand whether high-quality curricular materials are being used at their children's schools.

Research studies show that selecting a high-quality curriculum can have a bigger impact than a number of other interventions, including decreasing class sizes and offering merit pay to teachers (Boser, Chingos and Straus, 2015; Koedel and Polikoff, 2017; Whitehurst, 2009). The Task Force recommends a phased approach over the course of two to three years to support the implementation and reporting of high-quality literacy instructional materials.

Recommendation 4.1: The Task Force recommends that OSSE collect and publish the name of the ELA/literacy curricula schools are using from all DC LEAs.

The Task Force recommends OSSE collect information regarding ELA curriculum from all LEAs and publish the information for transparency. Annually, beginning October 31 of each year, OSSE will publish LEA-selected ELA curriculum on OSSE’s website. The Task Force recommends a phased approach over the course of two to three years to support the implementation and reporting of high-quality literacy instructional materials.

- In year one, the Task Force recommends that OSSE require LEAs to submit information on the literacy curricula each school is using in grades K-5. Additionally, in year one, the Task Force recommends that OSSE work with LEAs to comprehensively evaluate curricula offerings and adopt high-quality structured literacy instructional materials.
- In year two, the Task Force recommends that OSSE require LEAs to identify and submit what literacy curricula their schools are utilizing and that OSSE publish all submitted literacy curricula on OSSE’s website. This recommendation is in alignment to [DC Law 23-191](#), the “Addressing Dyslexia and Other Reading Difficulties Amendment Act of 2020,” each LEA must adopt a science-based reading program by the 2024-2025 school year.
- In year three, and annually thereafter, the Task Force recommends that OSSE update the list of literacy curricular materials to reflect any changes reported by LEAs.

The Task Force recommends that OSSE implement this recommendation to increase transparency for families, educators, and community members and ultimately improve student access to high-quality literacy curricula.

Recommendation 4.2: The Task Force recommends that OSSE create and maintain a list of high-quality instructional materials to be used for structured literacy instruction.

The Task Force recommends OSSE generate a list of high-quality instructional materials for literacy instruction. As new materials are developed on a regular basis, the task force further recommends that OSSE maintain this list by regularly reviewing and updating it based on current evidence.

- In year one, the Task Force recommends that OSSE work with a credible vendor partner with expertise in structured literacy to provide guidance in the development of a recommended list of high-quality literacy curricula. OSSE would make the process and rubric for the selection of curricula aligned to structured literacy available for public review.
- In year two, the Task Force recommends that OSSE publish all literacy curricula data on its website, denoting curricula aligned to evidence-based structured literacy instruction and those that are not.
- In year three, and annually thereafter, the Task Force recommends that OSSE update the recommended list of high-quality instructional materials aligned to structured literacy.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Beyond the above four recommendations, OSSE further intends to ensure that high-quality literacy training is available to adult educators so that DC educators are equipped to meet the literacy needs of all students, including adult students.

Additionally, with recognition that parents and families are their students’ first teachers, OSSE intends to ensure that families and communities are engaged in supporting their students in developing and maintaining strong literacy skills. To that end, OSSE will provide LEAs with a communications toolkit that will support them in communicating with families about their students’ early reading skills. Additionally, OSSE remains committed to engaging the broader DC community with opportunities to connect and strengthen literacy across the District (e.g., literacy convenings).

CONCLUSION

The DC Literacy Education Task Force was an interagency body charged with developing recommendations for the implementation of structured literacy training for teachers and leaders, providing on-the-job structured literacy support for educators and ensuring that high-quality structured literacy instructional materials are in use in classrooms across the District. Through deliberative meeting sessions, the Task Force developed a set of recommendations to meet the charges of the legislation. These recommendations provide a strong foundation for improving and strengthening literacy outcomes in the District.

The recommendations outlined in this report will require collaboration among many DC stakeholders, including educational leaders, teachers, and legislators, to be effectively implemented. During the formulation of the FY25 budget, we recommend additional funding be considered to provide access to increased structured literacy training opportunities, establish the structured literacy coaching pilot program, and contract for the review of high-quality instructional materials. In addition, OSSE will require additional resources to conduct data collection and analysis to ensure implementation effectively meets the needs of District students and provides a professional environment in which teachers and administrators feel empowered and confident in their ability to deliver outstanding literacy instruction. Further, OSSE will need to expedite hiring in fiscal year 2024 to successfully staff the structured literacy coaching pilot program.

Mary McLeod Bethune once said, “The whole world opened to me when I learned to read.” The DC Literacy Education Task Force recommendations outlined in this report will help ensure that the world opens to DC learners as they become competent, confident, and joyful readers.

