



# Edgecombe County Public Schools School-Based Literacy Coaching Program Phase I Evaluation Report

*February 2025*

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### Suggested Citation

Friday Institute for Educational Innovation (2025). *Edgecombe County Public Schools School-Based Literacy Coaching Program Phase I Evaluation Report*. North Carolina State University. <http://www.fi.ncsu.edu/>

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## Executive Summary

The Edgecombe County Public Schools (ECPS) School-Based Literacy Coaching Program (the Program) is a key component of the district's broader literacy initiative, Building Science of Reading Capacity in Edgecombe County. This initiative aims to ensure all ECPS students achieve reading proficiency by the third grade, with a particular focus on addressing achievement gaps among historically underserved populations.

An effort to extend and amplify North Carolina's statewide investment in the Science of Reading, the Program is designed to enhance teacher professional development and improve early reading instruction via a highly qualified literacy coach embedded in participating district elementary schools. The program features a comprehensive approach, incorporating professional development, evidence-based literacy curricula and family engagement, all underpinned by ongoing data analysis to drive instructional decision-making toward improved K-5 student literacy achievement outcomes.

Given the Program's early implementation, this Phase I evaluation report from the Friday Institute for Educational Innovation (FI) focuses on assessing the Program's implementation and identifying and describing key contextual factors, resources and the programmatic theory of change, providing insights to guide the Program's continued efficacy, sustainability and growth

## Findings

The findings summarized below are organized by evaluation question (EQ) and highlight the contextual factors, including pre-existing conditions and interventions; program resources; and the programmatic theory of change, including program goals, objectives and resource allocation that are shaping the Program. These findings emerged from qualitative data sources, including a logic modeling survey and facilitative sessions, transcripts from interviews and focus groups, and program documentation. ECPS district and school personnel as well as parents and caregivers of students at participating elementary schools shared their insights via these data sources.

**EQ1.** What are the *contextual factors* influencing the implementation of the Program?

**Literacy champions across the district and broader Edgecombe County community have a shared desire for improving literacy outcomes for ECPS students.**

The Program capitalizes on state-wide momentum for evidence-based literacy learning in service of strengthening Tier 1 instruction to raise student reading proficiency scores in participating district elementary schools. District and school leaders, literacy coaches, teachers, parents and caregivers, funders and education and workforce development partners have expressed their support for the district's broader literacy learning initiative.

**Ongoing support is needed for teachers to deliver high-quality early literacy instruction.**

The Program provides crucial ongoing support to teachers by addressing varying levels of teacher expertise and responding to persistent student literacy challenges. Literacy coaches tailor their support with teachers, focusing on data-driven instruction, continuous professional growth and evidence-based literacy instructional practices. Teachers, literacy coaches and school administrators reported that literacy coach support helps teachers improve their literacy instructional practices and better address the evolving needs of students.

**EQ1a.** What *pre-existing conditions and interventions* may affect the program's success?

**The success of the Program may be affected by interrelated district programs, evolving literacy curriculum programs, staffing challenges and funding sustainability.**

The Program operates synergistically with other district initiatives, such as Advanced Teaching Roles, literacy tutoring and early learning (PreK). Additionally, ECPS school-level personnel have closely linked the Program's identity to the rollout of the 95 Phonics Core Program<sup>®</sup>. Challenges like high teacher turnover and funding constraints may also impact the Program's success. While ECPS personnel shared concerns over long-term financial support, they also expressed optimism that demonstrating the Program's effectiveness will help secure future funding.

**EQ2.** What *resources* (financial, human, technological) are available to support the Program?

**The Program is supported by a variety of financial, human and technological/material resources.**

The Program is supported by multiple funding sources, including federal, state and private funds, which support staffing, materials and training. Human resources, particularly the school-based literacy coaches themselves, play a central role in providing instructional support and strengthening teachers' understanding and implementation of evidence-based literacy practices. In

terms of technology and materials, the program leverages physical and digital resources available through the 95 Phonics Core Program® to enhance both teacher training and student learning.

**EQ3.** What is the Program's *theory of change*?

**ECPS developed a "living" logic model to guide the theory of change for the Program (See Appendix C).** The logic model was created through collaboration with district leadership, school personnel and the FI evaluation team, using interviews, surveys and direct questioning to identify the necessary resources, activities and outcomes for successful program implementation. This model is designed to help ECPS refine and sustain their literacy coaching programmatic efforts over time.

**EQ3a.** What are the *goals and objectives* of the program, and to what extent are they clearly articulated and achievable?

**The goals and objectives of the Program are focused on improving teacher literacy instruction, enhancing student engagement and foundational literacy skills, fostering a collaborative school and district culture, demonstrating instructional leadership via school-based literacy coaches and increasing parent and community engagement.** These goals are designed to strengthen teachers' understanding of literacy practices, boost student proficiency in reading, create a culture of literacy learning within the district and improve communication with families. District leaders noted that teacher retention may be indirectly impacted by the Program, but it is not an explicit goal due to the many factors that influence teacher attrition.

**The goals and objectives of the Program are generally well articulated at the district level but are less consistently communicated and understood at the school level.** While district leaders have clearly defined and attainable goals for literacy instruction and community engagement vis-à-vis the Program, school-level personnel often focus more narrowly on specific literacy skills, such as phonics, or the implementation of a specific literacy curricular program. Despite this disconnect, many school staff feel confident that the goals for improving student literacy via the Program are achievable, provided there is enough time for implementation.

**EQ3b.** How sufficient are the *resources allocated* to the program, including funding, personnel and materials?

**The resources allocated to the Program are generally sufficient with strong support from school-based literacy coaches.** Teachers and school administrators highlighted that having a dedicated literacy coach and access to data-driven insights were key assets for supporting student and teacher growth in literacy learning and instruction, respectively. However, some teachers noted gaps in certain physical and digital resources, like the accessibility of online platforms and materials, and stressed the importance of sufficient time to effectively implement specific literacy curricular programs.

## Recommendations

The findings from the Phase I evaluation of ECPS's School-Based Literacy Coaching Program focus primarily on program implementation. Based on the aforementioned findings, recommendations include clarifying the literacy coach's role, developing a family and community engagement plan, creating a plan for securing sustainable funding and conducting future evaluations to assess the program's impact on student literacy and teacher efficacy. The following recommendations are interconnected and aim to address both current challenges and future evaluation needs:

### Clarify the role and responsibilities of the literacy coach

Reframe the literacy coach's role to focus on supporting teachers' professional learning in high-quality, evidence-based literacy practices, beyond just implementing the 95 Phonics Core Program<sup>®</sup>. Ensure clear communication with all stakeholders, including teachers, students and parents, and define a specific grade-level focus for literacy coaches (e.g., K-2 or K-5).

### Establish goals and develop an action plan for family and community engagement

Develop annual goals and action plans focused on increasing family and community engagement in literacy. This may include sharing resources like newsletters, apps and community events, such as Literacy Nights. Set measurable outcomes to help evaluate and strengthen home-school connections for literacy learning.

### Create a prospectus for securing and maintaining program funding

Co-create, with district and school leaders, a prospectus for securing funding to scale and sustain the Program across ECPS elementary schools. This serves as an actionable step toward ensuring the Program's sustainability in alignment with the district's goal of improving third-grade reading proficiency.

### Engage in ongoing evaluation to assess program impact

Conduct future evaluations to assess the Program's impact on student literacy outcomes and teacher instructional efficacy. Future evaluations should gather comprehensive data, including student achievement scores, teacher and coach observational data, and parent and community engagement surveys, and consider examining the broader district literacy learning initiative to analyze the Program's effectiveness in relation to other literacy learning programs in the district.

# Introduction

Edgecombe County Public Schools’ (ECPS) School-Based Literacy Coaching Program (the Program) is part of the district’s literacy learning initiative, Building Science of Reading Capacity in Edgecombe County. The initiative is focused on ensuring all ECPS students achieve reading proficiency by the third grade. This district-level initiative seeks to build on the State of North Carolina’s 2021-2024 investment in teacher professional learning in the Science of Reading (SoR) aimed at closing the gap among research, policy and practice to deliver high-quality early reading instruction.

In the 2023-24 school year, 32.7% of ECPS students in grades 3-5 tested as grade-level proficient (GLP) in reading (NCDPI, 2024). Building Science of Reading Capacity in Edgecombe County focuses on evidence-based literacy coaching, curriculum and professional development to close the achievement gap, particularly for historically underserved populations in ECPS.

## School-Based Literacy Coaching Program

As part of Building Science of Reading Capacity in Edgecombe County, the Program was piloted in Coker-Wimberly Elementary School during the 2023-24 school year; the program has grown during the 2024-25 school year to include G.W. Bulluck and G.W. Carver Elementary Schools. District leadership aims to expand the program to the additional six elementary schools in ECPS by the 2026-27 school year (see Table 1).

**Table 1: ECPS School-Based Literacy Coaching Program Proposed Expansion**

2023-2024 <b>1 coach</b> 1 school 2 schools planning	2024-2025 <b>6 coaches</b> 3 schools 3 schools planning	2025-2026 <b>9 coaches</b> 6 schools 3 schools planning	2026-2027 <b>9 coaches</b> 9 schools
Coker-Wimberly	Add Carver and Bulluck	Add Stocks, Princeville, Martin Millennium Academy	Add Baskerville, Johnson, Fairview

## Initiative Key Features

The following key features have guided district and school leaders in the design and scaling of Building Science of Reading Capacity in Edgecombe County. The key features of the broader initiative shape, and are shaped by, the Program. Conversations with

ECPS district and school leaders, literacy coaches, teachers, and parents and caregivers, as well as program documentation, informed the descriptions of these key features.

- › **Professional Development:** Ongoing evidence-based training for educators to enhance instructional knowledge and pedagogical practices in effective literacy instruction with a particular focus on understanding and implementing the 95 Phonics Core Program® from 95 Percent Group™.
- › **Curriculum Alignment and Implementation:** Providing consistent access across elementary schools in the district to the 95 Phonics Core Program® for Tier 1 (i.e., whole classroom) literacy instruction and ensuring that all aspects of the literacy instructional program, from learning objectives to instructional strategies and assessments, are carefully coordinated and delivered with integrity and fidelity by teachers and instructional support staff.
- › **Student Engagement:** Active participation in and demonstration of literacy learning by students through instructional delivery by teachers and instructional support staff that is data-driven, explicit, systematic and cumulative.
- › **Family and Community Engagement:** Active participation of parents, caregivers, guardians and other family members in regular, two-way and meaningful communication involving student literacy to ensure that parents and family members play an integral role in assisting their child's learning and being actively involved in their child's literacy education at school.
- › **Data and Continuous Improvement:** Iterative feedback cycle that includes (1) regular collection and analysis of student literacy data from state and local assessments administered in ECPS toward identification of trends and areas for growth in students' literacy learning and (2) using analyses of assessment data to guide teacher instructional decision-making to ensure all students' literacy skills are optimally growing.
- › **Literacy Coach:** Experienced educational professional who works directly with teachers, providing expert guidance and support through professional development, instructional modeling and student data analysis to improve teachers' literacy instruction, focusing on the implementation of evidence-based strategies through the 95 Phonics Core Program® toward ensuring all students' literacy skills are optimally growing.

