

**NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading Initiative**  
**Education Learning Team**  
Meeting Two Summary Report

The NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading Education Learning Team met for the second time on October 19<sup>th</sup> from 1-4 pm at SAS in RTP.

All of the materials and presentations shared at Learning Team meetings are online at <http://buildthefoundation.org/learning-teams/>

Background on the NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading Initiative is online at [www.buildthefoundation.org/pathways](http://www.buildthefoundation.org/pathways).

### **Meeting Two Summary**

Team members each sat at one of three tables that corresponded with the Education Outcome they knew the most about. The four tables focused on:

- Outcome 1: High Quality Birth to Eight Programs with Highly Qualified Professionals
- Outcome 2: School Attendance
- Outcome 3: Safe, Positive Climates that Support Social-Emotional Development

Co-Chairs Khari Garvin and Terry Stoops welcomed 17 Learning Team members and set the context for the meeting by reminding the team members of the top-line goal, the shared Measures of Success Framework, and the goals of the Learning Teams process. They walked through what to expect at each of the four Learning Team meetings and outlined today's activities:

- To examine patterns within the Equity data and explore why these inequities are happening in NC; and
- To consider the level of Need in NC around these indicators, including the degree of the problem, the scale of the problem, and the trend.

The co-chairs reminded the group of the [Guiding Principles](#) of the Pathways work.

Mandy Ableidinger, Policy and Practice Leader at NCECF, then addressed the data concerns that were brought up during meeting 1.

- A document responding to all data questions was posted on Basecamp.
- Facilitators brought some new data to meeting 2 that was specifically requested by team members. Mandy briefly outlined the new data and encouraged team members to add it to their data notebooks.
- Mandy noted that we will never have all the data we would like to have, in the format we would like to have it. Given that the data will always be incomplete, our charge moving forward is to:
  - Use the data that are available to aid in our prioritization decisions;
  - Also use our experience and expertise to guide our decision-making around prioritizing indicators; and
  - Develop a data development agenda to identify the gaps where the state needs to collect more or different data.
- The group discussed the importance of having data to tell the story, but not allowing the process to get stuck when data are not available. For example, we don't want to eliminate an indicator

from consideration for prioritization because there are no good data available – that may still be a crucially important indicator.

### **Table Work: Why Do the Inequities Exist?**

Mandy introduced the Education Inequities Synthesis – a new tool that displays on one page all the insights the team members offered at meeting 1 about the inequities found in North Carolina in these indicators. The Inequities Synthesis is also available online at <http://buildthefoundation.org/learning-teams/>.

There was a large group conversation around the patterns seen in the Inequities Synthesis, which led into the first table exercise. Patterns noted included:

- **Racial/Ethnic disparities:**
  - Asian children are seeing better than average or the best results on all indicators
  - African American children are seeing worse than average or the worst results on all indicators
  - American Indian children are seeing the worst outcomes in 3 of the 6 indicators
  - Hispanic children are seeing better than average results on all indicators except retention, which is the only academic marker we have equity data for
  - White children are seeing better than average or best results on all indicators
- Geographic disparities – the edges of the state are struggling (far West, far East)
- Age disparities – younger children are seeing worse outcomes than older children in all indicators except suspensions.

In preparation for the first table exercise around *why* the inequities noted in the data exist in NC, Mandy introduced the team to a framework of structural or system characteristics that research (Foster-Fishman and Watson, 2012) has shown explain why inequities exist and are powerful levers of change. The characteristics included:

- **Regulatory Environment** – policies, rules around eligibility for programs.
- **Program Components and Support Environment** – program quality, accessibility, affordability, availability.
- **Relational/Connectivity Environment** – shared data, shared goals, co-located programs, integrated, seamless referrals and information sharing.
- **Resource Environment** – funding (what is and isn't funded, is funding sufficient), skills and capacities of providers, sufficient numbers of skilled providers.
- Economic Environment – state economy and available economic opportunities for families.
- **Power/Decision-Making Environment** – who has influence and voice at the state level, and who does not?
- **Mindsets** – Attitudes, values, beliefs, and biases that exist across the populace and among those in power and in decision-making roles.

