

# **NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading Design Teams Survey Results**

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# Introduction

The North Carolina Pathways to Grade-Level Reading (Pathways) initiative brings together diverse leaders 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. These leaders are asking what is possible.

## 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 were rooted in how children develop?
- We coordinated strategies to support children’s optimal development beginning at birth?

The Pathways vision is bold. 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.

In the first phase of the initiative, North Carolina leaders created a set of shared measures of our state’s progress towards this common vision. [Pathways Partners](#) – a group 150 strong and growing – tasked a [Data Action Team](#) of 30 experts from North Carolina’s leading universities, research institutes, government agencies, businesses and think tanks – with identifying the research-based factors that matter for moving the needle on third-grade reading. [The Pathways Measures of Success Framework](#) resulted from their work.

In Phase Two, Pathways Partners launched Learning Teams to review the North Carolina data behind the Measures of Success. There were three [Learning Teams](#): 1) Health and Development on Track Beginning at Birth, 2) Supported and Supportive Families and Communities and 3) High Quality Birth-to-Eight Learning Environments with Regular Attendance. Each Learning Team comprised content experts, data experts and policy

thinkers. The teams met individually three times, then held a final meeting together, to recommend measures to act on first.

In the third phase, three Design Teams were constituted to identify strategies for action to impact the areas prioritized by the Pathways Partners. There were three [Design Teams](#): 1) Social-Emotional Health, 2) High Quality Early Care and Education and 3) Regular School Attendance. Teams were tasked with considering the universe of possible strategies and prioritizing a set of actions across the areas of focus to make progress toward the top line result of all children reading on grade level by the end of third grade.

Design Team members participated in six meetings:

- [Meeting One](#) was a joint meeting of the three Design Teams in June 2017. Participants began to brainstorm what current North Carolina policies and practices to keep, change, create or chuck to see improved outcomes for children and families.
- At [Meeting Two](#) in October 2017, Design Teams met separately to learn a racial equity framework from OpenSource Leadership Strategies, establish a racial equity lens for the work, and think about root causes from an equity angle to inform solutions.
- At [Meeting Three](#) in December 2017, Design Teams met separately to bring together the work on racial equity with input from parents, local providers of services for children and families, and national research to inform cross-sector actions. Criteria, grounded in the Pathways Principles, were developed to guide the group as they selected actions to pursue.
- [Meeting Four](#), a joint meeting of Design Teams in March 2018, shared findings from 13 Community Conversations from across the state. Team members used the Pathways Criteria to identify top actions for moving forward.
- In the joint [Meeting Five](#) of the Design Teams in June 2018, members came to consensus on the top actions. Team members also began to gather input on what NC is already doing in the action areas.
- At [Meeting Six](#), in August 2018, team members celebrated finding consensus on the [Pathways Action Framework](#) and began action planning for the implementation phase of the work.

This report presents results of surveys that were completed by Design Team members after each meeting. The surveys were designed to understand members' assessments of how well the meetings met the stated objectives, valued participants' time, engaged members in meaningful ways, and were planned and executed. The surveys also included open-ended questions to gather team members' ideas for continuous process improvement. The table below presents the survey response rates. Survey questions are located in Appendix A.

For more information on the NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading initiative, please visit <https://buildthefoundation.org/initiative/pathways-to-grade-level-reading/>.