## Literacy Coach Responsibilities

The following literacy coach responsibilities are essential to understanding the role of the literacy coach within the Program, the broader district literacy-learning initiative and, thus, this evaluation report. Definitions of these responsibilities are derived from program documentation and conversations with ECPS partners, as mentioned above.

- › **Expert Guidance:** The literacy coach brings a wealth of knowledge in literacy instruction, including phonics, which is invaluable for teachers.
- › **Professional Development:** The literacy coach plans and provides ongoing professional development for teachers, helping them deepen their understanding of phonics instruction and refine their teaching practices.
- › **Modeling Effective Strategies:** Through observation and modeling, the literacy coach demonstrates effective literacy teaching strategies, helping teachers improve their instructional techniques.
- › **Data Analysis:** The literacy coach assists teachers in analyzing student data to identify trends and areas for growth, guiding instructional decisions and interventions.
- › **Support and Encouragement:** Implementing a new program can be challenging, and the literacy coach provides teachers with the support and encouragement they need to stay motivated and confident in their teaching.

## Evaluation Overview

In spring 2024, ECPS district leaders sought an external evaluation partner to assess the implementation and impacts of the district's School-Based Literacy Coaching Program as the Program entered its second year (2024-25) and expanded from one elementary school, Coker-Wimberly, to include two additional elementary schools in the district, G.W. Bulluck and G.W. Carver.

ECPS district leaders connected with a team of evaluators at NC State University's Friday Institute for Educational Innovation (FI) through Rupen Fofaria, an external district partner, former journalist with EducationNC and current Director of Operations and Policy with the NC State Board of Education (SBE).

Following the Context, Input, Process, Product (CIPP) Evaluation Model (Stufflebeam et al., 2017), the FI evaluation team developed a Phase I evaluation plan to assess the contextual factors influencing the district’s School-Based Literacy Coaching Program, including the organizational environment, partner needs and available resources, and to evaluate program inputs, such as program goals, resources and design, to determine their alignment with the Program’s objectives and theories. The evaluation team began their work in August 2024. This report details Phase I evaluation findings from August 2024-February 2025.

Given the program implementation timeline and budgetary constraints, a second phase of the evaluation should examine the processes driving the Program, as well as the products that result from it.

## Evaluation Questions & Approach

Aligned with program activities and expected outcomes, Phase I of the study was guided by three evaluation questions (EQs) and affiliated subquestions:

**EQ1.** What are the *contextual factors* influencing the implementation of the ECPS School-Based Literacy Coaching Program?

**EQ1a.** What *pre-existing conditions and interventions* may affect the Program’s success?

**EQ2.** What *resources* (financial, human, technological) are available to support the ECPS School-Based Literacy Coaching Program?

**EQ3.** What is the ECPS School-Based Literacy Coaching Program’s *theory of change*?

**EQ3a.** What are the goals and objectives of the Program, and to what extent are they clearly articulated and achievable?

**EQ3b.** How sufficient are the resources allocated to the program, including funding, personnel and materials?

This Phase I evaluation report utilizes these questions as an organizational structure to discuss study findings. Through a collaborative approach to evaluation, ECPS leadership, as practice partners with deep contextual knowledge, directly inform program evaluation and the subsequent translation and implementation of evaluation

findings and recommendations in the district. Phase I of the evaluation takes a formative perspective with the FI evaluation team aiming to inform the ongoing development and implementation of the Program toward scalability, sustainability and positive impact.

## Study Design, Methods & Data Sources

Phase I of this evaluation is part of an anticipated extended program evaluation that will employ a mixed-methods embedded design (Decuir-Gumby & Schutz, 2016). This design uses qualitative data to elaborate and enhance quantitative findings to provide a more complete understanding of findings (Greene et al., 1989; Tang & Solomon, 2001; Onwuegbuzie, & Teddlie, 2003). This design is appropriate for evaluation contexts in which a single data set is not sufficient and evaluation questions require different types of data. By using this design, the evaluation can “increase the interpretability, meaningfulness and validity of the constructs and inquiry results by both capitalizing on inherent method strengths and counteracting inherent biases in methods or other sources” (David & Sutton, 2011, p. 296).

In Phase I, three key data sources were gathered and analyzed: (1) a Logic Modeling Survey and Facilitation, (2) Transcripts from Interviews and Focus Groups, and (3) Program Documentation. Phase I methodological approaches included logic modeling, thematic analysis and document analysis. Table 2 below demonstrates the alignment of the context and input dimensions of the CIPP Evaluation Model, Phase I evaluation questions and data sources.

Table 2: Context and Input Dimensions of CIPP Evaluation Model Alignment with Phase I Evaluation Questions and Data Sources

CIPP Element	Phase I Evaluation Questions (EQs)	Data Sources
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● EQ1. What are the contextual factors influencing the implementation of the Program?                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ EQ1a. What pre-existing conditions and interventions may affect the Program's success?</li> </ul> </li> <li>● EQ2. What resources (financial, human, technological) are available to support the Program?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Interview/Focus Group Transcripts</li> <li>● Program Documentation</li> </ul>
Input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● EQ3. What is the Program's theory of change?                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ EQ3a. What are the goals and objectives of the Program, and to what extent are they clearly articulated and achievable?</li> </ul> </li> <li>● EQ3b. How sufficient are the resources allocated to the Program, including funding, personnel and materials?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Logic Modeling Survey</li> <li>● Interview/Focus Group Transcripts</li> </ul>

The methods employed in Phase I of the evaluation and accompanying data sources are described in detail below.

### Logic Modeling

Logic models are living documents that graphically represent the relationships among the key elements of a program and outline how program strategies lead to intended outcomes. In Phase I, the evaluation team facilitated a logic modeling process for the

Program to identify key resources/inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impact areas. To inform the logic model, the evaluation team designed and distributed a logic modeling survey (see Appendix A) in fall 2024 to ECPS district leaders and school administrators, literacy coaches and teachers supported by literacy coaches at the three elementary schools participating in the program. Between September and November 2024, nine people (n=9) responded to the survey, including school administrators, literacy coaches and teachers supported by literacy coaches. In December 2024 and January 2025, the evaluation team facilitated two in-person feedback sessions on the first draft of the program logic model with ECPS district leaders; the goal of this work was to establish a theory of change for the program.

### Thematic Analysis of Interview and Focus Group Transcripts

In September 2024, the evaluation team conducted a site visit to ECPS Central Office and the schools participating in the Program (i.e., Coker-Wimberly, G.W. Bulluck and G.W. Carver). During the site visit, district leaders (n=4), school administrators (n=5), literacy coaches (n=3) and teachers receiving support from the literacy coaches (n=7) participated in semi-structured focus group interviews to discuss the implementation and impact of the program in relation to the Program's context and inputs. Focus groups and interviews ranged from 30 to 90 minutes in length with one to four ECPS participants and were audio recorded for transcription purposes.

Participants were asked about the Program's design and goals, resources and funding, relevant contextual factors shaping program implementation, outcomes with students and families and perceived impact on student literacy learning, teacher learning and literacy instruction. Interview and focus group questions can be found in Appendix B.

In December 2024, the evaluation team facilitated four virtual interviews with parents and caregivers (n=4) of students at two of the three schools participating in the program. Conducted via Zoom, interviews ranged from 20 to 30 minutes in length and were audio recorded for transcription purposes. Parent and caregiver study participants had students enrolled in kindergarten, second and fourth grades. Interview questions with parents and caregivers asked about their students' literacy learning experiences in ECPS prior to and during program implementation, school and teacher communication with parents and caregivers regarding literacy learning, and resources shared with parents to support student literacy learning outside of school (see Appendix B for the Parent and Caregiver Interview Questions).

To examine focus group and interview data, the evaluation team employed thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify common strands across focus group and interview transcripts. The evaluation team used a priori codes drawn from evaluation questions and program documentation to afford a nuanced analysis of context and inputs as they related to implementation and, to a lesser extent, the impact of the Program across participating schools. To ensure accuracy, two members of the evaluation team coded each transcript with the team discussing themes as needed. Additionally, district leaders were invited to engage in a member-checking process to ensure accuracy of information shared in the report. Through these approaches, the evaluation team has been able to provide a rich and detailed account of contextual and input factors identified by program partners as influencing the implementation and impact of the Program.

### Analysis of Program Documentation

To better understand program context, inputs, and goals and objectives, the evaluation team worked with district leaders and school staff to gather program-related documentation. Employing document content analysis (Elo & Kyngas, 2008), the evaluation team reviewed provided artifacts and identified major themes and concepts in support of developing data collection instruments and analyzing findings from other data sources, including the logic modeling process and focus group and interview transcripts.

In terms of program documentation, ECPS provided the evaluators with a slide deck detailing the district's vision for the Program, description and outcomes from the Program's pilot year at Coker-Wimberly and planned program expansion. The evaluation team was also able to review the daily schedule of a literacy coach at one of the three participating schools and a collaboratively written inquiry statement that shared important contextual information on the value, goals and program inputs from the perspective of ECPS district leadership.

## Evaluation Findings

Results presented below are organized by Evaluation Question (EQ) and then subdivided into specific findings within each EQ. For EQs 1-2 and respective sub-EQs, findings draw primarily from interview and focus group transcripts and program documentation, while for EQ 3 and respective sub-EQs, the findings are largely informed by the logic modeling process. Given the foci of the EQs and the early-stage

nature of the program and evaluation, the amount and depth of data underlying each finding varies. The evaluation team explicitly includes early results in this Phase I report given their value in informing the directions of both the Program and its evaluation.

## Program Implementation Contextual Factors

**EQ1.** What are the *contextual factors* influencing the implementation of the Program?

The discussion below is organized into three categories of contextual factors that emerged from interview and focus group transcripts and program documentation: (1) desire to improve literacy outcomes for ECPS students, (2) literacy champions across the district and broader community and (3) ongoing support needed for teachers to deliver high-quality early literacy instruction.

### Desire to Improve Literacy Outcomes for ECPS Students

Three factors underlay the desire to improve literacy outcomes for ECPS students through the Program: (1) state-level momentum, (2) student reading proficiency scores and (3) Tier 1 instruction.