Each table then moved through a process aimed at answering the question – Why do these inequities exist in NC? Each table looked only at the indicators for the outcome they were responsible for. Facilitators took notes at each table, and Individual Reflection sheets were collected after the meeting. *Insights gleaned from the individual work and the table conversations are included here as Appendix A.*

After the table work, the full group summarized their discussion on why there are patterns of inequities in North Carolina:

Regulatory Environment:

- Lack of jobs impact housing, which impacts mobility and school attendance

Program Support Environment:

- English-only instruction in schools – lack of supports for teaching children in their home language has direct implications for early reading proficiency

Resource Environment:

- Gap in high quality early education for youngest children has to do with access, impacted by cost and sufficient highly trained professionals
- Rural/poor counties struggling more to fund programs and quality teachers because smaller tax base, unemployment

Connectivity Environment:

Power/Decision-Making Environment:

- There are historical, systematic reasons why poverty is higher in some areas and certain demographic groups

Mindsets/Biases:

- Cultural norms – for example, Hispanic families more likely to care for children within the extended family rather than using formal child care
- Idea that preschool is “real” school – impacts attendance and other variables.
- Belief that certain children won’t succeed; having lower expectations because of racial and/or income bias

### **Table Work: Rating the Indicators on Need**

Mandy introduced the next exercise – rating the overall Need across the state on each indicator. The group thought about Need in three ways:

- Degree of the problem: How badly or well is the state performing on this indicator?
- Scale of the problem: How many children and families are affected by this indicator?
- Trend: Is the state’s performance on this indicator stagnant, getting worse or better, or expected to get worse or better?

Mandy highlighted the data resources that were available for the table conversations, and the tables began rating the indicators in the outcome they were responsible for. *Need ratings are included here as Appendix B.*

There was a brief group discussion around the questions – “What does the stakeholder group need to know about Need around these indicators?” and “Why are these Needs present in NC?” Comments included:

- All the indicators are high need

- Indicators are connected and impact each other
- For those who can access programs (i.e, regulated child care or NC Pre-K), quality is good, but we don't know anything about the rest of the children who aren't accessing those programs – by choice or not?

*Data questions from the meeting are included here as Appendix C.*

### **Wrap-Up and Next Steps**

The meeting concluded with a reminder of next steps. Meeting 3 will focus on the connections among indicators, and the team will make prioritization recommendations to present to all three Learning Teams, which will be meeting together in December for Meeting 4.

The next Education Learning Team meeting is scheduled for November 16<sup>th</sup> from 1-4 pm at SAS.

The PowerPoint presentation for the meeting is available online at <http://buildthefoundation.org/learning-teams/>.

## Appendix A: Synthesis of Table Work on Why the Inequities Exist

### Outcome 1: High Quality Birth to Eight Programs with Highly Qualified Professionals

High quality child care enrollment	K-3 reading growth
<b>Regulatory Environment</b>	
Harder for infant/toddler classrooms to meet 4- and 5-star standards because of cost	Policies in preK-12 instruction that emphasize “English-only” instruction negatively impact dual-language learners
Fewer publicly-funded programs to support infants and toddlers	Increase in testing in K-3 environments hinders teachers’ ability to deliver instruction - creates a domino effect
Child care subsidy rules are too narrow (requiring families to be working), thereby restricting access	Policies requiring certification or renewal credits for literacy training butts up against the accessibility of the trainings (either availability or sheer cost) and other un-funded mandates
Rules around eligibility have an impact on enrollment.	Too much emphasis on assessments (K-3 formative, Reading 3D, etc.) hinders teachers.
Policies around teacher certification for birth-prek educators- are standards too low?	English only
A lot of state run programs for 4 year olds.	Increase in amount of testing at K-3 level.
In some communities speaking a second language at home may put you higher on a list for Pre-K, however some other groups then may not be eligible for Pre-K.	Amount of work put on K-3 teachers. Not enough time to focus on needs of struggling learners.
Parents must be working to qualify for subsidy.	Policies requiring literacy training for K-5 certification renewal? Professional development may be harder to access in rural areas.
Re: Age inequity, there has been singular focus on publicly funded programming for older children (e.g. PreK and Head Start)- although there is a shift happening in Head Start to address younger children.	
Re: American Indians, this group is regarded as a sovereign nation and is not subject to some of the regulatory requirements of more "mainstream" populations.	
Fewer state-funded high-quality programs for younger children compared to PreK aged children- worse for infants/toddlers.	
<b>Program/Support Environment</b>	