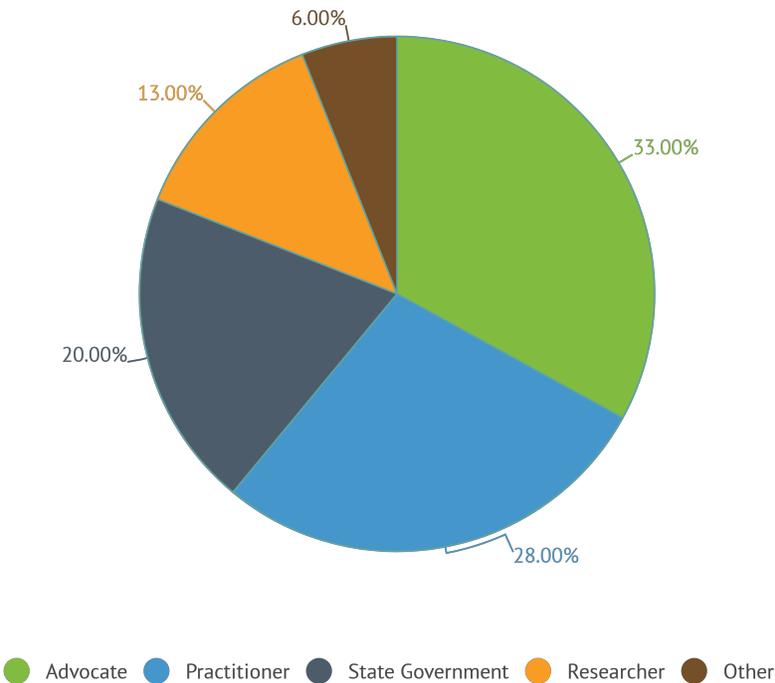
Snapshot of Evaluations completed per meeting:

Meeting	Number of Meeting Attendees	Number of Completed Surveys	Survey Response Rate
<b>Meeting 1</b> <i>Joint meeting of all Design Teams</i>	69	53	77%
<b>Meeting 2</b> <i>Each Design Team met separately</i>	60	59	98%
<b>Meeting 3</b> <i>Each Design Team met separately</i>	58	56	97%
<b>Meeting 4</b> <i>Joint meeting of all Design Teams</i>	49	38	78%
<b>Meeting 5</b> <i>Joint meeting of all Design Teams</i>	48	37	77%
<b>Final meeting</b> <i>Joint meeting of all Design Teams</i>	34	26	76%

Please note: When team members were unable to attend meetings, Pathways solicited input from them and shared it with their team members.

# Design Team Representation

Pathways Design Team members reflected a diversity of sectors and roles that incorporated a range of expertise, backgrounds and perspectives into discussions. Of the 269 total surveys returned over the course of Phase Three, 33 percent of respondents identified themselves as advocates, 28 percent as practitioners, 20 percent as representatives from state agencies, 13 percent as researchers and six percent as “other.” Definitions of these categories follow.



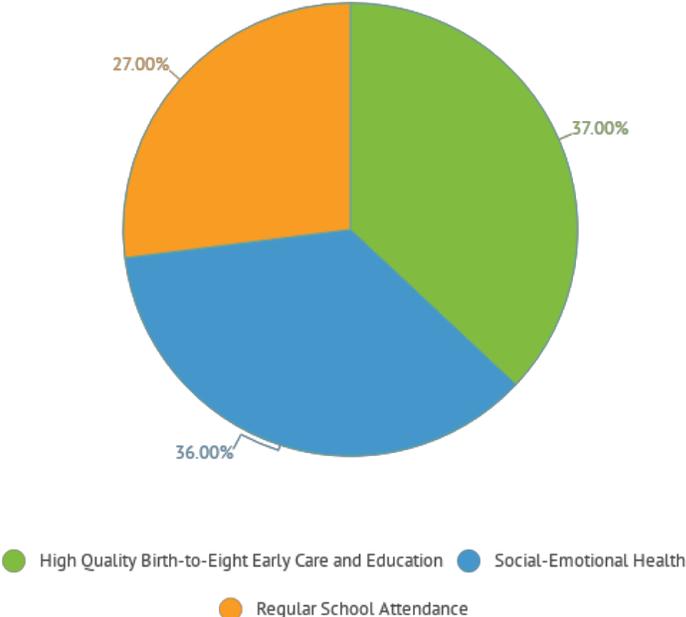
**Practitioner:** works with children and families. Examples: service provider, teacher, school or district administrator, pediatrician

**State government:** works for a state agency. Examples: DPI, DSS, DPH, DMA

**Advocate:** works outside of government in an advocacy or policy role. Examples: NC Child, Prevent Child Abuse NC, local nonprofit

**Researcher:** works in academia. Examples: UNC, Duke, NC State

An even spread of members from all three Design Teams responded to the surveys. In aggregate, 37 percent of participants who completed surveys were from the High-Quality Birth-to-Eight Early Care and Education Design Team; 36 percent from the Social-Emotional Health Design Team; and 27 percent from the Regular School Attendance Design Team.