**State-Level Momentum.** The 2021 passage of the Excellent Public Schools Act (EPSA, 2021) in North Carolina codified coordinated supports for pre-service and in-service teachers in evidence-based reading instructional practices. Given the state's investment in building educator capacity for high-quality literacy instruction, district leaders and community partners sought to build off this momentum toward further improving literacy outcomes for ECPS students.

One ECPS district leader characterized the question guiding discussions among district leaders and community partners thusly: once we have “the LETRS training done, what is it going to take to ensure that this has a practical use and coaching inside of the buildings?”

With ECPS K-5 teachers each completing approximately 160 hours of state-mandated professional development in the Science of Reading (SoR) via Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS<sup>®</sup>) by the end of the 2023-2024 school year (Rash, 2024), district leaders, with community funders, developed the Program as an essential next step to further support teachers in translating their professional learning into practice and to continue to strengthen evidence-based early literacy instruction in ECPS.

Some ECPS school administrators and teachers also noted the timeliness and importance of the Program in sustaining, amplifying and extending educator knowledge and practice in evidence-based literacy instruction. One ECPS teacher shared, “When I think back to LETRS last year, we were able to start to implement this stuff [evidence-based literacy instructional practices], but it's so much more with this program.”

**Student Reading Proficiency Scores.** Since the 2020-2021 school year, the percentage of ECPS students in grades 3-5 scoring at the grade-level proficiency level on End-of-Grade (EOG) reading assessments has hovered around 30% (NCDPI, 2024). Comparatively, for the state of North Carolina across the 2020-2021 through 2023-2024 school years, an average of 48.2% of students in grades 3-5 scored at the grade-level proficiency level on the EOG reading assessments (NCDPI, 2024).

As one district leader highlighted, “We have a focus on literacy because we see where our students have not historically performed in reading.” Similarly, an ECPS literacy coach noted, “We’ve done so much as far as looking at our success in K-2, but...I look at third, fourth and fifth grades, and we’re not where we need to be [in terms of reading proficiency].”

“When I think back to LETRS last year, we were able to start to implement this stuff [evidence-based literacy instructional practices], but it's so much more with this program.”

*-ECPS Teacher*

Additionally, a school principal identified the need to push students’ literacy learning forward “from being just grade-level proficient up to college and career ready...because that’s what our data is showing us is that we’re kind of in that ‘not meeting growth’ [category] with that group.”

Thus, moving the needle in terms of the percentage of grade 3-5 students achieving and exceeding reading proficiency was identified by district leaders, literacy coaches and school administrators as an important factor driving the Program. ECPS aims to increase grade 3 reading proficiency to 71.7% by the 2025-26 academic year through the district’s literacy learning initiative of which the Program is a part.

**Tier 1 Instruction.** District leaders, school administrators and literacy coaches emphasized strengthening Tier 1, or core, instruction as a primary goal of the Program. “Let’s focus on the strong core first,” underscored a district leader. “Every kid’s not ready to go straight to intervention.”

The guiding principle shared by ECPS educators was that by focusing on improving core K-5 literacy instruction through coach support, fewer district and school resources would be needed for literacy instructional interventions (i.e., Tier 2 and 3 supports). One school principal explained the trade-off in this way:

We know that without having strong Tier 1 instruction in the core, it’s going to make it difficult for us to get the interventions we need to the ones who need it, as well as push kids forward.

In describing her role in strengthening Tier 1 literacy instruction with teachers, a literacy coach quipped, “I really want to put intervention companies out of business...I just feel like we’ve gotten so used to looking at our kids and [saying] ‘What intervention?’”

### Literacy Champions Across the District and Broader Community

ECPS personnel and community partners have been instrumental in championing the district’s literacy learning initiative and, as part of the initiative, the Program, through advocacy, development, implementation and support efforts. Key coalition members have included (1) funders and education and workforce development partners, (2) parents and caregivers, (3) literacy coaches and teachers, and (4) district and school leaders.

**Funders and Education and Workforce Development Partners.** A district leader characterized ECPS’s relationship with community partners in the “Twin Counties’ environment” as one of “support slash...pressure around literacy.” Funding for the district’s literacy learning initiative and, more specifically, the Program have, in part, been provided by the Barnhill Family Foundation, the Anonymous Trust and the ChildTrust. Funder support for the initiative grew out of conversations with district leaders around the question: “What could we [ECPS] do to make some big leaps in literacy?”

In terms of education and workforce development partners, the district has connected with individuals and organizations to consult on initiative design and impact. Rupen

Fofaria, Director of State Board Operations and Policy at the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), provided ECPS district leaders with guidance in terms of initiative design based on his previous journalistic work covering literacy teaching and learning across North Carolina for EdNC. Moreover, the FI and the Hill Learning Center have led evaluations of two key components of the district’s literacy learning initiative—the School-Based Literacy Coaching and HillRAP Programs, respectively. District leaders are also engaged in early conversations with area workforce development organizations to identify and cooperate on points of synergy across these organizations and the district in terms of literacy teaching and learning.

**Parents and Caregivers.** District leaders, school administrators, literacy coaches and teachers identified parents and caregivers as key partners in the district’s literacy learning initiative; however, ECPS personnel and parents and caregivers described differing levels of engagement across schools and classrooms. A district leader shared, “a key piece in our literacy work is how we bring [together] parents, guardians and other community members to support.”

Parent Caregiver Educator Academies (PCEA) and family literacy events were two approaches highlighted by ECPS personnel to connect with the parents and caregivers of students to strengthen literacy learning. One assistant principal described these special events as:

an incredible way for us to be able to connect with families...and be able to have some really explicit, direct conversations about the [literacy] work that they're doing in different grade levels. And then also, just spark that joy and love of reading in kids and come together as a community.

Parents and caregivers echoed the importance of these events in helping them better support their children’s literacy learning. One parent shared, “My oldest [child]...She had a lot of issues with reading comprehension...And some of the programs, the activities we did in the literacy parent program, it really helped her a lot.” For these outside-of-typical-school-hours events, funding concerns and limited frequency were cited by ECPS personnel as limitations.

Teachers and school administrators called attention to a more routinized approach to parent and caregiver engagement that is part of the 95 Phonics Core Program®—weekly literacy activity letters. In one school, the principal highlighted the role of the literacy coach in “getting the parent letters ready to go out” with the teachers noting, “The parents have been doing it...the kids still come in on Wednesday already knowing

some of the sight words and things.” Conversely, teachers in another school voiced their concern that the letter “wasn’t getting utilized outside of school.”

Parents and caregivers also highlighted the weekly literacy activity letters as important in communicating what literacy instruction looks like at school and being able to reinforce learning at home. One parent of an upper elementary student shared:

[my child] comes home with the sheet, and it's basically a story. And it has about maybe four to five paragraphs in there. And he has to read that story every day...because on the back of the sheet, he's got Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday homework...he has to go back into the story and reread it again. So, that helps him a lot to understand a little bit.

Multiple parents and caregivers described doing the literacy activities in the weekly letters with their children, and many shared that they are seeking and providing additional literacy learning supports — some made available to them through the school system (e.g., after-school tutoring, Epic and i-Ready), and others identified through personal and community connections (e.g., Hooked on Phonics®, grade-level literacy workbooks, story hour at the public library and summer camps sponsored by local churches).

All parents and caregivers shared that they felt positively about the direction of literacy instruction through the Program and the district’s broader literacy learning initiative. One parent commented:

I am so excited that this program is here for these children. It helps them. You don't understand how much it helps them improve, whether it's writing or whether it's comprehension, or whether it's the speed of reading. It really helps these students and it gives them hope.

However, some parents requested additional communication between school personnel and parents and caregivers regarding literacy learning. One parent remarked, “A little bit more communication with the parents...I know as parents, me and my wife, we want to be more involved.” Parents and caregivers also cited providing time and encouragement, and sometimes parental participation, for reading at home as integral in supporting students’ literacy development and cultivating their interest in reading. One parent described, “What we do at nighttime, we have little storybooks that we read...So, we'll take turns being different characters, so we all three read together, try to make it fun. So, they enjoy that.”

ECPS personnel described strengthening parent and caregiver engagement in literacy teaching and learning as ongoing. One literacy coach shared that engagement with parents and caregivers is “a work in progress, but we are trying to get as much parent outreach and community involvement [as possible] because it takes all of us to make this [literacy teaching and learning] shift and this change happen.”

“I am so excited that this program is here for these children. It helps them. You don't understand how much it helps them improve, whether it's writing or whether it's comprehension, or whether it's the speed of reading. It really helps these students and it gives them hope.”

*-ECPS Parent*

**Literacy Coaches and Teachers.** Many ECPS district leaders, school administrators and teachers described the essential roles taken on by the school-based literacy coaches in strengthening the delivery of evidence-based reading instruction at Coker-Wimberly, G.W. Bulluck and G.W. Carver Elementary Schools. ECPS personnel described literacy coaches as trainers, instructional specialists, data analysts, teacher and student advocates, thought partners and personnel gap-fillers. One school principal remarked, “The literacy coach position...is pivotal. It's someone that you can talk with and problem solve.” Notably, most ECPS parents and caregivers interviewed had minimal direct interaction with the literacy coaches; however, one parent emphasized the positive impact of their school's literacy coach on their child's literacy learning: “[Literacy coach] has been an impact a lot with him and his writing, and his reading.”

A key feature of the literacy coach role that was cited by ECPS district leaders and school administrators was the non-evaluative nature of coaches in providing teachers with feedback. In this way, literacy coaches have been able to develop trust with teachers that encourages teachers to “just open up and receive that authentic feedback.” As one teacher observed, “Without her [the literacy coach] being here...it probably wouldn't be going as well as it is.”

From a qualifications standpoint, literacy coaches participated in a rigorous hiring process involving district leaders and school administrators. Applicants for the position had to provide the hiring committee with data and evidence on their impact in the

classroom as a teacher, specifically in the area of literacy. The hiring committee also evaluated candidates on their ability to grow adult learners, in addition to elementary students. School administrators expressed their satisfaction with the literacy coaches they were able to hire through this process with one assistant principal asserting their school:

wouldn't be what it is without [literacy coach]...She really is the beating heart of the school, whether it's serving as the exemplar in that fourth grade classroom where she stepped in or being behind the scenes, making sure all of those logistics work so that teachers can do the hard work of teaching, as opposed to the hard work of organizing and bringing all those pieces together. She is an excellent coach, thought partner and teammate.

District leaders, school administrators and literacy coaches expressed awareness of the need for teacher buy-in with the Program and the simultaneous adoption of the 95 Phonics Core Program<sup>®</sup>. As one district leader commented, "We've been very slow in how we moved in rolling out the curriculum, since we wanted to ensure that teachers had a strong understanding of the curriculum and the purpose of the curriculum and how it was supposed to work in the classroom." Similarly, a literacy coach shared her philosophy and messaging with teachers of "getting in there and giving it [the new literacy program] time, trusting the [coaching] process, don't give up on it. So just making sure that the teachers all buy in. And for the most part, I think everybody has."