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APPENDIX A: OVERVIEW OF PHASED IMPLEMENTATION

<p>PHASE 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All K-2 general education teachers*, all K-5 reading specialists/interventionists and all K-12 special education teachers shall be required to satisfy the pathway requirements for structured literacy training • School-based administrators with primary responsibility for evaluating K-5 literacy teachers (general education and special education) and instructional coaches shall be required to satisfy the pathway requirements for structured literacy training • OSSE provides additional structured literacy training options, as available, including bilingual structured literacy training, training for early childhood educators, training for adolescent educators (grades 6 – 12), training for middle and high school administrators, training for instructional coaches, and training for school-based librarians • OSSE collects literacy curriculum information from LEAs • OSSE creates a list of high-quality instructional materials for structured literacy instruction • Literacy coaching pilot program is launched • Walkthrough tool for structured literacy instruction is developed • LEAs provide annual reporting to OSSE on training completion compliance
<p>PHASE 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All grade 3 general education teachers* and all K-5 EL teachers working in public elementary schools shall be required to satisfy the pathway requirements for structured literacy training • OSSE publicly posts all curriculum information from LEAs on a publicly available webpage • Literacy coaching pilot program continues as an evaluation of effectiveness is completed, and training is provided on the new citywide walkthrough tool • LEAs provide annual reporting to OSSE on training completion compliance and updated curricular materials
<p>PHASE 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All grade 4 general education teachers* working in public elementary schools shall be required to satisfy the pathway requirements for structured literacy training • LEAs provide annual reporting to OSSE on training completion compliance and updated curricular materials • Annual updates are made to curricular materials lists • Literacy coaching program continues as informed by the evaluation of effectiveness and LEA feedback, and the walkthrough tool continues to be available • OSSE maintains additional literacy trainings on LMS
<p>PHASE 4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All grade 5 general education teachers* working in public elementary schools shall be required to satisfy the pathway requirements for structured literacy training • Structured literacy competency assessment is completed and available on the OSSE LMS in preparation of demonstrated competency on a 5-year cadence • LEAs provide annual reporting to OSSE on training completion compliance and updated curricular materials • Annual updates are made to curricular materials lists • Literacy coaching program continues as informed by the data evaluation and LEA feedback, and the walkthrough tool continues to be available • OSSE maintains additional literacy trainings on LMS

**LEAs with departmentalized K-5 teachers exclusively teaching subjects other than English, English Language Arts (ELA), humanities, reading or an equivalent subject may request a limited waiver of this requirement for those specific K-5 teachers who are responsible for instruction in subject areas other than literacy.*

APPENDIX B: EARLY LITERACY EDUCATION TASK FORCE MEMBERS

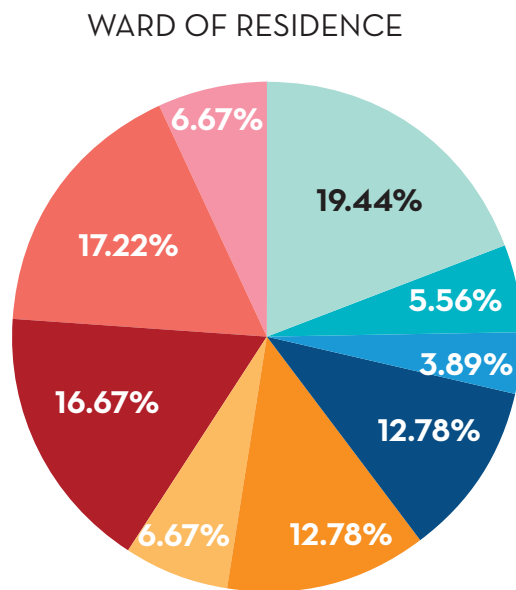
<p>Clara Botstein</p> <p>Director of Legislation and Governmental Affairs Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education</p>	<p>Allister Chang</p> <p>Ward 2 Representative DC State Board of Education</p>
<p>Megan Dumond</p> <p>Special Assistant for Teaching and Learning Office of the State Superintendent of Education</p>	<p>Shareen Fernanders</p> <p>Director of Literacy District of Columbia Public Schools</p>
<p>Dominique Foster</p> <p>Literacy Teacher Friendship Public Charter School – Blow Pierce</p>	<p>Andrew Gall</p> <p>Deputy Chief of Staff, Legislative Affairs and Policy Office of the State Superintendent of Education</p>
<p>Rikki Hunt Taylor</p> <p>Chief Academic Officer E.L. Haynes Public Charter School (DC Council Representative)</p>	<p>Kierra Jenkins</p> <p>Intergovernmental Relations Coordinator DC Public Charter School Board</p>
<p>Sherri Jones</p> <p>Media Specialist District of Columbia Public Schools – Houston</p>	<p>Celina Ketelsen</p> <p>Director, Academic Excellence and Training Office of the State Superintendent of Education</p>
<p>Mary Pendleton</p> <p>Director of Humanities & Literacy DC Prep Public Charter School</p>	<p>Elizabeth Ross</p> <p>Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning Office of the State Superintendent of Education</p>
<p>LaMarge Wyatt</p> <p>Chief Academic Officer Richard Wright Public Charter School</p>	