Infant/toddler care less available/accessible	Teacher quality as it relates to strategies to support dual-language learners, cultural competency, and students needing other supports
Lack of transportation	Quality of administrators and access to professional development
American Indians disproportionately impacted because they tend to live in under-resourced counties	Access to summer learning programs
Less geographic availability in high poverty.	Lower teacher/administrator supplements in high poverty counties
Lack of programs available for ages 0-3?	Program quality, accessibility, affordability, availability are all challenges for low income families, stronger risk with summer gap
Too few spots available for 3 and 4 year olds. (Transportation)	Transportation challenges especially in rural areas.
Accountability of programs.	Summer learning
Transportation to and from child care.	Teacher Quality
Infant/toddler care is less available and more expensive than other ages.	Administrator Quality
Transportation- especially in rural areas.	Insufficient literacy training for teachers, insufficient prep time for teachers in high-needs schools
	Summer learning programs
	Access to low-cost summer learning programs?
	Programs to link literacy to location- like Reach Out and Read?
	Lower quality public schools in rural areas.
<b>Relational/Connectivity Environment</b>	
	More opportunities needed for parents
	More supportive services should be embedded in schools
	More opportunities to share data between pre-k to K to support transition
	More data sharing needed between schools and community resources
Lack of shared data and assessments into transition to K.	Lack of shared data for transition from Pre-K to K- e.g. share data on children's language/literacy skills
Kindergarten Entry Assessment?	Challenge getting data from school systems.
Frustrations between child care centers and elementary schools.	Lower supplements for teachers in high poverty communities.

	Continuous assessments
	EOG and Reading 3D and KEA
	Reading tutors/reading specialists
	Data sharing between DPI and service orgs (like Read and Feed)?
	More opportunities for parent programs in school.
<b>Resources Environment</b>	
Rates do not cover true cost of quality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lower staff salaries</li> <li>• Lower retention rates of staff</li> </ul>	More funding needed for low-income areas for education and specifically for literacy
High unemployment rates lead to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families ineligibility for subsidy</li> <li>• Diminishes need for formal care</li> </ul>	More funding needed to support parent education
Small numbers of skilled providers in rural areas of the state.	Ensuring adequate teacher knowledge, PD, supports for PK-3 around language literacy practices, especially with regard to dual-language learners and children who need additional supports, ensure adequate K-3 reading growth
Lack of jobs (economic opportunities) in rural areas.	Rural areas struggle with lack of resources and program offerings.
Outside data- Educational levels of adults and impact on job access.	Lack of funding for schools serving low-income children and mostly minority children.
Salaries for early care providers too low to ensure high quality.	Access to books for low-income families?
If families don't have jobs, can't access high quality care or subsidies.	Lack of employment, low wages, lower local tax base has influence on funding.
More funding needed for child care in communities with high percentage of African Americans and American Indians.	Lack of funding for parent programs about supporting their children's literacy.
High unemployment rate.	
Lower salaries for early care teachers.	
Not enough public dollars to meet childcare needs	
Not enough career pathways to living wage jobs.	
Lack of funding for training and low wages for childcare workers.	

Early childhood education is a relatively low-paying field- difficult retaining highly-qualified EC educators, especially in higher poverty areas.	
<b>Power/Decision-Making Environment</b>	
Parents' and teachers' voices not reaching ears of lawmakers who shape policy that can create high quality environments	Superintendents
Voices of parents often not heard at state level.	Elected officials
Parent voice missing among decision makers.	Unheard voices (parents, teachers, community members if they do not speak up)
Teachers under represented.	Legislators out of touch with best-practices for instruction
Parents and teachers aren't heard.	Read to Achieve feels punitive instead of aspirational- is parent/teacher voice missing.
NCECF	
NC Non-Profit Agencies	
<b>Mindset</b>	
Minority families may feel left out	"Reading is the schools' job" false belief
Some cultural norms impact families' willingness/need to access formal care	Belief that some students in poverty will not rise above a certain proficiency level.
Minorities often feel left out of power and decision making.	Lack of professional development centered around culturally competent teaching strategies.
Cultural bias against formal care.	Long held prejudices and beliefs about how various groups value education.
Lack of understanding of importance of early care.	
Latino families often do not see the value of preschool if they have a parent (often Mom) at home.	
Other cultural stigmas, fear about childcare.	
Lack of understanding among decision makers about the critical development window of 0-5.	