Some teachers at G.W. Bulluck and G.W. Carver Elementary Schools and most teachers at Coker-Wimberly Elementary School had previous experience with 95 Percent Group literacy programs; as previously mentioned, many teachers had also completed LETRS<sup>®</sup> training at the end of the 2023-24 school year. These related, prior experiences paved the way with teachers to see value in the Program. As one teacher reflected, "I've seen it last year from where the kids started to where they ended...they grew a whole lot more than they probably would have without a focus on that piece [foundational literacy skills]."

Furthermore, parents and caregivers spoke positively, to varying degrees, about their interactions with teachers since the beginning of the Program. A few parents and caregivers highlighted that they were receiving more frequent feedback from teachers on students' literacy learning progress and areas for growth. One parent remarked that "weekly they let us know or even they give us a phone call...to go over my kid's status." By building buy-in overtime and taking an asset-based approach, teachers at Coker-Wimberly, G.W. Bulluck and G.W. Carver Elementary Schools are championing literacy learning in ECPS. "The teachers that we have here and the amazing things

[literacy teaching and learning] that are happening,” emphasized one school principal, “we really can continue to flourish and grow.”

“She really is the beating heart of the school, whether it's serving as the exemplar in that fourth grade classroom where she stepped in or being behind the scenes, making sure all of those logistics work so that teachers can do the hard work of teaching, as opposed to the hard work of organizing and bringing all those pieces together. She is an excellent coach, thought partner and teammate.”

*-ECPS Assistant Principal*

**District and School Leaders.** The impetus for the Program and the district's broader literacy learning initiative grew out of conversations among district leaders and community partners. District leaders took the lead in terms of designing program rollout. One leader shared, “We started with Coker-Wimberly; we looked at their data and then also in that part of the district, we've done a lot of innovative work...we had a [school] leader there who we felt was ready to kind of take on the challenge of doing this work.” Examining student literacy data across ECPS elementary schools played an important role in district leaders' decision-making regarding program rollout: “Looking at the data from the schools...we felt that if we could make an impact at Coker, with what we were doing [in the Program], we could surely scale that up to the rest of the schools in the district.”

Through ongoing communication, district leadership has been able to create a shared understanding of the program's goals and provide feedback on program implementation among district personnel. As one teacher stated, “The [program] expectations that were given to us were clear from district, to admin or [literacy coach], and then down to our level.” Continuous communication and support from district leadership has looked like weekly meetings with participating schools to:

talk about the implementation plan, what is implementation looking like, the needs of the teachers, the needs that [the literacy coach] has, in order to support the teachers in the classroom, and what we need as a district, to ensure the integrity of the curriculum and the fidelity of the implementation.

Despite ongoing communication between district leaders and schools, some uncertainty remains regarding the role and responsibilities of the literacy coach. One

school principal noted, "From a district level, there's been little clarity around the role of the school-based literacy coach...it's really the principal's discretion of how they are deployed." Thus, school administrator support and leadership have also been integral in shaping and implementing the Program.

Additionally, literacy coaches, teachers and district leaders mentioned school administrators' importance in communicating the goals and mission of the program. "My principal, she just reiterated, 'we want to see our core [literacy instruction] strengthen,'" noted a literacy coach, "and that was another main goal and mission with the program." To maintain open lines of communication and collaboration toward achieving program goals, district leadership shared that the "the MCLs [Multi-Classroom Leaders], along with what they're doing with the K-2 literacy coaches, they meet in a PLC [Professional Learning Community] along with the principal, weekly, to discuss instruction in the school building." Another literacy coach highlighted the importance of "knowing that I could go to my principal with concerns or challenges...and feeling like I had support and guidance from her."

### Ongoing Support Needed for Teachers to Deliver High-Quality Early Literacy Instruction

According to district and school personnel, the Program seeks to provide teachers with ongoing support to deliver high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction in response to (1) teacher knowledge, skills and capacity and (2) persistent student literacy needs.

**Teacher Knowledge, Skills and Capacity.** Given ECPS teachers' varying backgrounds and years of experience, the school-based literacy coach is tasked with personalizing supports to meet the literacy professional learning needs of educators across the school. Literacy coaches highlighted how their supports benefitted both beginning and veteran teachers. One literacy coach reported, "one of our BTs [beginning teachers], she said it [the literacy coach's support] took out all the guesswork." School leaders and teachers also noted the essential role of literacy coaches in building teacher capacity for high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction through differentiated supports. An assistant principal described literacy coaches as being able to "push staff who are veterans to continue to deepen their practices and then also coach up any beginning teachers or teachers that are new to the [school] community."

Literacy coaches were also described by district and school leaders as being pivotal for enhancing teacher knowledge, skills and capacity in analyzing student data and

supporting teachers in making data-driven instructional decisions. As one district leader reported, “The K-2 literacy coach has taken a lead to say, ‘based on what this data is saying, this would be how I would begin to coach in these classrooms.’” Additionally, literacy coaches see this as a core function of their role supporting teachers; with one coach sharing she needs to “be able to support teachers and direct them with implementation, and so know the data, how to move our students.”

**Persistent Student Literacy Needs.** District leaders, school administrators, literacy coaches, teachers, and parents and caregivers described the importance of school-based literacy coaches as one resource in addressing persistent student literacy needs across ECPS. In a previous role with the district, a literacy coach observed, “seeing it [student literacy needs] from various schools and grade levels...I feel like that supported me in this role as well.” Student literacy needs in early elementary were described by another literacy coach as compounding as the students entered upper elementary grades: “our third and fourth grade and fifth grade teachers were just drowning because they were having to teach the kids to read. But they also had the demands of that test. And that EOG.”

ECPS personnel and community members also observed the ways in which the Program has begun to address persistent student literacy needs. A parent shared how one school’s literacy coach was instrumental in addressing their child’s literacy needs, “Last year his [the child’s] reading improved a lot...[the school’s literacy coach] was actually taking him out of class with a smaller group. And we could tell the difference.” Additionally, a school principal emphasized, “We can also see the transfer in our data...where they were in kindergarten, pre-literacy coaching has tremendously changed post-literacy coach.”

“Last year his [the child’s] reading improved a lot...[the school’s literacy coach] was actually taking him out of class with a smaller group. And we could tell the difference.”

*-ECPS Parent*

## Pre-Existing Conditions and Interventions

**EQ1a.** What pre-existing conditions and interventions may affect the program’s success?

The discussion below is organized into four related areas of pre-existing conditions and interventions drawn from interview and focus group data, as well as program documentation: (1) Synergistic ECPS Programs, (2) Literacy Curricular Landscape, (3) District and School Staffing Concerns, and (4) Program Funding Mechanism.

## Synergistic ECPS Programs

As previously stated, the Program is part of a broader district literacy learning initiative. When discussing the coaching program, district and school personnel as well as parents and caregivers mentioned other ECPS programs that operate synergistically with the coaching program, including Advanced Teaching Roles, Literacy Tutoring and Early Learning (PreK).

**Advanced Teaching Roles.** Pre-dating the Program, ECPS implemented Advanced Teaching Roles (ATR) to increase the impact of highly effective classroom teachers. In ECPS, highly effective classroom teachers are positioned as lead teachers supporting a team of teachers and, thus, their students; this advanced teaching role is called a Multi-Classroom Leader (MCL). In the three ECPS elementary schools participating in the Program during the 2024-25 school year, each school had MCLs—focused on math and English language arts (ELA)—and a literacy coach. From the district leadership perspective, the focus of the literacy coach was intended to be “K-2...looking at that core instruction for phonics and phonemic awareness.” However, across Coker-Wimberly, G.W. Bulluck and G.W. Carver, the literacy coaches supported K-5 teachers. As one literacy coach described when sharing her weekly schedule: Next week I'm going to be able to get in, and just pick a day [to observe]. Because...K and 1 do pretty much phonics at the same time of the day...Fifth grade, since they do it four different times, I can see [teachers] at other times. Fourth grade does it two times of the day, so I think I can go see them here. And so I can see second grade at their time. And third grade here.

In addition to this broader grade-level focus, literacy coaches, while predominantly supporting instruction on discrete literacy skills (i.e., phonemic awareness and phonics) were also sometimes called upon to support literacy instruction more broadly. And, in some cases, the literacy coach took on a leadership role with the ELA MCLs. One district leader characterized the broader literacy focus of the literacy coach in this way:

The MCLs, along with what they're doing with the K-2 literacy coaches, meet in a PLC [Professional Learning Community] along with the principal weekly to discuss instruction in the school building. They look at the data that they have K-5. When you're looking at literacy, the implementation, looking at student

data—what they're learning, what they're not learning—the K-2 literacy coach has taken a lead to say, 'based on what this data is saying, this would be how I would begin to coach in these classrooms, especially at [participating school].' She has pretty much given them the resources to say, 'This is what you should be doing.' She's modeled for the MCLs...She's going in to watch the MCLs as they're coaching the teachers and also providing feedback to them.

This shared literacy instructional focus with the ELA MCLs was reiterated by teachers, literacy coaches and principals. As one teacher remarked, "she [literacy coach] would sit in with our MCL, and, if she needed to throw in anything from 95 Percent [phonics program publisher], she would during that meeting."

**Literacy Tutoring.** District leaders, school administrators, literacy coaches, teachers and parents all discussed tutoring as being an important piece of the district's literacy learning initiative. Literacy tutors' responsibilities were characterized differently depending on school context. In one school, a literacy coach described literacy tutors being used as part of Tier 1 instruction with a focus on comprehension: "we actually took the comprehension piece and we hired tutors, and we handed that to our tutors and said, 'Hey...This is what I need you to do with our kids.'" In another school, the principal shared that former teachers served as tutors and were focused on supporting students who needed additional literacy interventions:

We'll have a K-2 tutor, a part-time tutor and then a 3-5 part-time tutor who are retired teachers. So they'll come in three days a week for about six hours and then provide targeted instruction for interventions.

Teachers in a third school described NC Education Corps tutors as providing additional support for students needing literacy interventions; however, the teachers expressed concern that tutoring was focused on students in K-2. One teacher commented, "You're closing the gap in K-2 [with literacy tutoring], but you still have this gap in 3-5."

In school personnel's descriptions, literacy tutoring appeared to be taking place during school hours. Additionally, one parent reported that their children participate in school-sponsored after-school literacy tutoring: "They attend tutoring, after-school tutoring...I can see the change there whether it is we have to work on this [literacy skill] more or this right here."