APPENDIX C: EARLY LITERACY EDUCATION TASK FORCE STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

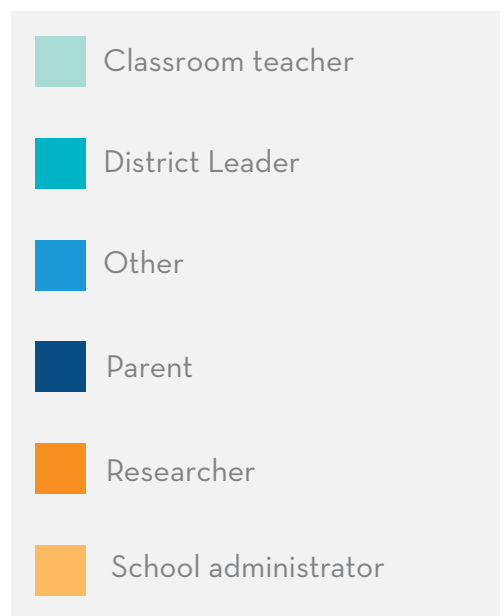
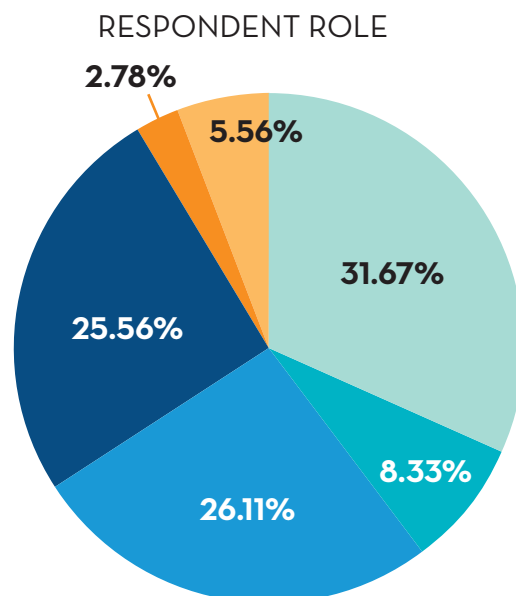
OSSE collected information from community stakeholders on literacy education, training, and instruction in the District by deploying a DC Literacy survey. This survey aimed to gather valuable insights from various community stakeholders, including educators, school administrators, instructional coaches, librarians, family members, and other individuals invested in the community. The data obtained from the survey served to inform the Early Literacy Education Task Force in developing the enclosed recommendations.

The survey was accessible through OSSE’s website from April 11, 2023 through May 5, 2023. The survey was administered confidentially to encourage individuals to express their views candidly and truthfully. By employing the DC Literacy survey, the Task Force aimed to better understand stakeholders and residents’ unique viewpoints, concerns, and aspirations regarding literacy instruction and training within the District. A total of 148 respondents completed the DC Literacy survey.