## Outcome 2: School Attendance

<b>Regular attendance</b>	<b>School stability</b>
<b>Regulatory Environment</b>	
Age of entry policies	Expulsion rules
No compulsory attendance laws	Exceptional children policies/laws
Age at entry (not required to be in school until 7)	Expulsion rate vs. school changes- are they related?
Eligibility requirements can be restrictive for NC Pre-K.	Statutes/legislation that affect parental decisions to move student for better access. Ex. EC, R and A
Age of entry	Expulsion rules prompting school changes
Compulsory attendance	Exceptional children program quality (IEP, 504)
Age entry for K	Expulsion- mobility
Laws- not mandatory for Pre-K to 7	legislation/EC- mobility
	Expulsions compared to school stability- do moves between schools align to expulsions
	EC legislation affect stability?
<b>Program/Support Environment</b>	
Limited access (budget)	Migrant populations – more mobile
Variability in quality among classrooms	Military populations – more mobile
<b>Relational/Connectivity Environment</b>	
No continuity between pre-k and K-3 data systems	
<b>Resource Environment</b>	
Transportation to pre-K can be an issue	Job opportunities
No guidance on spending or budgeting	Housing issues – evictions, opportunities
PK providers not held to same certification standards	Poverty
<b>Power/Decision-Making environment</b>	
DHHS rules for staff certification	School report cards prompting school selection
<b>Mindsets</b>	
Pre-K not as "important" as K	Younger grades not viewed as importantly as "testing" grades
	Custody arrangements
	“school shopping”

### Outcome 3: Safe, Positive Climates that Support Social-Emotional Development

Suspensions	Expulsions	Retentions	Schools incorporate social-emotional strategies
<b>Regulatory Environment</b>			
No consistent policies governing suspensions	Everything from suspensions discussion applies here, too	<p>Decisions around retention are made at the individual student level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No set protocol for retentions across the state</li> <li>▪ Teacher and principal bias in play</li> <li>▪ Some retaining more because of Read to Achieve, some retaining less</li> <li>▪ Parent input is a factor, which brings in more disparity</li> </ul>	(No disparity data on this.)
SROs in schools mean law enforcement solution instead of positive discipline	Equity in interventions	Prevention - No standardized early warning system triggered by academic testing, IEP, 504	No consistent standardized way to create a trauma-informed culture in the schools to better understand behaviors
Hispanic children have high enrollment, low suspension rate, language is additional risk factor	Consistent policy on what constitutes expulsions	Any impact from ESSA? (Forward looking)	No consistency in school leadership (principal turnover) - impacts implementation of strategies
Black: low enrollment, high suspension rate	Teacher/admin training on dealing with challenging children, policy or requirement	System pushes promotion so decisions not necessarily what is best for the child	Focus on positive behavioral interventions

Recruitment, site availability in low-income, transportation barrier for enrollment.		ESSA	Investment in alternatives
Consistency/alignment of policies around suspension		Site based decision making on retentions.	Health/income, health interventions
Lack of support for poor school districts		Varies greatly by school and district.	
<b>Program/Support Environment</b>			
Minority kids not connecting with school environments because not represented in materials, teachers, which leads to boredom/disconnect, behavior, suspensions	Lack of programs for teaching self-regulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resources</li> <li>• Teacher training and classroom resources to support that training</li> <li>• Principal trainings</li> </ul>	Remediation and other programs that would prevent the need for retentions – issues with transportation, access, etc.	Caregiver supports for mental health/depression
Access to FRL/breakfast can impact behavior	Programs for parents/children on expulsions	Retention issues across race/ethnicity- suggests accessibility or availability.	
American Indian – suspension rates very high; concentrated geographically but don't seem to be increased understanding/training/cultural competence in those areas of the state			
Networks and others supports for caregiver well-being			
<b>Relational/Connectivity Environment</b>			
Insufficient sharing of data so can analyze why disparities exist	Mental health referrals for certain expulsion reasons: how many kids expelled for violence	Syncing up data for each grade level and consistent reporting.	