**Early Learning (PreK).** District leaders, literacy coaches and parents mentioned the importance of a solid literacy foundation via an early learning program (PreK) in positively impacting students' literacy learning trajectory in kindergarten and beyond. A

district leader noted, “We have tried to expand our early learning program. We tried with a 3-year-old program, but that became cost prohibitive...We added two additional [preK] classrooms this year using the Title I funding.” A literacy coach underscored the importance of being “consistent from PreK” with literacy learning, while a parent reported their child “did PreK twice because of her age” and now “in kindergarten, she enjoys it [reading]” and “knows most of her sights words and she wants to read every night.”

## Literacy Curricular Landscape

The Program was described by ECPS personnel and parents as highly enmeshed with the rollout of the 95 Phonics Core Program<sup>®</sup> in participating schools. A district leader explained:

It [the purpose of the coaching program] was to put a K-2 literacy coach at [participating elementary school]. And her focus was going to be K-2, of course, classrooms looking at that core instruction for phonics and phonemic awareness...part of her job was to go in to coach and model and co-teach with teachers, as they’re rolling out the 95 Percent Group curriculum.

One literacy coach characterized the connection between her role in relation to implementation of the 95 Phonics Core Program<sup>®</sup> even more closely, stating, “the biggest part of my role is making sure that the 95 phonics school program is run as it should be..with fidelity and just all the integrity.” A teacher echoed, “That’s one thing that is very helpful, having that literacy coach...they helped implement this 95 Percent [curriculum].”

Although parents did not explicitly conflate the Program and the 95 Phonics Core Program<sup>®</sup>, multiple parents noticed changes in literacy learning from previous years based on shifts in what student homework looked like as part of the 95 Phonics Core Program<sup>®</sup>. One parent remarked, “This year’s [literacy homework] just jumped to, ‘Okay, you’ve got this four-paragraph story to read. Now you have questions on the back to read for each day.’ So, it has jumped tremendously.”

Relatedly, district and school leaders, literacy coaches and teachers noted challenges in navigating the multiple literacy curricular programs being utilized in participating schools, across the broader district and from year-to-year. For Tier 1 literacy instruction, schools participating in the Program during the 2024-25 school year have utilized Benchmark Advance<sup>®</sup> for comprehension and knowledge-based literacy

instruction and the 95 Phonics Core Program® for phonics and phonemic awareness literacy instruction.

In previous years and in ECPS schools not participating in the Program, Benchmark Phonics® was in use. In integrating two literacy curricular programs, one principal noted, “One challenge now is figuring out how those meld, and pacing is not the same. And the way that 95 teaches phonics is very different than the way that Benchmark does.” A literacy coach identified the coaches’ role in clarifying the relationship between the two literacy curricula and communicating this with teachers:

We just went to an MCL meeting the other day. And what we're going to do is we're going to look at Benchmark and 95 and how it aligns...And we're going to write it down so our teachers know, 'Hey, I can go pull this out of Benchmark...I can go pull this into the X materials.' And so we're going to sit down...and get that correlation.

Additionally, literacy coaches and teachers expressed a desire for more consistency and longevity across the ECPS literacy curricular landscape. One literacy coach voiced the following:

From kindergarten all the way to fifth [grade], using a core program and intervention piece that are very connected and well meshed. And not having to piecemeal it together, having that piece in place so that it's very seamless and it's very smooth.

Moreover, a teacher articulated, “Hopefully we keep this curriculum. That's what I'm planning to work on is to ask Edgecombe County to stick with this [95 Percent Group curriculum].”

### **District and School Staffing Concerns**

ECPS personnel and parents and caregivers described how the Program and the broader district literacy learning initiative have been affected by district and school staffing concerns. District leaders noted that ongoing, high teacher turnover had the potential to minimize the positive impacts of the Program. One district leader stated:

One of the things that we are able to take away [through the Program] is building the capacity of our teachers...but the rub comes in when we have high turnover. And we are a district that has high turnover in our elementary schools.

These concerns were echoed by school administrators with one assistant principal explaining that part of her role with the Program had been “ensuring that the rollout

with teacher turnover is consistent, and the vim and vigor of the entire thing doesn't fall on the back burner." Relatedly, a parent shared how their child's literacy instruction had been impacted by teacher turnover, "My youngest one, they're still on the same sight words. However, they had to change teachers...Hopefully they'll start learning a little more."

Concurrently, district leaders and school administrators shared their observations as to how the Program may help to address staffing concerns. A principal described how, "in a world of teacher turnover," the Program had the potential "to keep what's good [literacy] teaching in front of our kids." Furthermore, a district leader highlighted that between years one and two of the Program, Coker-Wimberly "had very low; I don't think they had any turnover in K-2...Those folks had the support that they needed." One school principal envisioned the school-based literacy coach as having a key role in differentiating supports for teachers toward improved job satisfaction, determining "what can we do for both our veteran teachers and our newer teachers to get what they need so they're not just sitting there."

Additionally, in some schools, literacy coaches provided instructional coverage due to personnel shortages. One literacy coach had "been covering an MCL position a little bit too" and focusing more on the upper elementary grades. Since the MCL position had recently been filled, she was now "getting ready to start working more with our K-3 teachers." Another literacy coach had been "filling in for a fourth grade teacher who was out."

In a world of teacher turnover, the Program has the potential  
"to keep what's good [literacy] teaching in front of our kids."

*-ECPS Principal*

### Program Funding Mechanism

District and school leaders identified multiple funding sources through which the Program has been financially supported, including grants from private foundations, Title I funds and the Teacher and School Leader Incentive (TSL) Program. Given the Program's partial dependence on private grant funding, district leaders expressed their concerns regarding sustainability. One district leader commented, "One of the things that always concerns me with initiatives [funded] by grants...is how to really sustain it to the level of where it is going to really make an impact." Additionally, a school principal

shared that she and her team are trying to structure and implement the Program as “an all-hands-on-deck model. Sustainability without extra funds.”

District and school personnel also raised concerns over the expense of a high-quality, evidence-based literacy curriculum as connected to the Program. A literacy coach remarked:

We were looking at several new ELA [English Language Arts] programs curriculum, and we had one that was a first choice. But we were just like, we can't afford it...It is frustrating and hard because our kids really deserve the very best.

Correspondingly, a district leader foregrounded:

The money that we [ECPS] get for textbooks along with the money that we get for Read to Achieve and the Literacy Intervention Plan does not even come close to what a district our size would need in order to sustain or expand a core curriculum or core phonics curriculum.

Despite ongoing concerns regarding the sustainability of funding for the Program, district and school personnel also displayed optimism regarding future funding. One district leader observed:

It's going to be a struggle to sustain it [the Program] without looking for outside resources...But I'm confident that we can show how it's helping. And so funders will be more apt to really help us.

## Program Resources

**EQ2.** What *resources* (financial, human, technological) are available to support the ECPS School-Based Literacy Coaching Program?

ECPS's focus on implementing the Program as a means to provide support for teachers to continue building their capacity to deliver high quality, data driven literacy instruction has required an investment of various resources to nurture a literacy-rich culture and community that develops proficient readers. This discussion highlights three key resource categories that support the Program: (1) financial, (2) human and (3) technological/material.

### Financial

As previously mentioned, the district leverages a variety of funding sources to implement the Program, including the Teacher and School Leader (TSL) Incentives Program, Title I dollars, state funding allocations, as well as the support of private foundations, to secure staffing, materials and resources to implement the literacy program. A district leader shared that ECPS has exercised flexibility with federal Title I and state funding allocations to maximize its support of the Program, specifically, “using state textbook dollars, allotments for Read to Achieve and Literacy Intervention Plan funds.”

ECPS personnel and parents and caregivers communicated the belief that an investment in improving literacy in Edgecombe County will have far-reaching and long-term impacts in the broader community; similarly, private funders have seen value in investing in strengthening foundational literacy instruction at ECPS elementary schools. As one district leader highlighted, “we had some major funders in the area; I would say Barnhill is our biggest funder that's helping with this [the Program], as well as the Anonymous Trust and some other smaller funds.”

## Human

Participating schools have one coach dedicated to supporting and building the capacity of teachers to implement high-quality, data-driven and rigorous literacy instruction. This school-based literacy coach role is the core of ECPS’s Program, as their role is to provide technical support with instructional planning, data analysis and pedagogy, while serving as a liaison with school- and district-level leaders, advocating for the needs of both teachers and students. Seeking to build on and enhance current structures for building teacher capacity, school-based literacy coaches participate in established district PLC meetings for MCLs to ensure collaboration among the teacher leadership roles at the school level. In order to support teachers with implementing evidence-based practices in literacy instruction, literacy coaches focus on building strong relationships with teachers. One literacy coach emphasized, “you have to [build relationships with teachers]...for them to feel safe and to be able to articulate and communicate their needs and their concerns.”

ECPS personnel and parents and caregivers foregrounded the district’s commitment to strong home-school relationships; the implementation of the Program was described as indirectly enhancing the district’s investment in this vital human resource ( i.e., parents and caregivers). Parents shared that they value access to a variety of resources from the school including weekly literacy newsletters, homework, information about accessing literacy learning opportunities in the community, as well as digital learning

platforms that can be accessed at home during the school year and in the summer. PCEAs and Literacy Nights provided opportunities for family engagement, for school staff to share about the Program, as well as best practices, strategies and tips for learning at home.

**“You have to [build relationships with teachers]...for them to feel safe and to be able to articulate and communicate their needs and their concerns.”**

*-ECPS Literacy Coach*

### Technological/Material

In interviews with school-level personnel, the technological and material resources aligned with the Program primarily connected to the delivery of the 95 Phonics Core Program® with “fidelity and integrity.” Participating ECPS schools received technical support from 95 Percent Group via weekly coaching calls, as well as on-site coaching visits and professional development. One literacy coach shared:

The company [95 Percent Group] provided training for us, for all our teachers and myself. And then we had a coaching consultant as well come out three times a year, mostly after our mCLASS data, and she would also observe...she and I would sit down, talk about what was happening consistently, how we could move with the program, any instructional gaps.

The 95 Phonics Core Program® also provided school administrators and literacy coaches with a walkthrough tool to guide their observations and subsequent coaching sessions with teachers.

Moreover, teachers and literacy coaches referenced digital materials (e.g., slide decks, handouts, instructional guides) made available through 95 Percent Group. One kindergarten teacher remarked on teacher-facing instructional supports, “I think there’s something online that will kind of explain parts of the lesson for you...It will kind of help you if you’re not understanding how to teach a certain part.” In addition to resources for teachers, the 95 Phonics Core Program® also provided student-facing materials to support foundational literacy skill learning. According to a third grade teacher, the student resources support “kids with those foundational skills for reading, tools for sounding out words, the sound mapping and then just really focusing on vowel sounds and blends.”

