



Comprehensive Early Literacy Policy

Fundamental Principle: Literacy Coaching

Frequently Asked Questions | 2024

What is a literacy coach?

A literacy coach is an instructional leader with specialized knowledge in the science of reading, evidence-based practices, English Language Arts state standards, curriculum and other instructional materials, as well as the knowledge of how to work with educators as adult learners.

How do literacy coaches support comprehensive early literacy policy implementation?

Literacy coaches provide on-site, job-embedded professional development to elementary teachers in reading instruction, ultimately supporting reading achievement state-wide.

What supports do literacy coaches provide at the school level?

Literacy coaches are trained in the science of reading and are assigned to elementary schools to provide embedded professional development and coaching to elementary teachers. Coaches provide on-site teacher training in the science of reading and data-based decision making. They also demonstrate lessons, co-teach, observe teaching, and provide immediate feedback for improving instruction.

What qualifications should literacy coaches have?

Literacy coaches should have teaching experience with proven success teaching children to read and have a deep knowledge of instructional practices aligned to the science of reading. Coaches should also be aware of best practices in adult learning. In some states, literacy coach positions may require a licensure endorsement or certification in reading.

What type of training should literacy coaches receive?

Literacy coaches should receive on-going professional development on the most up to date research and instructional practices rooted in the science of reading and should be trained in effective coaching/adult learning practices. Training should occur at least monthly.

If implementing a state-led literacy coaching model, what are best practices for deploying literacy coaches to schools?

There are 18 states that have adopted a retention strategy within their larger literacy policy: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee and West Virginia. Research on retention strategies implemented in Arizona, Florida, Indiana, and Mississippi have demonstrated positive impacts in literacy outcomes.

Which states have a literacy coaching policy?

There are 26 states that have adopted literacy coaching as part of their early literacy efforts: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Utah, Virginia, and Wisconsin.



Spotlight on Alabama

The [Alabama Reading Initiative \(ARI\)](#) has local and regional literacy specialists who support elementary schools to improve reading instruction. The ARI initiative structure is tiered; regional literacy specialists provide intensive support to schools that are among the lowest performing in the state (bottom 5%) and provide two levels of limited support to remaining schools. All elementary schools have a local reading specialist who provides intensive, targeted professional development for teachers at one school, and are supported by the regional literacy specialist. Additionally, regional literacy leadership specialists are provided to support school administrators.



Spotlight on Florida

[Florida](#) has 18 state regional literacy directors that support the professional development of literacy coaches, who are dispersed locally at all elementary schools. [Literacy coaches in Florida](#) must be endorsed or certified in reading. The Florida Department of Education has a Literacy Coach Certification Program (established under the CARES ACT). Coaches are also trained in Florida's Benchmarks for Excellent Student Thinking (B.E.S.T.) English Language Arts Standards. Any additional training for school-based coaches is determined locally by the district.



Spotlight on Mississippi

Coaching staff in Mississippi is comprised of literacy coaches, regional literacy coordinators, and assistant state literacy coordinators. Coaching support is provided each year to identified literacy support schools throughout the state, who receive varying levels of support based on data and sustainable achievement over time. Literacy support schools work with coaches to implement [non-negotiables](#), which are based upon instructional best practices aligned to the science of reading. Mississippi coaches provide regional professional development available to all Mississippi educators. Coaches also receive [professional development](#) through monthly regional meetings and monthly statewide coaching meetings. Read more about Mississippi's coaching approach [here](#).

Learn More

[Early Literacy Matters, ExcelinEd's Early Literacy Policy Playbook, Coaching: Progress is a Process Training Resource, & Definition of a Literacy Coach.](#)

For more information, check out [ExcelinEd's Comprehensive Early Literacy Policy](#).

Contact

Casey Sullivan Taylor, Ed.S.

Policy Director, Early Literacy
casey@excelined.org

