NEWTON COUNTY SCHOOLS
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Literacy Blueprint Update

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NCS 2024-2025 Priorities

ACADEMICS

- Develop a clear and comprehensive literacy strategy, prepared for launch in 2025 – coupled by the identification of essential, research-based supportive resources
- Strengthen the district's instructional core by clarifying common expectations for curriculum usage, instructional planning and delivery, academic intervention, and assessment
- Implement clear and consistent systems of support, coaching and development, and supervision for teaching and learning personnel; invest in the development of key instructional support personnel

OPERATIONS

- Strengthen staff recruitment and retention efforts
- Develop programming aimed at removing barriers to student learning , with a focus on mental health, behavioral support and intervention, and student attendance
- Develop infrastructure to support increased parent engagement and connection; streamline access to essential services and resources
- Enhance district communication efforts (both internal and external) to achieve 1)organizational transparency 2) elevated branding and marketing

CULTURE & ENGAGEMENT

- Increase opportunities for formal employee recognition across multiple divisions and at every level within the organization
- Deepen and initiate expansive professional development opportunities for NCS personnel
- Develop a more robust reporting structure for BOE meetings to ensure greater community transparency regarding organizational objectives, status, and plans.

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ACADEMICS

Quantifiable Goals

- Increase the percentage of students in grades 3-12 reading on grade level as measured by the Lexile score on the Georgia Milestones Assessment (GMAS).
- Increase overall percentage of Proficient and Above Learners in ELA in grades 3, 5, and 8 on GMAS.
- Increase overall percentage of Proficient and Above Learners in Math for 4th, 7th, and Algebra Concepts and Connections on GMAS.

ACADEMICS

Executable Goals

- Design and implement a comprehensive, districtwide literacy strategy aligned to the Science of Reading.

- Design and implement 1) a universally applied instructional framework 2) a universally applied balanced assessment system.

Uphold Literacy as a Human Necessity: We pledge to ensure that all students, from the earliest stages of learning have the tools and support they need to read, write, and communicate effectively.

Enable Culture of Lifelong Learning: We pledge to cultivate a district-wide commitment to advance a love for reading and learning that lasts a lifetime.

Champion Quality Education: We pledge to provide targeted supports for so every learner has the chance to succeed.