# Key Findings

**Overall, Design Team members reported extremely positive experiences in their participation in the Pathways initiative and felt the work, if implemented, would improve third grade reading outcomes for North Carolina's children.**

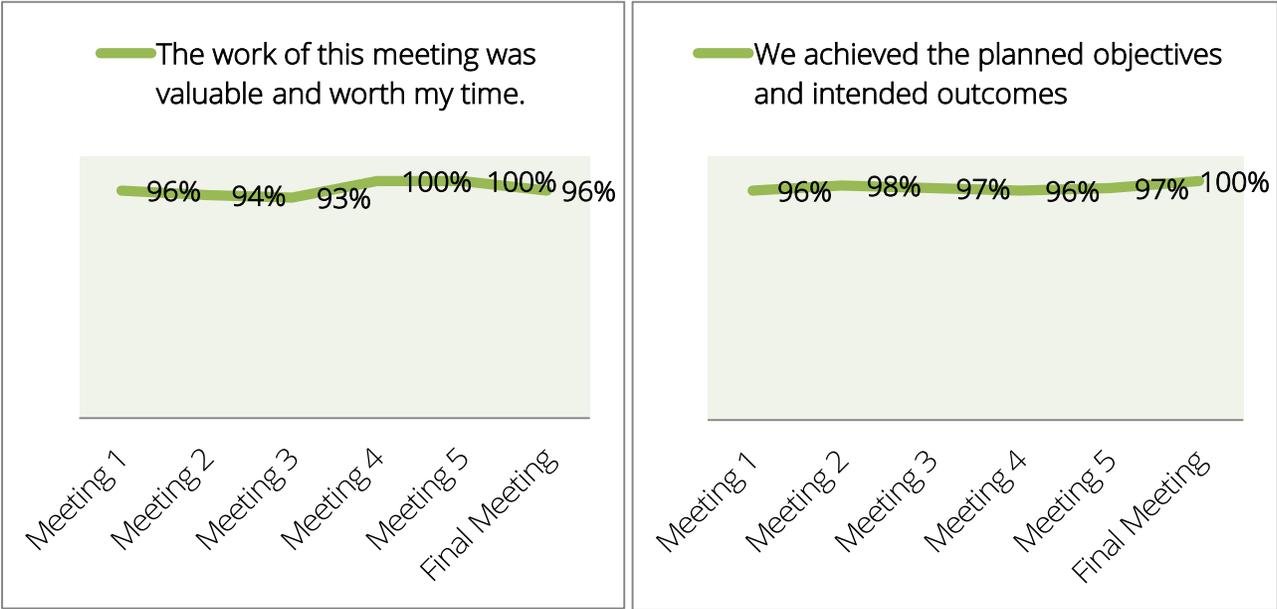
- Ninety-seven percent (97%) of Design Team members indicated that meetings were valuable and worth their time.
- Ninety-seven percent (97%) of Design Team members reported that the meetings achieved the planned objectives and intended outcomes.
- Ninety-eight percent (98%) of members stated that they felt the Design Team was engaging in work that, if implemented, would improve third grade reading outcomes for North Carolina's children.
- Ninety-eight percent (98%) of members reflected that they felt their voices were heard.
- Ninety-nine percent (99%) of members indicated they had a valuable role in shaping the work.

**Design Team members made suggestions for continuous improvement that Pathways incorporated throughout the process.**

- Simplifying and clarifying activities as much as possible.
- Identifying opportunities to share across Design Teams to keep the work connected and participants updated on the overall progress of the initiative.
- Maximizing meeting productivity by fine-tuning logistics to meet Design Team members' needs.
- Within meetings, balancing the need for context-setting and moving the work forward.
- Involving parents and youth more throughout the process.