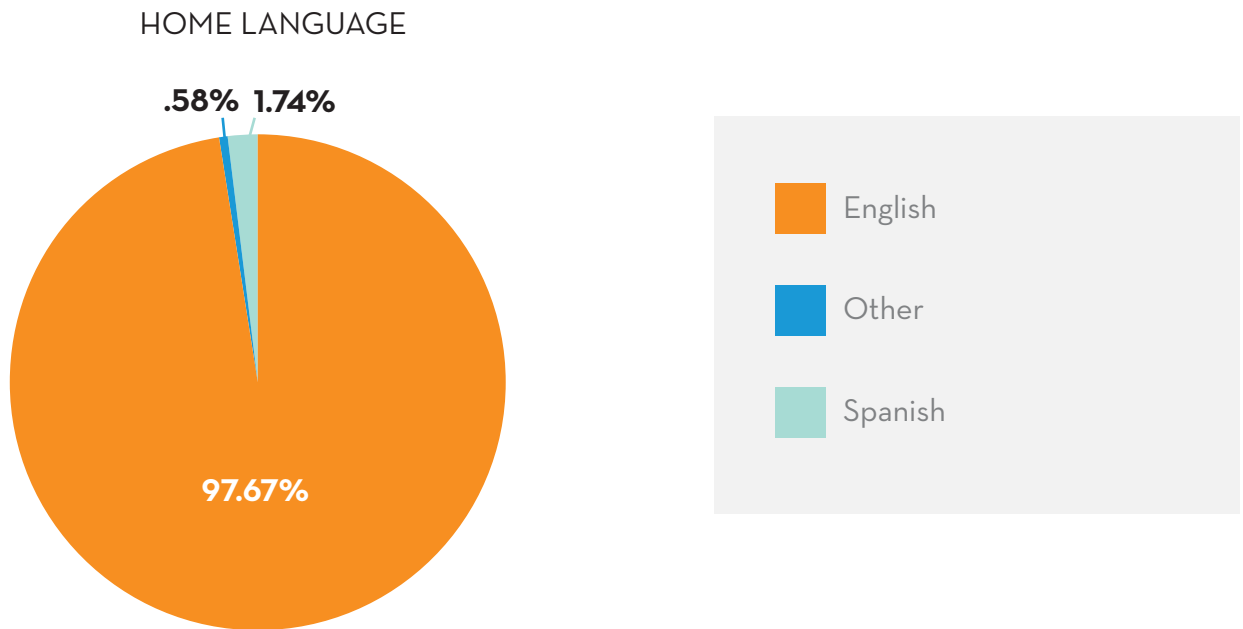
1. All Respondents: In what ward do you live?



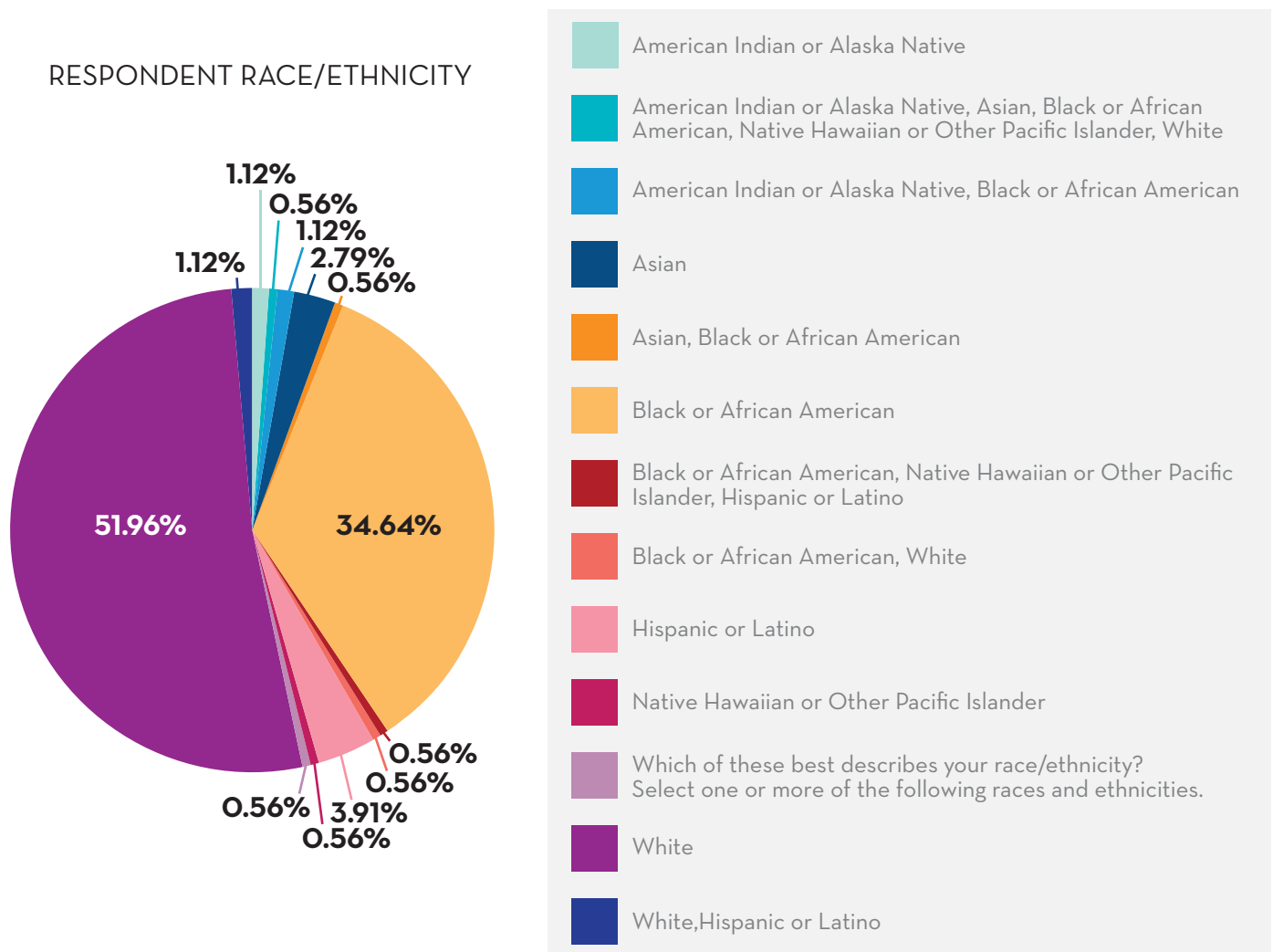
2. All Respondents: What is your primary role (drop-down)?