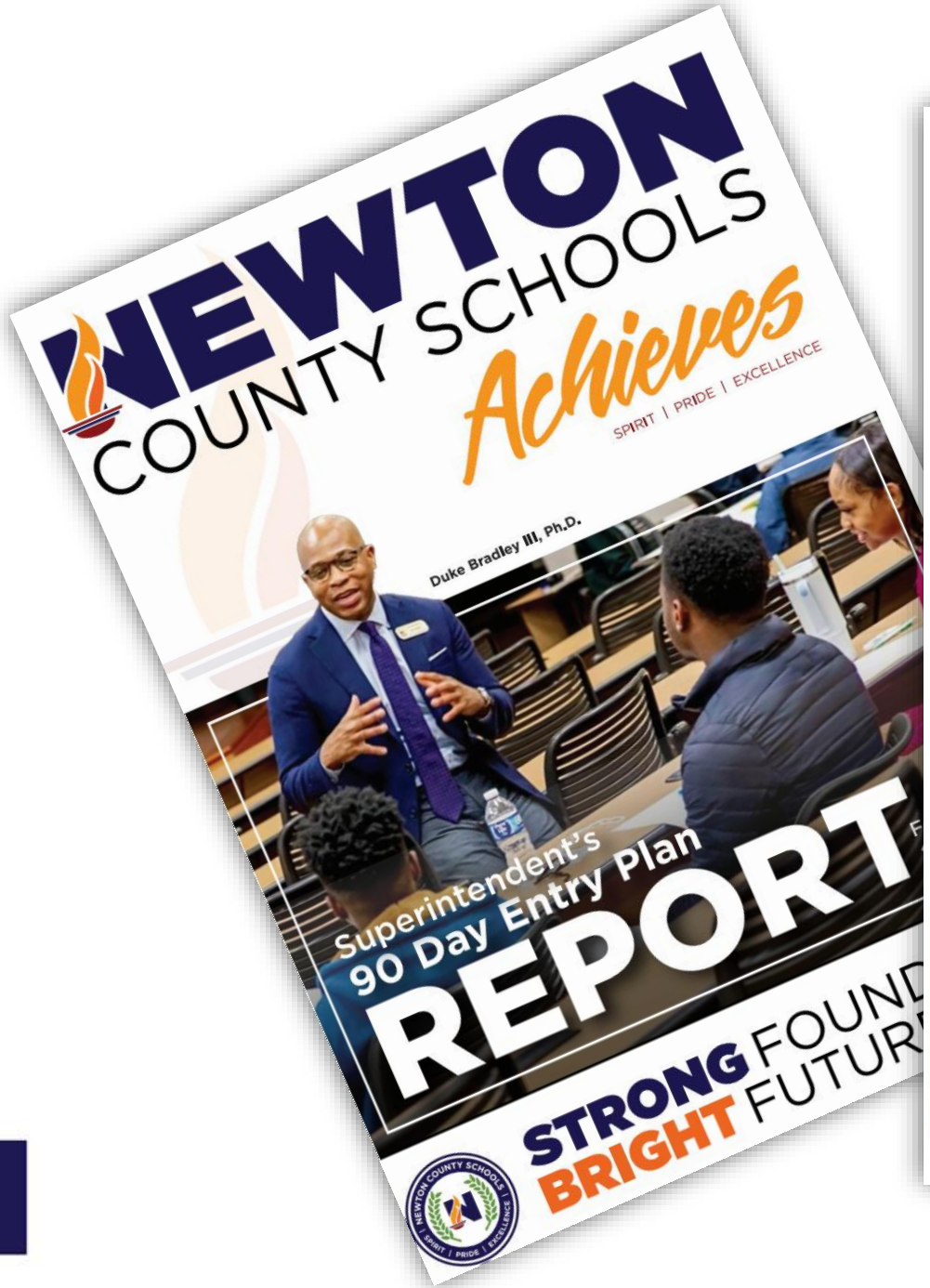
Collaborate for Success: We pledge to work together, as a united community, to provide the support, resources, and encouragement that our students need to become confident and capable readers and writers.

Create a Future of Hope and Promise: We pledge to be committed to ensuring that all students—today and in the years to come—have the literacy skills they need to thrive as citizens, leaders, and agents of positive change in our community and beyond.

Going forward, we pledge to make literacy the central focus of our efforts - recognizing that it is not just foundational to education, but vital to the future of our community. Together, we will nurture a generation of learners whose lives will be enriched by the power of words and who will go on to make a lasting impact on the world.

Newton County Schools' Literacy Pledge

NEWTON COUNTY SCHOOLS



ACADEMICS

Key Actions

I met with school board members, district administrators, department heads, and multiple other stakeholders to gain clear understanding about the current state of academics within the district - specific to the Board of Education's priorities.

First, it is important to note that literacy is appropriately positioned as a top priority for the district because it is the foundation upon which expansive student access, achievement, and competitiveness at the secondary and post-secondary levels are rooted. Additionally, the extent to which all students are positioned to meet their full potential and subsequently access quality instructional programming represents a crucial step towards improving educational outcomes.

FINDINGS

LITERACY

Encouraging Observations

There exists an **awareness across the district** and across all schools that current literacy rates are unacceptable and performance is misaligned with the outcomes desired by the community and the Board of Education.