**Design team members expressed that their involvement in Pathways was satisfying and energizing. They placed great value on the racial equity training and racial equity lens used throughout the process, as well as the diversity of input from many voices from a variety of sectors, backgrounds and perspectives. Team members indicated that the Pathways approach was effective in engaging members to unite behind a common purpose and do the hard work of building consensus.**

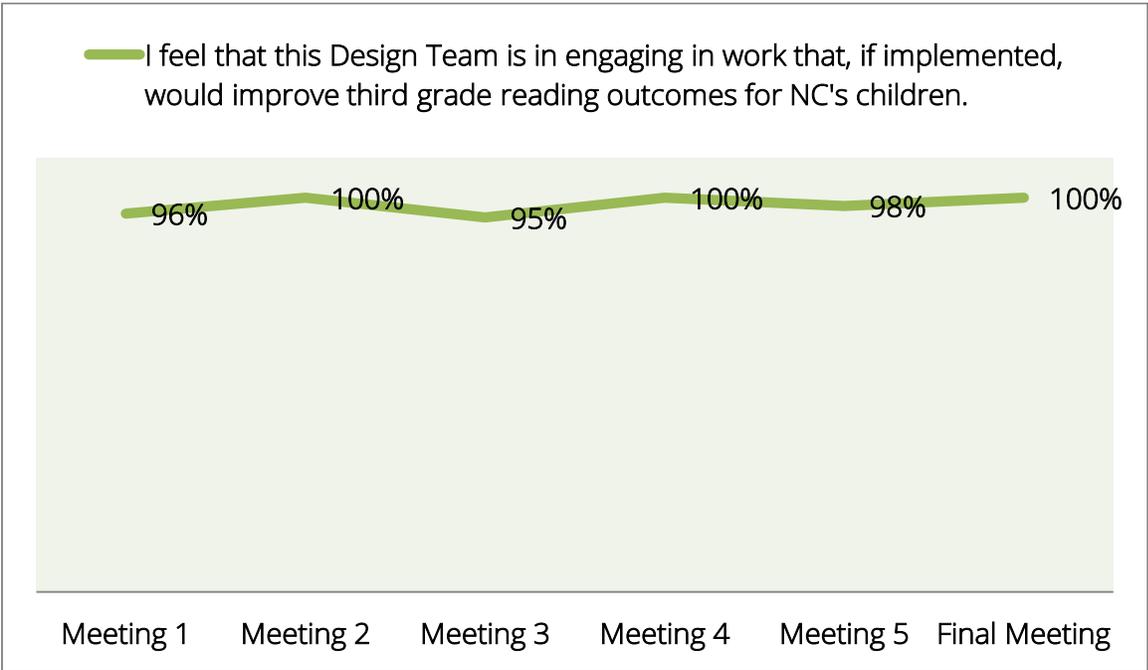
# Meetings were **valuable to members** and **achieved the objectives and intended outcomes.**



All, or almost all, Design Team members indicated that the Pathways meetings were valuable and worth their time. The percentage of members who agreed with this statement ranged from 96 percent after the first meeting to 100 percent after meetings four and five. In addition, after each Design Team meeting, all, or nearly all, members indicated that the planned objectives and intended outcomes were achieved. The percentage of members who agreed with this statement was consistently high, ranging from 96 percent after the first meeting to 100 percent after the final meeting.

These data suggest that the collaborative has been highly successful in facilitating and supporting team members' engagement in the overall project and accomplishing its stated objectives.

