

# NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading

## Partnering for a Stronger North Carolina

Driving the NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading initiative is the foundational belief that together we can realize greater outcomes for young children than any of us can produce on our own.

Pathways Partners are doing just that – they are working together toward a common goal, agreeing on how to measure progress, coordinating and promoting strategies that take into account all aspects of children’s healthy development, and aligning policies and practices along the developmental continuum, starting at birth, to maximize each child’s potential.

This document defines what it means to be a Pathways Partner and how to join a network of diverse leaders working across disciplines, sectors and systems to achieve a bold vision:

**All North Carolina children, regardless of race, ethnicity or socioeconomic status, are reading on grade-level by the end of third grade, and all children with disabilities achieve expressive and receptive communication skills commensurate with their developmental ages, so that they have the greatest opportunity for life success.**

### It’s Our **Moment**

The NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading initiative is a collaborative of diverse leaders building on North Carolina’s history of innovation and success to tackle one of the greatest challenges currently facing the state: the overwhelming majority of our children, especially those from low-income families, are not reading proficiently by the end of third grade. Reading well in the early grades predicts a child’s academic and career success.

Research shows that improving third grade reading takes a coordinated birth-through-age-eight approach that focuses on children’s health and development, families and communities, and high-quality learning environments with regular attendance. It takes aligned policies and practices all working toward a common vision.

Pathways Partners work across disciplines – health, family and community support, and early learning and education; across sectors – government, policy, private and nonprofit; across systems – birth-through-age-five and kindergarten-through-third-grade; and across the political aisle.

Together, Pathways Partners co-created the shared Measures of Success Framework and are working to align policies and practices to put each child on a pathway to grade-level reading.

**Pathways Partners are driven by possibility. What would be possible if . . .**

- ✓ We adopted shared, whole child, birth-through-age-eight measures that put children on a pathway to grade-level reading?
- ✓ We aligned policies and practices that are rooted in how children develop?
- ✓ We coordinated strategies to support children’s optimal development beginning at birth?

## Pathways Principles

- ✓ We will be data- and research-driven and informed by developmental science.
- ✓ We commit to acknowledging and eliminating systemic inequities and racial, ethnic, socioeconomic and ability disparities in early childhood experiences, opportunities, and outcomes.
- ✓ We will focus on the whole child, birth-through-age-eight, in the context of his or her family and community, using a multidimensional systems lens.
- ✓ We will be transparent, collaborative and accountable to one another.
- ✓ We will be informed by and hold ourselves accountable to families and communities.
- ✓ We will have a strength-based approach, highlighting protective factors and preventative solutions, and be guided by compassion.
- ✓ We will work to ensure that each child has the opportunity to fulfill his or her potential.
- ✓ We will prioritize solutions that are actionable and sustainable, and we will have high expectations of what is achievable.
- ✓ We will be results-oriented, embracing innovation and seeing change as opportunity

## Pathways Partnership Definitions

All Pathways Partners support the shared Measures of Success Framework and agree that if the state implemented aligned policy, practice and program changes around the measures, North Carolina would start to see improvements in third grade reading outcomes. Partners promote the importance of child development and early literacy to our state's well-being and encourage adoption of policies and practices that have the greatest promise in advancing progress toward the North Carolina Pathways to Grade-Level Reading vision.

Pathways Partners are part of a statewide effort to co-create and advance a common vision, shared measures of success and a coordinated birth-through-age-eight approach to improve third grade reading that focuses on children's health and development, supported and supportive families and communities, and high-quality learning environments with regular attendance.