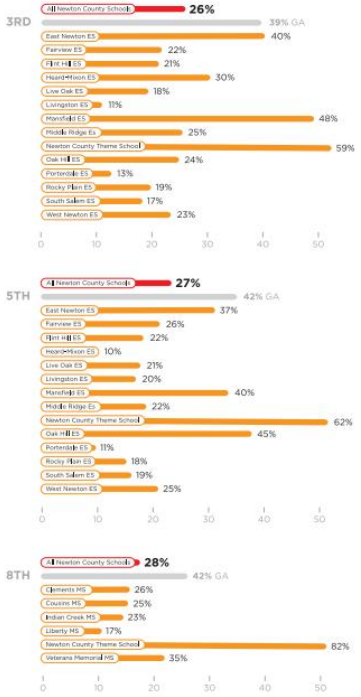
Schools have made **significant investments** in supplemental literacy materials to address student needs and to offset existing performance gaps.

Auxiliary programming (e.g. 2024 Literacy Extravaganza and Literacy Days) represent organized, **supplemental efforts** which are intended to energize the community around the importance of literacy within the district.

Scan to review full report

NCS ELA Performance Data

(2023 Milestones - Proficient and Above)



IMPACT

The impact of the district's overall literacy performance is compounded in the upper grades (6-12) when advanced coursework becomes more rigorous.

Achievement and competitiveness in advanced classes are also correlated to student's readiness for those courses, as measured by literacy performance.

Data Summary

The majority of Newton County School's students in grades 3, 5, and 8 are not proficient readers based on the 2023 Milestones examination.

Additional Findings

- The district is in need of a clear and articulable philosophy on literacy instruction.
- Disparate academic resources and varied instructional practices persist across most schools at every level.
- Essential supports are in place (instructional and financial) but they are too few and are applied differently.



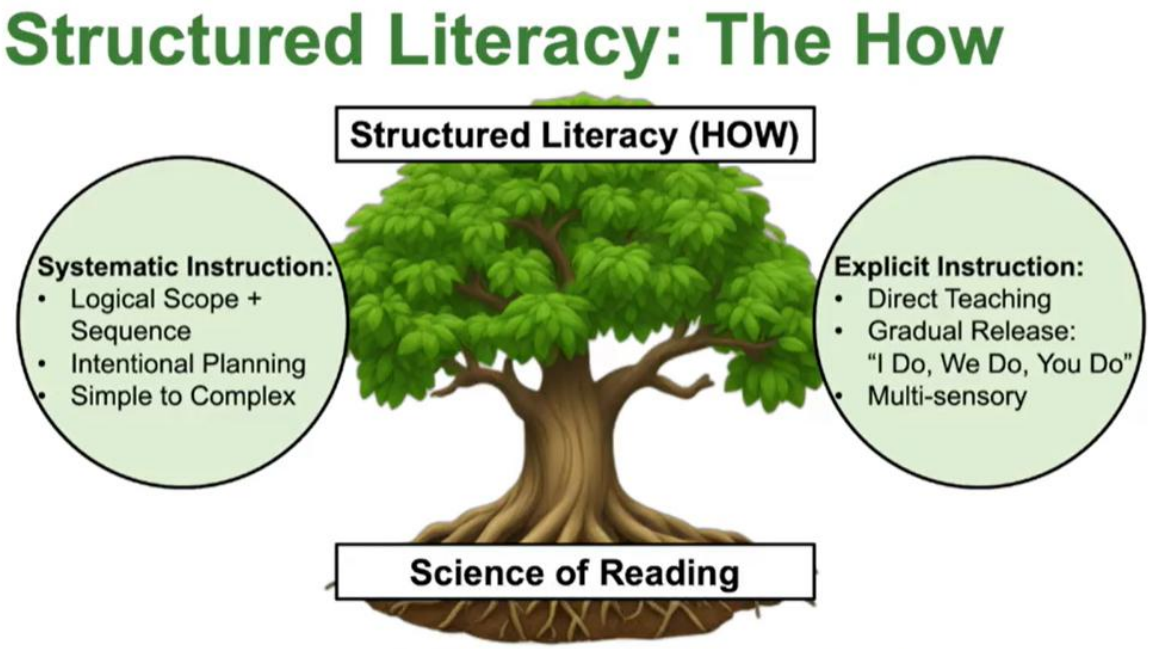
Literacy By the Numbers

- 1 in 5 adults in the USA lacks basic literacy skills
- 65 million adults are unable to complete basic daily skills such as:
    - Signing name on signature line
    - Reading a warning label on medication
    - Calculating cost on an order form
    - Locating streets on a map