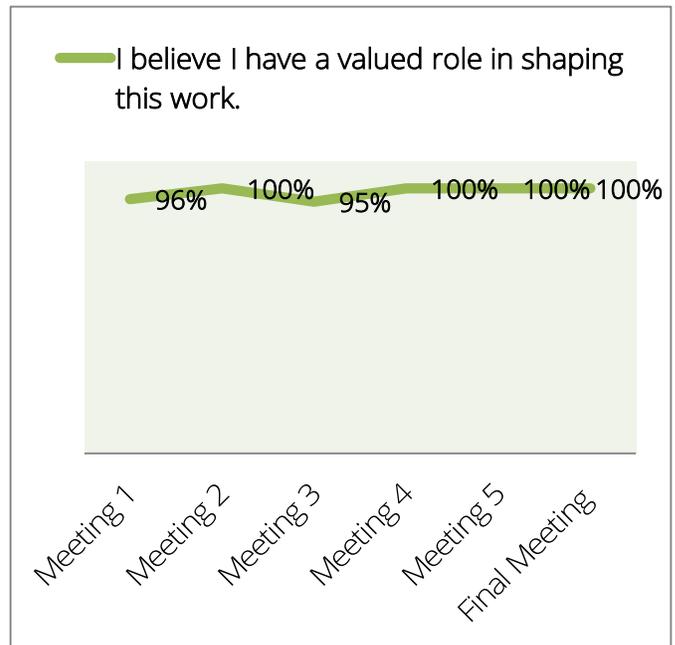
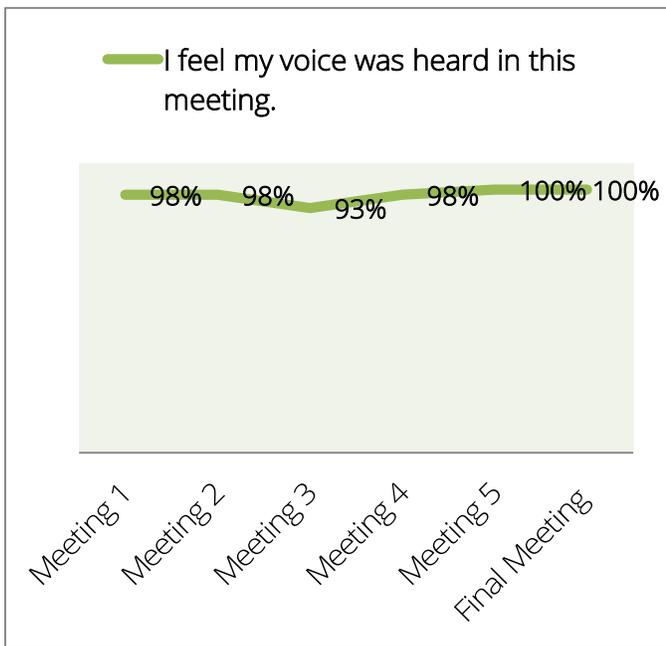
Members reported they were engaging in work that, if implemented, **would improve third grade reading outcomes** for North Carolina’s children.



Most members reported that Design Teams were involved in work that had the potential to move the needle on third grade reading outcomes. The percentage of members who agreed that the Pathways work, if implemented, would improve reading for third graders was consistently high, with 96 percent of team members agreeing after the first meeting to 100 percent after the final meeting.

These data suggest that the initiative has been highly successful in engaging Design Team members in identifying meaningful strategies that could have a real impact on North Carolina’s children.

# Members reported **their voices were heard** and **they had a valuable role in shaping the work.**



An important indicator of an effective process is the extent to which participants feel included, valued and heard. Consistently throughout the Design Team process, team members reported that their voices were heard. The percentage of members who felt their voices were heard in meetings ranged from 93 percent after the third meeting to 100 percent after meetings five and six.

In addition, after each Design Team meeting, all, or nearly all, members indicated that they felt they had a valued role in shaping the work. The percentage of members who agreed with this statement was consistently high, ranging from 96 percent after meeting one to 100 percent after the fourth, fifth and sixth meetings.

These data suggest that the initiative has been highly successful in facilitating and supporting team members in engaging in the overall work.

# Members described what **they valued** about the **Pathways initiative** and their experiences as stakeholders.

<b>Theme</b> <i>Members valued:</i>	<b>Members' comments:</b>
<b>Well-planned and executed meetings.</b>	<p>"Meeting organization, clear objectives and excellent facilitation."</p> <p>"Excellent advance preparation and pre-readings."</p> <p>"Content experts, interactive day."</p> <p>"Using every minute of time well and keeping it all on time."</p> <p>"Being flexible with the process in response to the dynamics of the meeting."</p>
<b>Inclusive input from many stakeholders with diverse expertise, knowledge and perspectives.</b>	<p>"Collaborating with other experts with varying perspectives around work that seems likely to have a positive impact on children."</p> <p>"Getting to interact with various leaders and working together to create the change."</p> <p>"Listening to different vantage points of other early childhood professionals that help me see things through a different lens."</p>
<b>Racial equity training, framework and lens.</b>	<p>"Information presented by OpenSource."</p> <p>"Equity work was very valuable to our understanding and moving this work forward."</p> <p>"Continued growth and understanding about how race affects all facets of our lives."</p> <p>"Viewing actual strategies with a racial equity lens makes us stay accountable to the overall goal of all children."</p>