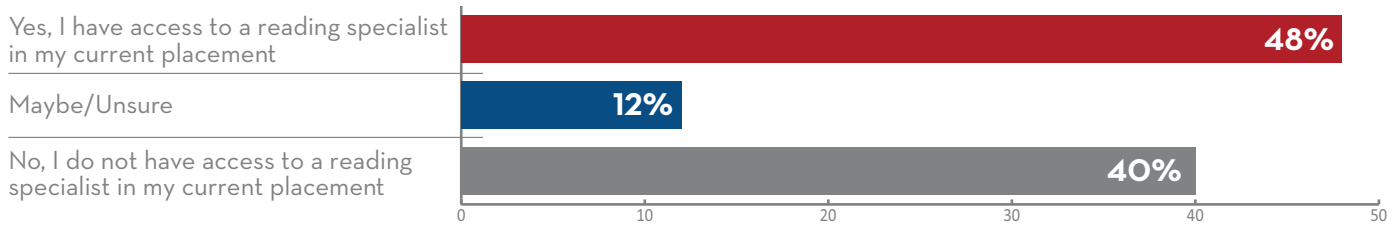
3. All Respondents: What is the primary language spoken at home?



4. All Respondents: What is your race/ethnicity?



5. Educators/Administrators: Does your school have access to a Reading Specialist?



6. Educators/Administrators: What are some of the literacy-related challenges your students face? (open-ended)

Sample Responses:

- Student absenteeism
- Limited teacher training
- Lack of foundational literacy skills in students
- Lack of early screening and diagnosis

7. Educators/Administrators: What actions would you like to see the District take to strengthen literacy instruction? (open-ended)

Sample of Responses:

- More courses available for teachers to understand and better implement structured literacy
- Use of multi-sensory program that follows the science of reading that will help students orthographically map out words
- Access to decodable readers that follow the scope and sequence
- Intervention by an expert trained in Structured Literacy
- Access to some research-based programs
- Texts that are translated into native languages for ELs
- More emphasis on phonics in elementary school and more reading intervention for teachers in higher grades
- Funds available for more teachers to take courses such as LETRS and funds available for the purchase and support of structured language and literacy programs across the District
- Research-based writing curriculum
- Increased access to the DC Reading Clinic

8. Parents/Caregivers: What, if any, actions can your school(s) take to improve reading and writing instruction?

Sample of Responses:

- More targeted summer interventions for struggling readers
- Training for teachers in the science of reading
- Use of phonics in explicitly teaching reading in elementary school
- More time devoted to writing
- Share more about how parents can support early literacy skills

9. Educator-Facing Question: What would help you better support your students' literacy development?

Sample of Responses:

- Decodables in the classroom.
- Parent education around literacy
- Ongoing coaching and mentoring in the classroom
- Research-based instructional materials that support literacy in each age group
- Access to support within the school
- Strategies for multi-lingual learners
- More learning about dyslexia and literacy for students with special needs

10. Parent-Facing Question: As a parent/caregiver, what can your school do to help you better reinforce your child's learning at home?

Sample of Responses:

- A reading partner for my child outside of school time - one who could build a relationship
- Phonics tools and strategies to use at home
- Guides and activities to strengthen literacy at home through multiple ways
- Transparency about the individual needs of the student
- Communication between parents and teachers about the expectations for a child at each grade level
- Recommendations on age-appropriate books



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