	received/attended intervention programs?		
	Data around expulsion reason	New K-3 formative assessments standardizes data	
<b>Resource Environment</b>			
Ensuring that teachers are trained to understand child development/behavioral health and cultural competence training	Programs funded?	Summer school defunded in some districts in the past	Not enough investment in alternatives to traditional discipline
Disparities in caregiver/home environment health and stability, which results in kids acting out (toxic stress repercussions)	Inconsistency on trained providers guidance counselors or school social workers	Disparate resources at the family level to advocate for kids from the beginning	Insufficient mental health interventions
Disparities in discipline data don't trigger additional resources	Inconsistent-access/transportation	Disparities already when enter K	Insufficient social workers in the schools
Lack of school social workers who could help deal with issues causing suspensions		Hispanic worse on retentions – why? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Testing issue?</li> <li>▪ English language issue?</li> <li>▪ Teacher bias?</li> </ul>	Teacher trainings and professional development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Understanding connection between cognition and social-emotional development</li> <li>▪ Standards around “highly qualified” for administrators, like they have for teachers</li> <li>▪ Training on child development and social-emotional health</li> </ul>
Need more training requirements on cultural competence, behavior management.		Funding for preschool programs?	Observation: Title I schools sometimes have more resources and have seen the need for programs like these; poor schools that are non-Title I don't have the resources

School resource offices		Teacher training?	Skills/training for teachers and administrators
Cultural competence		Hispanic (increase) retention: Language barriers? Are they being tested in primary language?	community learning teams
Training on alternate interventions		Dual language program available?	Multi-Tiered System of Supports - Prevention, Intervention, Intense Intervention
<b>Power/Decision-Making environment</b>			
Analysis of data, who gets suspended and why?	ESSA?	School boards, superintendents.	
<b>Mindsets</b>			
Implicit/explicit bias - Minority kids stereotyped and therefore suspended more	Behavior problems will persist to older groups.	Methods for testing aren't individualized	Belief that all kids come to school on equal footing
Pre-K: teachers blame the kids		Testing- some kids test better than others.	
Disparities in enrollment and suspensions for African American kids. Disproportionately represented among those suspended.		English Language should be primary.	
Hispanic families- discipline and behavioral expectations, 2 parents in home		Populace believes they should adapt, not the schools.	
Implicit/explicit bias			

## Appendix B: Need Rating Worksheet

Team members rated three aspects of Need, on the following scales:

- Degree of Need: **High**, **Medium**, or **Low**
- Scale of Need: **Affects Significant Numbers of Children**, **Modest Number of Children**, or **Few Children**
- Trend: **Getting Worse**, **Holding Steady**, **Getting Better**

	Degree	Scale	Trend	Notes
<b>Outcome: Access to high-quality, birth-to-eight programs with highly qualified professionals</b>				
<b>High quality child care enrollment</b>	High	Significant	<i>Insufficient data</i>	“High” and “significant” based on total population of young children in NC, not just those in care. Need more info on those not in care. Not enough data to determine trends.
<b>K-3 reading growth</b>	High	Significant	<i>Insufficient data</i>	Data considered is proficiency data, not growth; making some guesses here for now. Not enough data to determine trends.
<b>Outcome: School attendance</b>				
<b>Regular attendance</b>	High	Significant	Worse	100% of kids miss 15+ days (pre-K); disparities
<b>School stability</b>	Medium	Modest	Steady	Trend varies by grade; overall steady; need focus on low-income and African American – more mobile.
<b>Outcome: Safe, positive climates that support social-emotional development</b>				
<b>Suspensions</b>	High	Significant	Worse	Some counties (i.e., Wake) have seen improvements because of intentional policies to reduce suspensions, but overall trend is worse.
<b>Expulsions</b>	Low	Few	Better	
<b>Retentions</b>	High	Significant	<i>Insufficient data – but probably worse overall</i>	No trend data presented here, but group knows trend has been towards more retentions for 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> graders, fewer for kindergarteners. Read to Achieve should mean trend towards more retentions over last three years.
<b>Schools incorporate social-emotional strategies</b>	High	Significant	Better	This one – if done well – could impact the other three indicators.

## Appendix D: Data Questions and Suggestions

- Waiting list for NC Pre-K would be a measure of number of families who want a service and are eligible but aren't receiving it because of funding limitations.
- Survey questions of parents when children start kindergarten:
  - Was your child in child care or preschool last year? If not, why?
  - To find out whether it's lack of access or family choice
- Performing vs. Progressing (K-3 growth vs. proficiency indicators)
- Can look at Community College Data for family/parent education levels
- How many elementary schools have SRO's?
- Any longitudinal analysis on whether suspensions are leading to expulsions and/or the official causes of expulsions?
- Dual language program retentions vs. English-language only retentions