<b>Theme</b> <i>Members valued:</i>	<b>Members' comments:</b>
<b>Supporting all team members' voices.</b>	<p>"Very open and accessible to all attendees having a voice."</p> <p>"Encouraging ownership and voice in the process."</p> <p>"Experiencing my input heard, valued and championed by others."</p> <p>"Every voice was heard at my table."</p>
<b>Momentum of the process and reaching consensus.</b>	<p>"We are from a variety of backgrounds and perspectives, but are united behind a common purpose and willing to do the hard work of building consensus."</p> <p>"Whole group collaboration on choosing strategies and therefore the direction of the Pathways efforts."</p> <p>"Final agreement on the framework."</p>
<b>Small group work that was focused and intentional.</b>	<p>"Small group interactions and partner discussions."</p> <p>"Small group discussions with explicit directions."</p> <p>"Working in small groups on action steps."</p>
<b>Networking with colleagues from different sectors.</b>	<p>"Valuable to have the opportunity for networking and conversations."</p> <p>"Good time to interact and talk with each other."</p> <p>"Thinking outside of the day-to-day advocacy work and networking with other partner agencies."</p> <p>"Meeting new colleagues."</p>

# Members made **recommendations** for **continuous improvement**.

<b>Theme</b> <i>Members recommended:</i>	<b>Members' comments:</b>
<b>Clarify instructions for pre-work and activities.</b>	<p>"Try to make activities as simple, straightforward, or as clear as possible."</p> <p>"Make materials as user-friendly as possible, for example by using color-coding and page numbers."</p>
<b>Ensure the sense of the whole when working in individual Design Teams.</b>	<p>"Identify opportunities to share across Design Teams to keep the work connected and the participants updated on progress."</p> <p>"More discussion and information from other teams."</p> <p>"Integrate groups for richer perspectives."</p>
<b>Maximize meeting productivity by fine-tuning logistics to meet Design Team members' needs.</b>	<p>"Consider how to optimize the schedule by making meetings shorter, starting later or reducing or working through lunch to end earlier."</p> <p>"Have a break every 45 minutes to 1.25 hours."</p> <p>"Avoid Mondays. For those that must come in the night before, it is most disruptive to families."</p>
<b>Balance the need for context-setting with moving the work forward.</b>	<p>"Less time on 'where we've been' and more time on the substance of the meeting."</p> <p>"Be even more explicit and intentional connecting the activities of the meeting with the overarching work."</p>
<b>Involve parents and youth more.</b>	<p>"Eventually meet with youth for their thoughts, opinions and entice more parents to the table."</p> <p>"If we are talking about equity and talking about youth, then I feel like we should be providing opportunities for youth to participate in all aspects of this work."</p> <p>"Involve youth or adolescent mothers."</p>

# Members valued the racial equity lens.

<b>Theme</b> <i>Members valued:</i>	<b>Members' comments:</b>
<b>Building capacity and understanding of racial equity and its application to policy.</b>	<p>“I had just never thought about how embedded racism is in our culture, politics, policies, society. Learning more about racial equity versus equality was very eye-opening and especially important for the state of NC to consider as we make changes to our system of mental health and education.”</p> <p>“Racial equity is relevant because ‘race’ has been infused throughout the fabric of our nation.”</p> <p>“The idea that if we help the most vulnerable people in society we all benefit.”</p> <p>“Professionals who think they have an understanding of the magnitude of this issue, do not truly recognize how they may have perpetrated the division based on their own personal experiences and the lens they carry.”</p> <p>“The continual reminder to incorporate a racial equity lens was actually quite helpful. In my field, we use the terms ‘developmentally appropriate’ and ‘equitable’ and ‘culturally adapted’ quite a bit. However, I often lose track of the intent or meaning. Repetition and refraining has brought the issue to the forefront of my life.”</p> <p>“Built capacity of leaders working locally and statewide.”</p> <p>“Is it forced me to really consider how our recommended strategies can impact equity, and to only prioritize ones that do.”</p>