Literacy coaches, teachers and school administrators also identified the weekly parent and caregiver newsletters available through the 95 Phonics Core Program<sup>®</sup> as an important resource aligned with the Program. One literacy coach highlighted that their school is working toward gathering parental and caregiver feedback on these weekly newsletters:

Our teachers also send home a parent newsletter that goes home weekly with each lesson, and it gives activities that the parents can do at home with their kids that parallel what they're learning in class...One thing that our Teacher Advisory Council, we do have a Teacher Advisory Council for 95 [Percent Group], talked about and discussed was...if you've done this activity with your kid, just send a note, describe the experience...just to see if we can get a little bit more engagement with that.

## Programmatic Theory of Change

### **EQ3.** What is the Program's *theory of change*?

A theory of change is a model on how a program contributes through a chain of early and intermediate outcomes to an intended result (Serrat, 2017). Using a theory of change applies critical thinking to the design, implementation and evaluation of an initiative, by explaining how and why a sequence of events should lead to an intended outcome (Serrat, 2017). A logic model can be a tool for developing a theory of change, as it can highlight both available and aspirational resources, activities, outcomes and impacts. The FI evaluation team worked with ECPS to develop their own “living” logic model to help guide the theory of change for implementing a sustainable school-based literacy coaching program for participating elementary schools.

Data for the theory of change and logic model were collected in a variety of ways. Through interviews with district leadership, school principals, teachers and school-based literacy coaches, the FI was able to gather a variety of perspectives about the goals and objectives of the school-based literacy coaching model as well as the resources needed to successfully implement the Program. In addition to interviews with personnel, the FI evaluation team launched a logic modeling survey and asked district personnel, principals, literacy coaches, and teachers to identify the inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts of the program. Through follow-up direct questioning, the team was able to develop a first draft of the logic model. Throughout multiple logic modeling sessions with district leadership, the FI evaluation team refined the logic model for ECPS to use as a guide for their theory of change in implementing the Program. The final version of the logic model can be found in Appendix C.

## Program Goals and Objectives

**EQ3a.** What are the *goals and objectives* of the program, and to what extent are they clearly articulated and achievable?

The goals and objectives of the program can be broadly divided into five categories: teacher understanding and practices, student engagement and skills, school and district practices, school-based literacy coaches, and parent and community engagement. The following section briefly summarizes the key priorities within each division and highlights alignment and potential misalignment of initiative understanding between the district central office and participating schools.

### Teacher Understanding and Practices

ECPS personnel at all levels articulated that a key goal of the Program is for teachers to better understand how to instruct and support students' foundational literacy skills. This was clearly articulated to the FI evaluation team through interviews, the logic model survey and logic modeling sessions. Similarly, ECPS district leaders want to see an improved culture of learning in their classrooms, teachers displaying positive attitudes towards continual improvement in teaching practices and teachers better able to design, assess and implement best practices in literacy instruction.

Through interviews with staff and the logic model survey, teachers, principals and literacy coaches also noted that they hold the goal of improving their teaching practices. However, they also reported goals of reducing burnout and increasing retention as a result of having a school-based literacy coach. Though having a school-based literacy coach is unlikely to have a large direct impact on teacher levels of job satisfaction, burnout and retention, multiple teachers noted in the logic model survey that they thought having the additional support could have a long-term impact on ECPS staff.

### Student Engagement and Skills

Far and away, the most commonly reported goal by teachers and school staff was "students learning how to read." Through interviews with school staff, this appears to be the most clearly communicated goal of having a school-based literacy coach. More specifically, ECPS district leaders, principals, teachers and school-based literacy coaches noted that goals for student engagement include: students improving foundational literacy skills, students display improved proficiency levels, more students

are engaged in learning literacy skills and that fewer students need intervention support. When thinking more long-term, ECPS district leaders noted in logic modeling sessions that they want students to develop a love of reading and want students to be able to understand and articulate the importance of lifelong learning.

### School and District Practices

Principals, teachers and school-based literacy coaches noted goals related to school and district practices as a result of having a school-based literacy coach. The most commonly-reported goal was having consistency and communication about literacy curricula. Even caregivers who participated in interviews with the FI evaluation team reported valuing communication and wanting more of it. One caregiver stated, “The information of what they’re studying would be helpful for us.” Secondly, all ECPS staff (i.e., district leaders, teachers, principals, school-based literacy coaches) noted creating a culture of learning in the district and centering collaborative, data-based decision-making. District leaders also highlighted the importance of sustaining and strengthening partnerships with local resources to support literacy funding.

### School-Based Literacy Coaches

Interestingly, goals for school-based literacy coaches were less defined at the school level. District leaders defined most goals for school-based literacy coaches, including creating a Professional Learning Community among leaders and coaches. Additionally, district leaders noted that coaches should seek out and implement evidence-based practices in literacy instruction, cultivate an environment of curiosity about best practices in literacy and strengthen teacher capacity to support literacy instruction.

### Parent and Community Engagement

Similarly, school staff did not communicate goals for parent and community engagement as a result of having a school-based literacy coach, rather they were defined by district leaders. District leaders highlighted having a bidirectional goal of increased trust between caregivers and the district. They noted that as a result of school-based literacy coaching, caregivers should have increased confidence that their children are receiving quality evidence-based instruction, and that they hope caregivers will meaningfully engage in their child’s learning. Further, district leaders would like to strengthen partnerships with local resources to support literacy in the community (e.g., local libraries). Caregivers reported in interviews that the district provides them with worksheets and homework to take home. One parent noted that the Literacy Nights are valuable for communication and connection. They stated:

We go to Literacy Night because they have fun little things for the kids to do. Then the teachers will talk to us about what they're learning and how the curriculum has changed ...I think it's pushing the kids to do more.

## Communication within the District

Information about how program goals are communicated was gathered through interviews and focus groups with ECPS staff. Most school-level staff highlighted that the goals of the program were clearly communicated to them. School-level staff reported they have frequent meetings to discuss student progress and regularly meet with their school-based literacy coaches. School staff noted that they communicate with caregivers and the community through newsletters and interviews with caregivers affirmed this method of communication.

However, some of the nuance and breadth of the goals of having a school-based literacy coach may have been lost in the distillation of the information. When asked about the goals of the program, many teachers noted specific phonics skills or foundational literacy skills that students were expected to learn; others' responses were more general in that the goal of the program was to improve student literacy overall. One literacy coach stated in an interview, "My principal reiterated 'We want to see our core strengthen.' And that was another main goal and mission with the program. We wanted to strengthen our core." Many of the interviews with school-based literacy coaches, principals and teachers highlighted the importance of the program for cultivating readers. As one teacher emphasized, "I want all of our students ... to be readers. I just want to build a community of readers. And I want them to, by the end of second grade, to be on grade level." Few highlighted the secondary goals of reducing burnout, increasing retention and improving job satisfaction. One administrator did highlight the importance of having teachers learn new skills, while another literacy coach noted that she thought a key goal of hers was to build relationships and trust with her teachers.

When asked whether the goals of the program are attainable, school staff generally responded positively. One teacher noted, "I think it's pretty attainable. I think it's what my kids need and I see them making progress, so I feel like it's pretty attainable." Other teachers responded similarly, though many noted that they needed the time to implement the curriculum with "fidelity and integrity." When thinking about the other goals of having a school-based literacy coach (e.g., retention, school and district climate), district leaders noted in conversations that while it may be attainable to increase retention, that it may be unlikely that the cause of that shift is due to having a

literacy coach. Instead, having a literacy coach combined with other factors (e.g., time, learning communities, engaged students) may be more likely to influence retention and culture.

## Program Resource Allocation

**EQ3b.** How sufficient are the *resources allocated* to the program, including funding, personnel and materials?

When thinking about resources for implementing a school-based literacy coaching program, ECPS district leaders, principals, teachers and literacy coaches identified four major areas for consideration: district-wide resources, school-level resources, materials and support, and network support. District-wide resources necessary for implementation included supportive leadership, having a clear goal and vision, data-driven decision-making and having a North Carolina standards-aligned curriculum. School-level resources included strong school-wide collaboration, strong administrative leadership, teacher comfortability with curricula, having a qualified on-site literacy coach, having a clear coaching framework and having a positive school climate. The materials and support needed for successful implementation included personalized professional development, having a strong core phonics curriculum and having the necessary materials to implement the curriculum. Network supports included interpersonal networks (e.g., between teachers, between school-based literacy coaches) and having frequent check-in meetings. In interviews with teachers, principals and school-based literacy coaches, time was the most frequently mentioned necessary resource for success.

Generally, teachers reported they felt like they had the resources they needed to feel successful. When asked about resources and resource allocation, many interview participants noted needing more of the physical resources and sufficient time to implement the curriculum. Some teachers noted that some of the resources they have been given are not always what was needed. For example, one teacher stated, “I didn’t have to have timers, because I had already purchased timers from being in lower grades.” A few mentioned they had difficulty accessing the online platform or lacked access to the slide decks.

Teachers and principals noted that having the school-based literacy coach is a valuable resource for supporting student growth, as well as helping teachers get the resources they need. Having a supportive school-based literacy coach was one of the resources mentioned as being most helpful. One teacher reported:

[The literacy coach] took on a vital role in getting us prepared because she would have meetings with us. She would pull us in, show us how to utilize the kits. We had Q&A sessions, we met up, we talked about what's going wrong, what's going right, and how can we help or change? And so, I think just her role, and her being there, helped to put out any small fires we may have had, but also prepared us for what it would look like in the classroom.

Another valuable resource frequently mentioned was the act of data collection and analyzing student data. Literacy coaches mentioned using student data to assess which students and teachers might need the most support. One principal noted, "I think the walkthrough data is just a powerful way for us to analyze what's going on in the classroom and problem solve to figure that out."

## Conclusion

The findings reported in the previous section are intended to inform the iterative design and implementation of ECPS's School-Based Coaching Program as a component of the broader district literacy-learning initiative and in service of achieving the district's aforementioned third grade student reading proficiency goal. Findings speak more to program implementation than impact due to early-stage program implementation and evaluation scope. Future evaluations of the Program should more closely examine program impacts as they relate to processes and products.

The following recommendations are the result of a synthesis of all data collected as part of the Program Phase I evaluation and inclusive of interviews and focus groups, logic model survey and feedback sessions, and program documentation provided by ECPS personnel:

1. Clarify the role and responsibilities of the literacy coach.
2. Establish goals and develop an action plan around family and community engagement through the literacy coaching program.
3. Create a prospectus for securing and maintaining program funding across all district elementary schools.
4. Engage in ongoing evaluation to analyze program impact, particularly as it pertains to student literacy outcomes and ECPS teacher efficacy in delivering high-quality, evidence-based, rigorous literacy instruction.

These recommendations should be viewed as interrelated and synergistic. Three of the recommendations are programmatic in nature and emerged from implementation challenges and suggestions for improvement that were shared by ECPS personnel and

parents and caregivers. The final recommendation pertains to the direction of future program evaluations.

