



DeKalb County School District's Literacy Journey

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Structured Literacy Instruction Based on Science of Reading Research

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Students and Instructors

The "WHO"

Tier 1: Whole Class
English Language Arts Instruction

Tier 2: Small Group
Targeted Instruction / Additional Practice

Tier 3: Individual or Small Group
Intensive, Expert Instruction*

All teachers need knowledge of the structure of language (The "WHAT") and the ability to implement research-based instruction (The "HOW").*

Structured Literacy

Integrated Language, Reading, and Writing Instruction Supporting Automaticity, Fluency, and Proficiency

The "WHAT"

Instructional content integrates the domains of language as they pertain to reading (word recognition and comprehension) and written expression (handwriting, spelling, and composition).

Word Recognition/ Handwriting & Spelling

Phonemes ↔ Graphemes

Morphemes

Syllable & Stress Patterns

Orthographic Conventions

Integration of All Domains of Oral & Written Language
(Phonology, Morphology, Syntax, Semantics & Pragmatics)

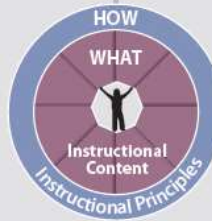
Comprehension/ Composition

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Sentence Structure/Grammar

Text Structure

Critical Thinking



The "HOW"

Essential principles of instruction guide how content is taught for both reading and written expression. These principles are beneficial for all students and necessary for struggling students.

Direct & Systematic

Explicit

Sequential and Cumulative

Highly Interactive

Multimodal

Mastery Oriented

Data Driven

Targeted Prompt Feedback

Scaffolded

Sufficient Practice

Purposeful Instructional Decisions for Text and Task
to Integrate Oral Language, Reading, & Writing

Science of Reading

The "WHY"

Scientific evidence from accumulated research on reading/writing acquisition provides the underlying basis for the content and principles of Structured Literacy.

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Importance of Following the Science

5-10%

learn to read effortlessly

35-40%

learn easily with
broad instruction

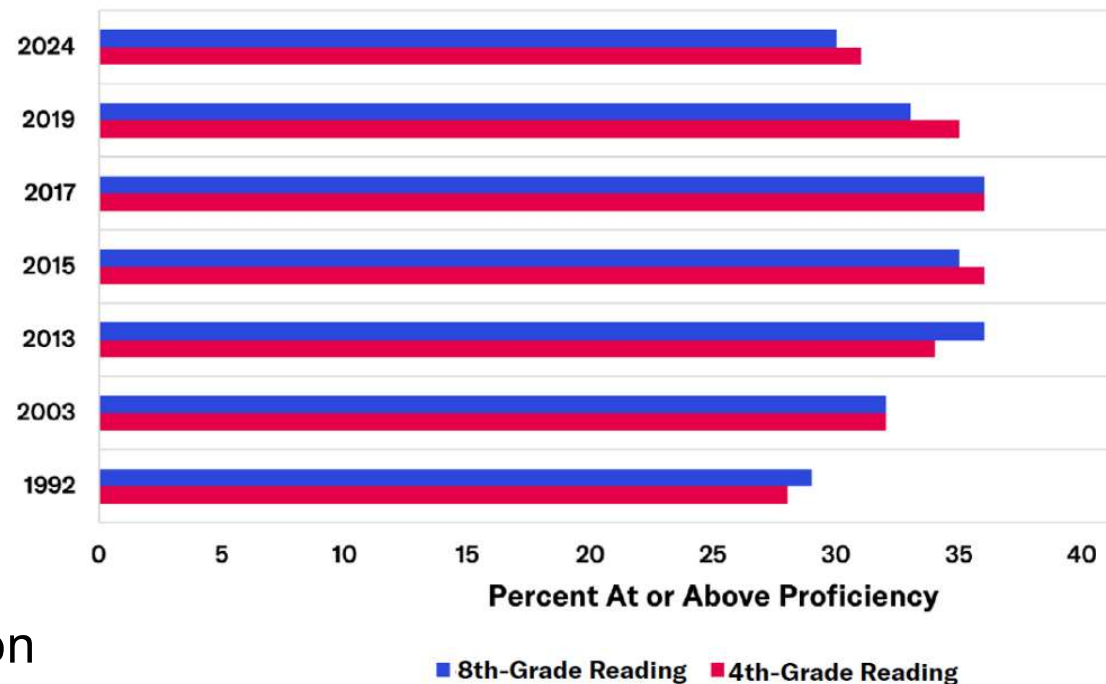
40-45%

require code-based
& explicit instruction

10-15%

require intensive intervention

NAEP 1992-2024



Impact of Following the Science

		Elementary Reading Status % On or Above Level	
		2023	2025
Statewide		66.4	68
Compared to Examples from:			
CSI Schools	Bibb	50.2	56.8
GaDOE-Rollins Navigation Cohort	Thomas	59.7	67.8
Literacy in Action Spotlights	Randolph	44	59

Considerations for Following the Science

BARRIERS	BRIDGES
Ensuring teacher knowledge/skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consistent training source• Job-embedded professional learning• Dedicated literacy coaches
Aligning expectations across roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leadership literacy training• Educate parents on shifts• Resource & assessment inventory
Maintaining momentum	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Celebrate small wins• Avoid implementation overload• Resist the urge to pivot too quickly

Strategic Plan 2024-2029

VISION

- To prepare students for success as lifelong learners and responsible global citizens

MISSION

- To promote the academic, social, and emotional growth of each student by fostering a safe, supportive and engaging learning environment

Goal Area 1

Student Academic Success with Equity and Access

Performance Objectives

1.1 Increase proficiency rates in literacy on district and state assessments.

- a. Implement a progress monitoring tool in grades K-3 focused on increasing early literacy skills and provide professional learning for teachers on how to use the tool.
- b. Implement district-provided reading interventions for students performing below grade level, using supplemental instruction, small group support and resources to accelerate student learning.
- c. Implement evidence-based instructional strategies that have been shown to improve literacy skills such as structured literacy, academic vocabulary development and explicit reading and writing instruction across the curriculum.

DCSD Reading Readiness

Percentage of Students Who Scored at/above Grade Level Reading Expectations (GA Milestones)

	2023	2024	2025
Elementary	62%	62%	61%
Middle	63%	64%	60%
High	61%	60%	64%

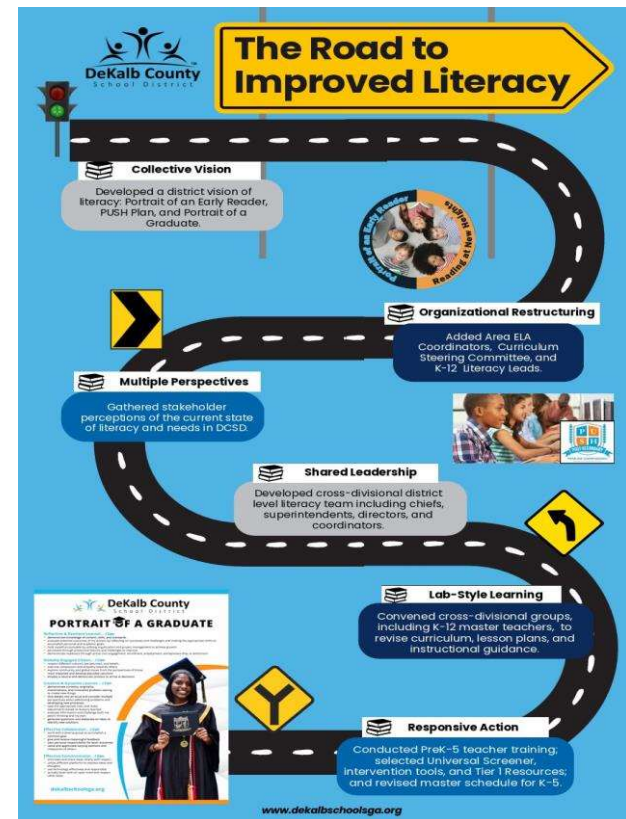
DCSD Lexile Scores

Grade Level	Lexile Band	GADOE 2026 Target	DeKalb 2025 Median
3 rd	520L-820L	520L	520L
4 th	740L-940L	740L	700L
5 th	830L-1010L	830L	880L
6 th	925L-1070L	925L	895L
7 th	970L-1120L	970L	1010L
8 th	1010L-1185L	1010L	1080L
American Literature	1185L-1385L	1080L*	1270L

*In 2025-2026, the American Literature EOC will be replaced by the Literature & Comprehension II assessment.

DCSD Culture of Literacy

- Build coherence in literacy instruction
- Strengthen foundational literacy
- Differentiate student support
- Strengthen adolescent literacy
- Enhance community engagement



Building Coherence

Staff Supports

- Over 85% of K-5 teachers trained in structured literacy
- Adopted High Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM)
- Providing PL to principals, teachers, coaches and families
- Adolescent literacy

Student Supports

- Academic Skills Centers
- Partnership with MRESA Let's Read, GA!
- Growing Readers Schools
- Beanstack reading goal: 4 Million Minutes

New Initiatives 2025-2026

- Dedicated phonics block in all K-5 classrooms
- Implementing 95 Phonics Core Program
- Implementing new GaDOE ELA Standards
- Using GADOE ELA instructional framework
- Administering Amira ISP K-3 reading assessment
- Amira Tutor for K-3
- Adolescent Literacy Modules for all 6-12 teachers

Immediate Next Steps

- District-wide re-focus on Literacy: Elevating Literacy to launch lifelong learning
- Development of a cross-divisional literacy task force
- Re-posture budgeting options to provide funding to expand the reach of structured literacy professional learning, reading specialists, kindergarten paraprofessionals, reading coaches to serve elementary schools directly (including grants)
- Collaboration with other successful school districts in elevating literacy outcomes
- Increase job-embedded professional learning to support literacy across all content areas, K-12
- Plan for consistent literacy support scheduled during and beyond school day
- Establish and train school-based literacy coaches
- Continue to support implementation of new ELA standards and provide aligned instructional resources
- Continue to train and support teachers in using data to meet student needs
- Continue to train and support school-based and district-level leaders in structured literacy components and implementation
- Continue community partnership and engagement efforts for access, awareness, and mutual support in Literacy focus