<b>Theme</b> <i>Members valued:</i>	<b>Members' comments:</b>
<b>Talking explicitly about race and racial equity.</b>	<p>“Watching this process with so many people was a learning experience – we can, and should, talk explicitly about racial equity.”</p> <p>“The need to explicitly and intentionally include strategies to address racial equity in all policy planning and program development, not just assume that ‘good quality’ plans will adequately address this issue.”</p> <p>“The reminder that it’s okay (and even necessary) to focus explicitly on race. My inclination is always to go with the broadest, most inclusive idea – but often that approach won’t actually address the racial equity and might even exacerbate or at least camouflage it.”</p>
<b>OpenSource Leadership’s guidance and Racial Equity Framework.</b>	<p>“The different ways to assess racial equity – rules, resources, stories and people – really helped me get a better framework for thinking about this work.”</p> <p>“I was able to make connections to the stories, rules, resources and people categories. They have helped me think about my work in a more strategic way.”</p> <p>“Consideration of four areas when analyzing/ incorporating an equity lens in planning/decision-making. Rules, stories, people, resources, history. A practical tool.”</p>
<b>Learning or re-exploring the history of race in America.</b>	<p>“I think what stood out most for me was the history gallery walk. It tells the story of racial inequity over time.”</p> <p>“Gallery walk told a powerful story. I recognized that the history lessons I learned throughout my education process were incomplete and biased.”</p>
<b>Finding support and agreement in the room</b>	<p>“Not new information for me, however, what was great was having agreement as a</p>

<b>Theme</b> <i>Members valued:</i>	<b>Members' comments:</b>
<b>around using a racial equity lens.</b>	<p>fundamental policy/principle that everything would be considered through that lens.”</p> <p>“It kept me remembering to include that in our discussions. But I will say it was easier when everyone in the group was also pushing for this instead of me being a lone voice.”</p> <p>“I like how we were continually encouraged and supported in using the equity lens. It was incredibly helpful to have it front and center throughout the process.”</p>
<b>Weaving racial equity throughout the work and staying true to the racial equity lens.</b>	<p>“Consistent presence of OSLS speakers at meetings demonstrated commitment to using the equity lens in all of Pathways work and served as a good reminder.”</p> <p>“Unusual to be a part of a process that actually succeeded in insisting the equity lens (particularly race) remained central and integral to the work.”</p> <p>“That constant nudge to keep ‘the slippery fish on the table’ was a helpful lens for keeping a hard conversation focused.”</p>

# Members plan to integrate racial equity into their own work.

Theme	Members' comments:
<p><b>This work inspired members to start similar work at their own organizations.</b></p>	<p>"It helped jumpstart and support our own agency's work on equity."</p> <p>"I plan to include the 'Equity focus' criteria in all future decisions."</p> <p>"Racial equity in our selection process will be something that we consider more purposefully."</p>
<p><b>Members intend to incorporate racial equity into their own self-assessment, planning and action.</b></p>	<p>"Our organization is incorporating this into our strategic planning process at this time. Community partners are also being explicit and discussing racial equity."</p> <p>"We plan to include this lens as we develop our next organizational strategic plan."</p> <p>"It will allow self-assessment. Did I really perform the tasks under the best viewpoint of all involved? Did I achieve more using this lens and what I wanted to achieve?"</p> <p>"As a child advocate, integrate pressure to improve our state's performance in this domain in all advocacy efforts."</p>
<p><b>Members are using the tools with their own teams and other stakeholders.</b></p>	<p>"The prompt 'Can you racialize that?' Is important for me personally as I work with teams and create materials and professional development at the state level. Keeping it at the forefront is key."</p> <p>"This lens helps me to be more aware and intentional when working with families from diverse backgrounds and cultures."</p> <p>"I plan to use this lens in working with parents and teachers."</p>