Source: Georgia Literacy Academy Module 1, Lesson 1: Science of Reading Overview

HB538- Georgia Early Literacy Act

- HB538 requires that by July 1, 2025, all K – 3 teachers shall complete a training program in the Science of Reading, structured literacy, and foundational literacy skills that enable student to develop reading skills required to meet state standards in literacy.
- All grade 4 and beyond teachers, leaders, and other certified staff members will participate in awareness training of the science of ready.



Source: Georgia Literacy Academy Module 1, Lesson 1: Science of Reading Overview

NEWTON COUNTY SCHOOLS LITERACY BLUEPRINT

LITERACY BLUEPRINT

Critical Components

Empowering Our Educators

- Every teacher and leader will receive training in structured literacy strategies that align with best practices in reading instruction.
- Instructional coaches will provide ongoing support and modeling to ensure strong implementation in the classroom.
- Professional learning will be tailored to real teacher needs, ensuring it is practical, relevant, and sustainable.

Laying the Foundation in Early Literacy (K-3)

- Explicit, systematic phonics instruction grounded in the Science of Reading.
- Intensive professional development for our early-grade teachers.
- Early interventions to support struggling readers before they fall too far behind.

LITERACY BLUEPRINT

Critical Components

Strengthening Literacy in Grades 4-12

- Cross-curricular literacy strategies to ensure students engage with text across subjects.
- Targeted support for middle and high school students who need literacy interventions.
- A shift in mindset: Literacy is not just an English teacher's job—it is everyone's job.

Engaging Families and the Community

- Parents will receive resources and support to help reinforce reading at home.
- Public library partnerships and community literacy nights will make reading a community-wide effort.
- Volunteers and mentors will provide additional literacy support for students who need extra help.

Measuring Progress and Holding Ourselves Accountable

- Students will be assessed regularly using universal screeners to track progress.
- Data will be used to inform instructional decisions and adjust strategies in real time.
- The newly established Newton Literacy Task Force will ensure accountability, monitor impact, and drive continuous improvement.

LITERACY BLUEPRINT

Newton County Literacy Task Force



LITERACY BLUEPRINT

Next Steps

By Fall 2025:

✅ **Expanding the REAP Literacy Pilot** to train more early-grade teachers in structured literacy practices.

✅ **Providing professional learning for K-3 teachers** on phonemic awareness, decoding, and fluency.

✅ **Launching targeted support for struggling readers** in grades 4-12, ensuring older students receive the interventions they need.

✅ **Developing a district-wide instructional framework** to ensure literacy is a priority in every subject.

LITERACY BLUEPRINT

Next Steps

By Spring 2026:

✅ **Full implementation of literacy unit planning guides** that embed structured literacy strategies into all subjects.

✅ **Completion of Adolescent Literacy Training** for all teachers in grades 4-12.

✅ **Establishing a system for Learning Walks** to monitor literacy instruction across the district.

By Fall 2026 and Beyond:

✅ **Full implementation of the district-wide literacy blueprint instructional framework** ensuring structured literacy strategies in all classrooms.

✅ **Ongoing professional development for teachers and instructional coaches** to sustain momentum.

✅ **A long-term sustainability plan** to ensure that literacy progress is maintained year after year.

NEWTON COUNTY SCHOOLS LITERACY BLUEPRINT

We are on a relentless pursuit to become the

FASTEST IMPROVING

school district in the state of Georgia – organized and led by a

HIGHLY SKILLED TEACHER & LEADER WORKFORCE

working tirelessly

on behalf of children for the benefit of our community

and **PRODUCING BREAKTHROUGH RESULTS**

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