## Recommendations

### Clarify the Role and Responsibilities of the Literacy Coach

As previously stated in this report, ECPS personnel and parents and caregivers frequently tied the literacy coach role to the rollout of the 95 Phonics Core Program<sup>®</sup>. Additionally, ECPS personnel described the literacy coaches and the ELA MCLs in participating schools as having a shared responsibility for supporting high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction. Given district concerns regarding cost of the 95 Phonics Core Program<sup>®</sup> and measurability of literacy coach impact, ECPS district and school leaders should clarify messaging with coaches, MCLs, teachers, students, and parents and caregivers on the role of the literacy coach( i.e., the literacy coach's role is to support teachers' professional learning toward implementing high-quality, evidence-based, rigorous literacy instructional practices). This reframing of communication around the role of the literacy coach should then carry through to coaches' responsibilities, ensuring that their support for teachers' professional learning in literacy instruction goes beyond implementation of a particular instructional program and emphasizes translating literacy research and data-driven decision-making into best instructional practice with teachers. These clarifications should also generate consensus on a grade-level focus for the literacy coaches (i.e., K-2 vs. K-5) and, from a scheduling standpoint, on how best to ensure that coaches' time is protected in order to effectively carry out their role.

### Establish Goals and Develop an Action Plan Around Family and Community Engagement Through the Literacy Coaching Program

As a district-identified key feature of the Program and broader literacy learning initiative, family and community engagement serves to strengthen home-school connections and ensure that parents and caregivers play an integral role in their children's literacy learning. In interviews, parents and caregivers frequently highlighted their desire for more communication and the sharing of additional materials and resources to enhance their knowledge and ability to support their children's literacy learning outside of school. To address this gap, school administrators and literacy coaches could develop annual goals and action plans for family and community engagement with literacy. These goals and plans could be reviewed with district

leaders and then communicated to parents. Goals may address sharing literacy learning resources with families that are accessible from home through the school system (e.g., weekly family literacy learning newsletters, literacy learning apps with district subscription), within the community (e.g., public library storytimes, literacy-related camps) and at school during special literacy learning-focused events (e.g., Literacy Nights, PCEAs). The goals and action plans should include measurable outcomes in which literacy coaches and school administrators can reflect toward iterative strengthening of school-family and community engagement in literacy learning across the district.

### **Create a Prospectus for Securing and Maintaining Program Funding Across All District Elementary Schools**

Program documentation detailed a four-year plan to scale the Program across all elementary schools in the district; however, given funding constraints, scalability and sustainability of the program are in question. District leaders, in conversation with school administrators, need to collaboratively strategize and co-create a prospectus for the Program in order to attract and inform community partners and potential funders. With the district's literacy learning initiative's stated goal of ensuring all ECPS students achieve reading proficiency by the third grade, ensuring fiscal sustainability and scalability of the Program represents an important step toward achieving this objective.

### **Engage in Ongoing Evaluation to Analyze Program Impact, Particularly As It Pertains to Student Literacy Outcomes and ECPS Teacher Efficacy in Delivering High-Quality, Evidence-Based, Rigorous Literacy Instruction**

As previously mentioned, this study is intended as a first step (i.e., Phase I of an evaluation of the Program). Given the implementation timeline for the program, successive evaluations need to analyze program impacts on student reading proficiency scores and teacher instructional efficacy. To this end, additional data will need to be gathered and analyzed; potential options include school administrative data, student achievement and Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS) data, parent and community engagement survey data, teacher and coach observational data, and teacher working conditions survey data. With future evaluations, ECPS may also want to consider broadening the lens of the evaluation to more holistically examine the district's literacy learning initiative so as to better understand the differential impacts of the Program vis-à-vis other initiative

components (e.g., the implementation of the core literacy curriculum with fidelity and integrity).

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## Appendix A: Logic Model Survey

**intro** The Program Evaluation and Education Research (PEER) Group at the Friday Institute for Educational Innovation at NC State will be working with you to put together a logic model to assess the inputs, activities, outputs, and goals of the school-based literacy coaching model at Edgecombe County Public Schools. While there are many frameworks for developing a logic model or program theory, we are using the Kellogg Foundation's Logic Model Development Guide to steer our work. The following questions will help us construct an initial model that we will share and revise as needed. Feel free to complete these sections in whatever order makes the most sense for you. Some people prefer to backwards map from impacts to inputs. Others like to start in the opposite direction. If you have any questions or would prefer to discuss these questions in person, please contact Dr. Alicia Fischer (avfische@ncsu.edu).

**role** Please select your role with the ECPS.

- Teacher
- School-based coach
- School-level administrator
- District-level administrator
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**resources** What do you think the primary resources are that enable your team's effectiveness when it comes to the school-based literacy coaching model? Potential resources may include: funding, existing organizations, collaboration partners, interpersonal networks, time, facilities, attitudes, geography.

[open response]

**barriers** What do you think the primary barriers are that inhibit your team's effectiveness for school-based literacy coaching? Potential barriers may include: funding, existing organizations, collaboration partners, interpersonal networks, time, facilities, attitudes, geography.

[open response]

**activities** What are the necessary steps or activities ECPS needs to take in order to successfully launch and sustain the school-based literacy coaching model for student success? Potential activities may include: educational materials, creating staff capacity,

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professional development, professional support, providing technologies, building staff relationships, building staff-student relationships, hosting community events, re-examining school and district policies and processes.

[open response]

**outputs** What are the direct results of your team's activities? Typically, outputs are quantifiable measures of your activities. These are the skills/products/materials that teachers, coaches, will use/develop the impacts of programming. For example: "after implementing the school-based coaching model across all ECPS elementary schools, school-based coaches will host TWO monthly meetings with teachers." "Teachers will have access to # of training materials." "Students receive # more minutes with direct instruction."

[open response]

**outcomes** What are the specific changes in attitudes, behaviors, knowledge, skills, functionality, policies, program implementation, level of functioning, etc. expected to result from program activities in the *immediate term (0-3 years)*? What about the *medium/long-term (3+ years)*?

[open response]

**st\_impacts** What short-term changes (0-3 years) would you expect to see in teachers, students, schools, and ECPS as a whole as a result of the school-based literacy coaching model? For example: *teachers will develop a greater culture of community through the school-based coaching model.*

[open response]

**md\_impacts** What are some of the medium-term (3-5 years), systematic changes do you feel ECPS will undergo as a result of the school-based literacy coaching model? For example: *ECPS retains X% of teachers year to year. ECPS increases retention of teachers by X%.*

[open response]

**lt\_impacts** What are some of the long-term (5-10 years), systematic changes do you feel ECPS will undergo as a result of the school-based literacy coaching model? For example:

*ECPS is seen as the premier model for school-based coaching for student success. ECPS teachers experience lower levels of burnout after implementing the school-based coaching model.*

[open response]

**additional comments** Is there anything else that you would like to share about ECPS's activities, implementation, goals, or anticipated outcomes and impacts that you have not yet shared?

[open response]

## Appendix B: ECPS School-Based Literacy Coaching Program Evaluation Study Focus Group and Interview Questions

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS - TEACHERS

We'd like to learn a little about the context of your ECPS school-based literacy coaching program and any factors that may have supported or impeded implementation of this program.

1. What are the goals and objectives of the program?
  - a. To what extent are the goals clearly articulated?
  - b. To what extent are the goals attainable?
2. What resources are available to support the implementation of the program?
  - a. To what extent are those resources readily available to implement the program?
  - b. How would you describe your level of preparation to use the program's resources?
3. To what extent do you feel you were provided adequate professional development to implement the program?
  - a. How would you describe the support you were provided to implement the program after the initial professional development.
4. Describe the program's outcomes for students and families.
  - a. What aspects of the program influence outcomes for students and families?
5. Share any successes and/or barriers to the implementation of the program.

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS - LITERACY COACHES

We'd like to learn a little about the context of your role as a literacy coach in the elementary school-based literacy coaching program and any factors that may have supported or impeded implementation of this program.

1. What are the goals and objectives of the program?
  - a. To what extent are the goals clearly articulated?
  - b. To what extent are the goals attainable?
2. Describe your role as a literacy coach and your level of preparation to serve in this capacity in the program. (What coaching methods were used- face-to-face PD, model lessons, co-teaching, observation & feedback?)
3. To what extent do you perceive your effectiveness as a coach in the program?
4. What resources are available to support the teachers' implementation of the program?

- a. To what extent are those resources readily available to implement the program?
- b. How would you describe your level of teacher support for using the program's resources?

5. Share any insights on the program's impact on how teachers delivered literacy instruction.

6. Share any successes and/or barriers to the implementation of the program.

#### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS - DISTRICT LEADERS

We'd like to learn a little more about the design and structures of the school-based literacy coaching program in Edgecombe County and any factors that may have supported or impeded implementation of this program.

1. When designing the program, what needs were you trying to address?
  - a. How were those needs identified?
  - b. How has this changed in the year since the program was initially implemented?
2. What are the goals and objectives of the program?
  - a. To what extent are the goals clearly articulated?
  - b. To what extent are the goals attainable?
3. How is ECPS's Early Literacy School-Based Coaching Program financially structured within your district?
  - a. What actions are you taking to make sure the program is sustainable?
  - b. What components of the program are sustainable?
4. What outside partnership(s) do you have to support the program? Describe the nature of the partnership and to what extent are the partner(s) engaged in the program?
5. Can you tell us a bit about how literacy coaches are selected/hired in ECPS?
  - a. What level of stability with coaches have you had within the program?
6. How are ECPS's literacy coaches supported?
  - a. What professional development opportunities do you provide your literacy coaches? (frequency of PD, content, key players)
  - b. Are there other structures in place to support your literacy coaches?
7. Share any successes and/or barriers to the implementation of the program.

#### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS - SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS (PRINCIPALS)

We'd like to learn a little about the context of your role as a principal (school level administrator) in the elementary school-based literacy coaching program and any factors that may have supported or impeded implementation of this program.

1. What are the goals and objectives of the program?
  - a. To what extent are the goals clearly articulated?
  - b. To what extent are the goals attainable?
2. What resources are available to support the teachers' implementation of the program?
  - a. To what extent are those resources readily available to implement the program?
  - b. How would you describe your level of teacher support for using the program's resources?
3. Describe any tools or resources for classroom observations and walkthroughs used to provide feedback to teachers implementing the program..
4. To what extent do you perceive your effectiveness providing instructional leadership for the program?
5. Share any insights on the program's impact on how teachers delivered literacy instruction.
6. Describe the program's outcomes for students and families.
  - a. What aspects of the program influence outcomes for students and families?

#### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS - PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

1. How would you describe your child's literacy learning experiences at school?
  - a. What has learning to read and write looked like for your child?
  - b. What changes have you noticed in how your child approaches reading and writing between last year and this year?
    - i. At home?
    - ii. With homework/school materials?
  - c. How do you feel about how your child's growth in reading and writing is being impacted by literacy instruction at school?
2. What does communication regarding literacy instruction and learning look like between you and your child's teacher?
  - a. How does your child's teacher tell you about your child's growth in reading and writing?

- b. Do you hear from others at your child's school about literacy instruction and learning? If so, what does that look like?
  
3. What resources are available to you as a parent or caregiver through the school to support your child's literacy learning outside of school?
  - a. Are they easy to access, understand, and use?
  - b. How have you used these resources with your child outside of school?
  
4. What additional feedback on literacy instruction and learning would you like to share with ECPS?

## Appendix C: Logic Model

### Edgecombe County Public Schools School-Based Literacy Coaching Program

An effort to extend and amplify North Carolina's statewide investment in the Science of Reading, the School-Based Literacy Coaching Program is designed to enhance teacher professional development and improve early reading instruction via a highly qualified literacy coach embedded in participating district elementary schools. The program features a comprehensive approach, incorporating professional development, evidence-based literacy curricula and family engagement, all underpinned by ongoing data analysis to drive instructional decision-making toward improved K-5 student literacy achievement outcomes.

### Inputs – Resources needed to operate the School-Based Literacy Coaching Program

- **District-Wide Inputs**
  - Supportive leadership
  - North Carolina standards-aligned curriculum
  - Clear goal and vision
  - Data-driven decision-making
- **School-Level Inputs**
  - Schoolwide collaboration
  - Administrator leadership
  - Teacher familiarity and fidelity with best practices in literacy instruction
  - School climate
  - Qualified on-site literacy coach
  - Clear coaching framework
- **Materials and Support**
  - Professional development
  - Core phonics curriculum resources
  - Core literacy curriculum materials
- **Network Support**
  - Interpersonal networks
  - Partners and coaches
  - Check-in meetings
- **Both Resources and Barriers to Implementation**
  - Time
  - Funding
  - Staff attitudes (e.g., buy in)

#### Potential Barriers to Implementation:

- Frequent curriculum changes
- Unclear implementation plan and guidelines
- Geography
- Staff capacity (e.g., retention, open positions)

## **Activities – Implementation of resources to bring about results**

### **Guiding Processes Activities**

- Create a clear goal and vision
- Create clear processes and policies for implementation
- Create a clear coaching model framework
- Create daily curriculum checklists for program fidelity
- Create reflection and reporting tools for school-based literacy coaches

### **Implementation Activities**

- Access to and use of educational materials
- Implementing and maintaining the phonics curriculum with fidelity and integrity
- Using data to drive instruction and coaching
- Develop a walkthrough tool to monitor the fidelity of implementation of both coaching and phonics programs

### **School and District Climate Activities**

- Build strong, solid relationships with all stakeholders
- Building a collaborative, reflective culture that fosters a love of literacy within the district and community
- Hearing teacher voice
- Hosting community events to build parent support
- Student engagement with phonics lessons

### **Staff Support Activities**

- Increased differentiated professional development for staff
- Ongoing support for teachers through observations, feedback, and modeling
- Increased teacher efficacy with the Science of Reading
- Emphasize ongoing literacy support and coaching in monthly meetings

**Activities are divided into four sections:**

Guiding Processes

Implementation

School and District Climate

Staff Support

## **Outputs – Direct results of the School-Based Literacy Coaching Program**

### **Measurable Professional Support**

- Teachers meaningfully engage in coaching sessions at least once per marking period
- Teachers participate in at least weekly Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings related to literacy instruction
- School-based literacy coaches participate in monthly Multi-Classroom Leader (MCL) meetings
- School-based literacy coaches participate in bi-weekly curriculum support meetings

**Outputs are divided into three sections:**

Professional Support

Professional Practice

Student Support

### **Measurable Professional Practice**

- Teacher efficacy with the phonics curriculum
  - Measured through the curriculum checklist
- Teachers participate in a data cycle review every 15-20 days
- Monitor teacher retention and attendance
- Principals review the school-based literacy coach reporting tool

### **Measurable Student Support**

- Students receive 120 minutes of daily literacy instruction
- Literacy progress is measured through 15-20 day data cycles
  - Teachers provide high-quality, data-driven, rigorous direct instruction
- Principals host quarterly “open house” events for home-school connection
- Monitor home-school connection and caregiver participation

## **Outcomes – Specific changes in behavior, knowledge, skills, status, and functioning**

### **Staff Outcomes**

- Teachers respond to student data and progress
- Teachers increase efficacy with direct literacy instruction
- Literacy coaches improve teacher understanding of developing proficient readers through high-quality, evidence-based, rigorous literacy instruction
- Literacy coaches increase their efficacy to support teachers with high-quality, evidence-based, rigorous literacy instruction

### **District-Level Outcomes**

- The core literacy curriculum is implemented with integrity and fidelity
- Teacher attendance and retention improves
- Increased home-school connection and caregiver participation
- ECPS elementary schools embrace the literacy coaching model

### **Student Outcomes**

- Students have improved mCLASS benchmarks
- Greater number of students display literacy proficiency
- More students are on grade-level
- Fewer students need intervention support
- Students receive high-quality, data-driven, rigorous direct instruction in phonics and word study
- More students are proficient with foundational literacy skills
- Upper elementary students display proficiency with reading comprehension skills

**Outcomes are divided into three sections:**

Staff Outcomes

District-Level Outcomes

Student Outcomes

## Short-Term Impacts – *Fundamental changes that occur as a result of school-based literacy coaching within 0-3 years*

### Teacher Understanding and Practices

- Teachers better understand foundational literacy skills
- Teachers display increased confidence in teaching new skills
- Teachers are interested in learning new approaches to teaching literacy
- Teachers display improved teaching practices
- Teachers are receptive to and incorporate feedback
- Teachers spend more time teaching grade-level literacy standards
- Teachers value and encourage (active) parent engagement
- Teachers view school-based literacy coaches as a key component of instructional practice

#### Short-Term Impacts are divided into five sections:

Teacher Understanding and Practices

Student Engagement and Skills

School-Based Literacy Coaches

School and District

Parent and Community Engagement

### Student Engagement and Skills

- Students improve foundational literacy skills
- Students improve levels of literacy proficiency
- Students are more engaged in learning literacy skills
- Fewer students need intervention support

### School-Based Literacy Coaches

- ECPS has a Professional Learning Community (PLC) among leaders and coaches across the district
- Literacy coaches strengthen teacher capacity to support high-quality foundational literacy instruction
- ECPS literacy coaches seek out and implement evidence-based practices in literacy instruction
- ECPS literacy coaches cultivate an environment of curiosity and excitement about best practices in literacy

### School and District

- ECPS elementary school principals shape a culture of learning and love of learning
- Improved school culture (e.g., staff/student attendance, caregiver involvement)

- ECPS has a more collaborative, data-driven, and research-based decision making process
- ECPS communicates changes in literacy instruction to the district and community
- ECPS communicates literacy learning goals with the district and community
- ECPS sustains partnerships with local resources to support literacy funding

## Parent and Community Engagement

- Parent education about literacy resources is increased
- Restore confidence between ECPS and the community
- Parents feel empowered to participate in their child's learning
- ECPS strengthens partnerships with local resources (e.g., literacy resources/engagement)

## Medium-Term Impacts – *Fundamental changes that occur as a result of school-based literacy coaching within 3-5 years*

### Teacher Practices and Satisfaction

- Teachers implement literacy instruction that is research-based with fidelity and integrity
- As a result of working with school-based literacy coaches in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), teachers have strengthened ability and confidence to design, assess, and implement best practices in literacy instruction
- Levels of teacher burnout are reduced
- Teachers display a positive attitude toward continual improvement in teaching practices
- Teachers foster a culture of learning in their classrooms

**Medium Term Impacts are divided into five sections:**

Teacher Practices and Satisfaction

Student Engagement and Skills

School-Based Literacy Coaches

School and District Culture and Practices

Parent and Community Engagement

### Student Engagement and Skills

- Students display higher literacy proficiency rates across multiple data sources (e.g., Lexile, mClass, EOG)
- Students display growth across foundational literacy skills
- Students increase mClass scores (subtest and composite)
- Students develop a love for reading
- Students understand and can articulate the importance of lifelong learning and literacy

### School-Based Literacy Coaches

- ECPS has a strong Professional Learning Community (PLC) among leaders and coaches across the district
- Literacy coaches strengthen teacher capacity to support high-quality foundational literacy instruction
- ECPS literacy coaches seek out and implement evidence-based practices in literacy instruction
- ECPS literacy coaches cultivate an environment of curiosity and excitement about best practices in literacy
- ECPS elementary schools have greater capacity to provide intervention support at all grade levels
- ECPS displays a culture of collaboration and excitement about best practices in literacy
- ECPS maintains a culture of accountability and data-based decision-making

### School and District Culture and Practices

- ECPS elementary schools have unified, research-based literacy practices
- ECPS elementary school principals have a shared vision of literacy coaches and practices to support instructional growth
- School-based literacy coaching is an integral part of teacher support and instructional growth
- ECPS elementary schools strengthen core literacy instruction

### Parent and Community Engagement

- Parents are confident that their children are receiving quality evidence-based literacy instruction
- Parents meaningfully engage in their child’s learning
- ECPS strengthens partnerships with local resources (e.g., literacy resources/engagement)

## Long-Term (Aspirational) Impacts – *Fundamental changes that occur as a result of school-based literacy coaching in 5 years and beyond*

### Teacher Practices and Satisfaction

- ECPS staff display higher levels of job satisfaction and career growth
- Teachers are excited to learn about best practices in literacy instruction
- Teachers strengthen the culture of learning in their classrooms
- ECPS staff display lower levels of burnout

**Aspirational Impacts are divided into four sections:**

Teacher Practices and Satisfaction

School Support

Student Engagement and Skills

Edgecombe County Sets the Standard

- ECPS will have higher retention rates
- ECPS staff increase their attendance
- As a result of working with Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), teachers have strengthened and sustained ability and confidence to design, assess, and implement best practices in literacy

### **School Support**

- ECPS staff have instructional capacity required to teach literacy effectively
- ECPS staff receive intentional and directed support through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and school-based literacy coaches
- ECPS is able to fill all open classroom positions

### **Student Engagement and Skills**

- At least 80% (MTSS/RTII) ECPS elementary school students are on-grade level with foundational literacy skills
- ECPS students display a love of learning
- ECPS students share the importance of lifelong learning and literacy

### **Edgecombe County Sets the Standard**

- ECPS is seen as a model of success for school-based literacy coaching
- ECPS is recognized at the state level for its growth and achievement in literacy
- ECPS is recognized at the national level for its growth and achievement in literacy



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