### There are two types of Pathways Partnerships:

- Pathways Partners
- Pathways Business Partners

## Pathways Partners

**Pathways Partners** are state or local entities and people who have been involved in at least one of the following activities annually:

- ✓ Attending a Pathways Partners (formerly Stakeholders) Meeting
- ✓ Serving on a Pathways Action Team (e.g., Data Action Team, Learning Team, Design Team)
- ✓ Using the Pathways Measures of Success Framework to engage partners in aligned local action
- ✓ Sharing data with Pathways
- ✓ Serving as an advisor to a Pathways process
- ✓ Providing in-kind or financial support to Pathways
- ✓ Aligning organizational/agency policies, practices, programs, and/or funding to advance any of the Shared Measures of Success and articulating the connection to Pathways.
- ✓ Advocating for the policies, practices and programs recommended by the Pathways Design Teams and finalized by Pathways Partners

### **Partners may benefit through:**

- ✓ Recognition on the Pathways website, in select Pathways materials, and on social media
- ✓ A Pathways icon to share on their website and include in email signatures
- ✓ Complimentary attendance to Pathways Partners meetings
- ✓ Opportunities to network and develop relationships with individuals from multiple sectors
- ✓ Promotion of the organization's or agency's work, and how it contributes to making progress on the Pathways measures.
- ✓ Access to influential partners and experts in multiple domains working collectively toward Pathways goals and strategies
- ✓ Opportunities to leverage and expand your organization's work and fund development through partnership

## Pathways Business Partners

**Pathways Business Partners** are private entities and people that have been involved in at least one of the following activities annually:

- ✓ Promoting the importance of child development and third grade reading to our state's well-being
- ✓ Encouraging adoption of policies and practices that have the greatest promise in advancing progress toward North Carolina's Pathways to Grade-Level Reading vision
- ✓ Adopting business policies, practices and programs that advance the Pathways Measures of Success for employees and their families and the local community
- ✓ Providing a testimonial supporting Pathways
- ✓ Submitting an op-ed or letter to the editor to a media outlet advancing Pathways' goals
- ✓ Sharing Pathways information with colleagues
- ✓ Hosting a Pathways presentation

### **Business Partners may benefit through:**

- ✓ Recognition on the Pathways website, in select Pathways materials, and on social media
- ✓ A Pathways icon to share on their website and include in email signatures
- ✓ Complimentary attendance to Pathways Partners meetings
- ✓ Championing an issue that is a top priority for North Carolinians and that matters for building a strong future workforce for our state
- ✓ Increased ties to organizations and individuals in your community and statewide who are working to improve outcomes for children and their families
- ✓ Recognition as one of the state's early learning leaders
- ✓ Recognition at Pathways events
- ✓ Speaking opportunities at statewide and regional events

Complete the online form at [www.buildthefoundation.org/pathways-partners](http://www.buildthefoundation.org/pathways-partners) to become an official Pathways Partner and/or Pathways Business Partner and receive your welcome kit.

## Pathways **Accelerator Team**

NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading is an initiative of the NC Early Childhood Foundation (NCECF), working in partnership with a Pathways Accelerator Team. NCECF, NC Child, The North Carolina Partnership for Children for Children, Inc., and BEST NC are founding members of the Accelerator Team.

### **Members of the Pathways Accelerator Team:**

- Provide strategic guidance and thought leadership on the Pathways initiative
- Provide expertise, experience and capacity to collectively support development of a sustainable multi-sector collaborative effort to support children's optimal development during their birth-through-age-eight years
- Build the capacity of state and community partners to advance the Pathways Measures of Success Framework and the policies, practices and programs recommended by the Pathways Design Teams and finalized by Pathways Partners
- Align strategic plans and commit organizational assets (e.g., community engagement, policy, data and programmatic expertise) to advance Pathways and align systems and policies across the birth-through-age-eight continuum
- Serve as vocal champions of the NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading vision and shared measures

Supported by the Pathways Accelerator Team, the **North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation** creates a space and facilitates people coming together to learn, discuss, co-create, and take action on improving third grade reading proficiency. We guide a process to:

- Identify research-based measures of success that will move the needle on reading proficiency
- Learn how North Carolina is doing on those measures, including where the biggest inequities lie
- Determine where to move to action first
- Develop strategies to make progress on the measures
- Develop strategies to improve data collection and analysis on the measures