Theme	Members' comments:
	<p>"In a plan to provide professional development for early educators, I will embed this equity lens, using some of the strategies OSLS has shared."</p>
<p><b>The work and learnings impacted members' personal lives.</b></p>	<p>"I think it is very important to use the equity lens at our work, home, place of worship, etc. Being aware of this helps us better serve our community, and create impact on those that are most vulnerable."          "It will impact how I raise my kids and all the volunteer work I do to promote social justice."          "The equity focus mattered to me. While I have engaged in equity work for more than 25 years continuously learning and serving as a change agent at various levels of the educational system, this work brought new thinking to challenge me. I reflected anew, met colleagues who recommended new texts, and I read...and listened...and learned...and grew. The work broke me open and reformed me again...it made me a better educator and person. I just wanted to express my deep gratitude for the experience."</p>

Pathways is grateful to Kathleen Crabbs and Sterling Freeman of OpenSource Leadership Strategies for their partnership throughout the Design Team work. Pathways' partnership with OpenSource was championed and funded by the North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc. (Smart Start).

# Summary

Results of the Design Team surveys showed that **members were extremely positive about their experiences with Pathways**, reporting that meetings were valuable, well planned and achieved the desired objectives and intended outcomes. Members indicated they felt their voices were heard and that they had an important role in shaping the work. All, or nearly all, members reported that the Pathways Action Framework, if implemented, would improve third grade reading outcomes for North Carolina's children.

Throughout the Design Team work, team members made **suggestions for continuous improvement**: simplify instructions and activities, ensure cohesion by intentionally sharing across Design Teams, maximize meeting productivity by fine-tuning logistics, balance the need for context-setting within meetings with engaging in new activities that move the work forward, and involve parents and youth more.

Overall, team members **expressed appreciation for the experience of being part of Pathways**. They placed **great value on the racial equity training and racial equity lens** used throughout the process, as well as the **diversity of input** from cross-sector colleagues with a range of backgrounds and perspectives.

# Appendix A: Design Team Survey

## Questions

### Design Team: Participant Evaluation

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**Instructions:** This survey consists of 17 questions and should take you no more than 10 minutes to complete. (Questions marked with a \* are required.)

#### *Background*

1. Which Design Team do you serve on?\*
  - Social-Emotional Health
  - High Quality Birth-to-Eight Early Care and Education
  - Regular School Attendance
  
2. Which of these primary roles best describes you?\*
  - Practitioner - I work with children and families. Ex: Service provider, teacher, school or district administrator, pediatrician
  - State government - I work for a state agency. Ex: DPI, DSS, DPH, DMA
  - Advocate - I work outside of government in an advocacy or policy role. Ex: NC Child, Prevent Child Abuse NC, local nonprofit
  - Researcher - I work in academia. Ex: UNC, Duke, NC State
  - Other
  
3. What Pathways Goal do you work in/interact with most often?\*
  - Supported and Supportive Families and Communities
  - High Quality Birth-through-Age-Eight Learning Environments with Regular Attendance
  - Health and Development on Track Beginning at Birth

#### *Session Evaluation*

For the next section, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the statements.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<b>OUTCOMES</b>				
4. The objectives and intended outcomes of the meeting were clearly defined.*				
5. We achieved the planned objectives and intended outcomes of this meeting.*				
6. The work of this meeting was valuable and worth my time.*				

7. The Design Team had the resources (e.g., organization, communication, leadership, talent, time) necessary to achieve the goals of this meeting.*				
8. I feel that this Design Team is engaging in work that, if implemented, would improve third grade reading outcomes for NC's children.*				
Additional comments or clarification about outcomes:				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<b>ENGAGEMENT</b>				
9. Members of our team were prepared and engaged.*				
10. I feel my voice was heard during this meeting.*				
11. I believe I have a valued role in shaping this work.*				
Additional comments or clarification about engagement:				
<b>EXECUTION</b>				
12. The meeting was well-planned and executed.*				
13. Time was used effectively and efficiently.*				
14. All follow-up actions and next steps are clear.*				
Additional comments or clarification about execution:				

***Feedback for Continuous Improvement***

15. What was the most valuable part of this meeting?*
16. What did we do well that we should continue to do in future meetings?*

17. What suggestions do you have for what we can change to improve our meetings?\*

Additional comments, feedback, or notes: