

DeKalb County School District's Literacy Policy, Regulation & Plan

"Lifting Literacy to Launch Lifelong Learning"



What Is Literacy?

Can you write a definition using some or all of the words below?

Reading

Writing

Speaking

Listening

Viewing

Creating

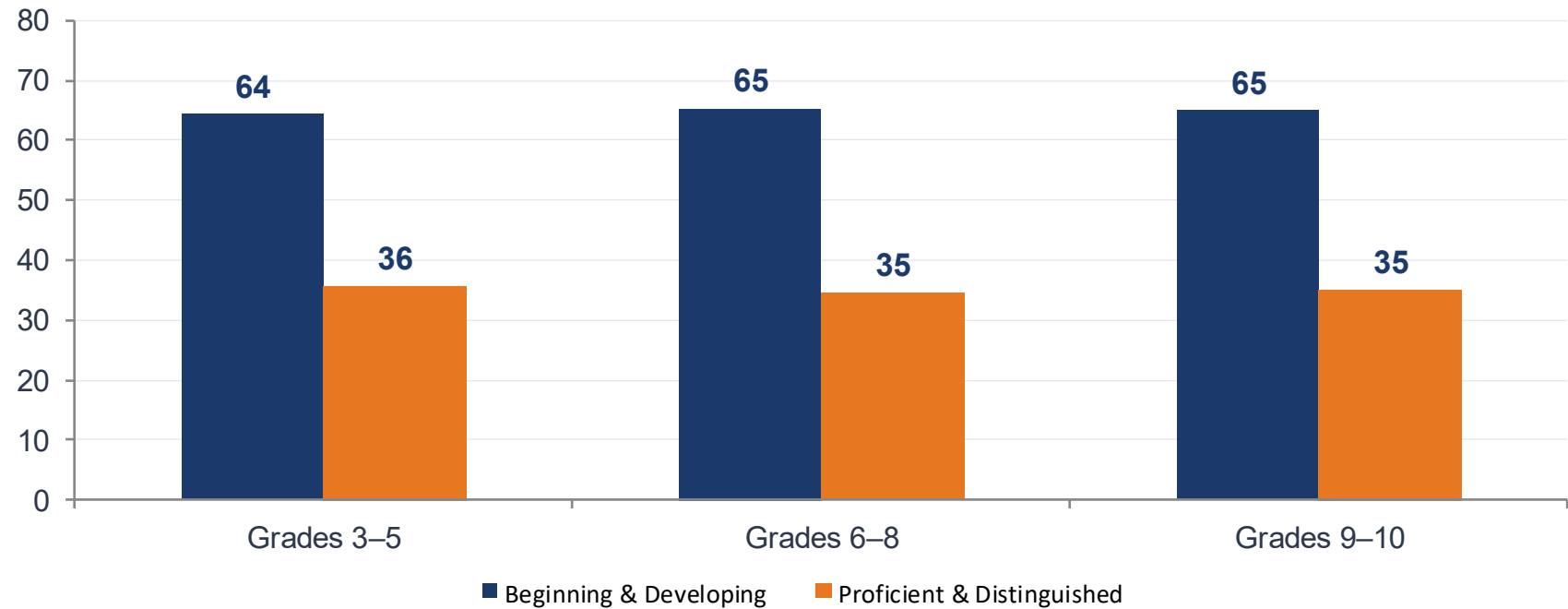
DCSD Statement on Literacy

Literacy is the ability to make and share meaning by interpreting and constructing texts, including multimodal, through reading, listening, viewing, writing, speaking, and creating for varied purposes, audiences, and contexts.

Grounded in evidence-based practices, literacy develops through explicit and systematic instruction in both word recognition and language comprehension and supports fluent and skilled reading comprehension, critical thinking, and purposeful communication across academic, civic, and real-world contexts.

Georgia Milestones ELA Proficiency Rates 2024–2025

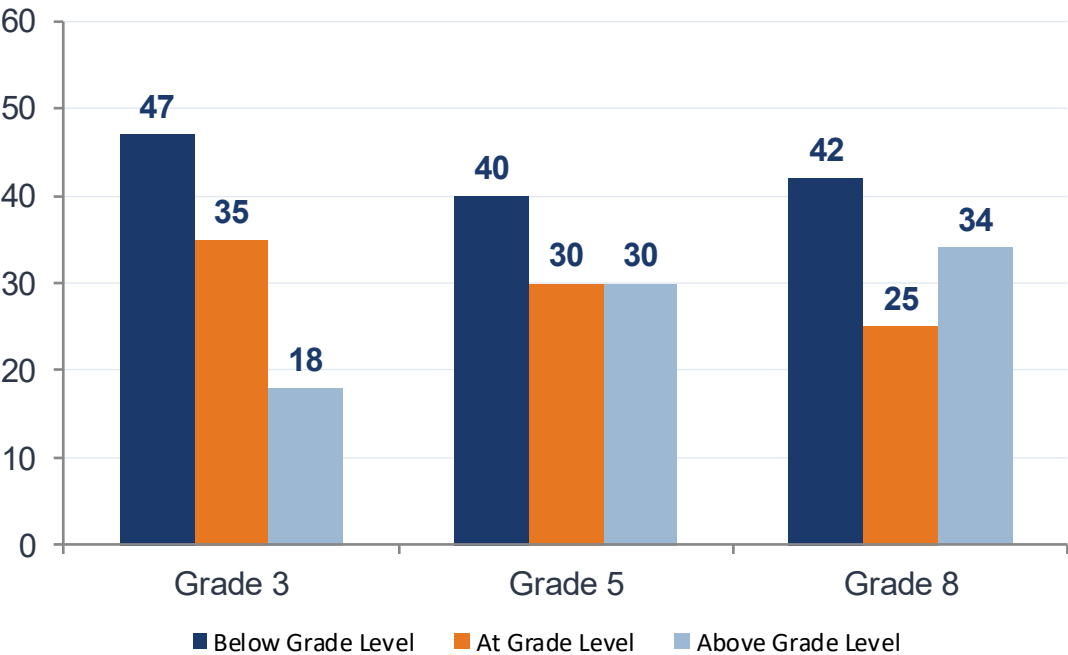
DCSD Georgia Milestones Performance 2024–2025



Why this policy matters – Around 65% of students perform below proficient on end-of-grade ELA assessments. This policy work is urgent.

Georgia Milestones: Reading Readiness 2024–2025

Nearly half of DCSD students are reading below grade level across tested grades. This policy work is urgent.



Grade Level	Below Grade Level	At Grade Level	Above Grade Level
Grade 3	<520L	520L–820L	>820L
Grade 5	<830L	830L–1010L	>1010L
Grade 8	<1010L	1010L–1185L	>1185L

Source: Georgia Milestones Reading Readiness Dashboard (georgiainsights.gadoe.org) · GADOE 2026 Lexile Targets

Literacy Journey to "The Georgia Literacy Act of 2026"

Georgia's literacy laws make early identification, structured literacy, and data-driven instruction non-negotiable.

1 HB 538

Georgia Early Literacy Act

Signed April 2023

- Science of Reading — statewide approach based on proven research
- HQIM adoption aligned to evidence-based instruction
- K-3 Universal screening and progress monitoring
- Individual reading plans and targeted support for struggling readers
- Teacher training in Structured Literacy and evidence-based practices

2 HB 307

Dyslexia Screening Act

Signed April 2025

- Characteristics of dyslexia screening in K-3
- Timely intervention and support for identified students
- Build educator and family awareness
- Aligns instruction with structured literacy approaches proven effective for dyslexic learners

3 HB 1193

The Georgia Literacy Act of 2026

Passed (waiting to be signed)

- Encourage PreK & age 5 Kindergarten attendance
- K-3 literacy coaches in every school
- Expands K-3 Universal Screeners and dyslexia identification
- Expands Science of Reading HQIM
- Student Promotion/Retention provisions for Grades 1, 3, 5, 8
- Requires local literacy plans
- Establishes literacy coaching endorsement and statewide committee

DCSD's Literacy Journey: Where We've Been

Building a strong foundation for districtwide literacy.

Building coherence in literacy instruction across all grade levels

K–5 Structured Literacy

85%+ of K-5 teachers trained in structured literacy. Adopted High Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM). Dedicated phonics block K–5. Amira ISP assessment K–3.

Early Childhood Literacy

Pre-K3 & Pre-K4 teachers trained in structured literacy. Waterford supplemental resources. Portrait of an Early Reader framework established.

Adolescent Literacy

Professional learning in explicit vocabulary, disciplinary literacy, fluency, comprehension, and writing across all content areas in grades 6–12.

[April 2026 Data](#)

Community Engagement

FACE advocates, family literacy nights, Beanstack reading platform, and Goal: 4 Million Minutes initiative districtwide.

Three Interconnected Deliverables

The District Literacy Team is developing three documents to anchor DCSD's literacy work

LITERACY POLICY

Goal:

Board-level vision, commitment, and oversight of literacy districtwide

The official rules & guidelines approved by the school board ensuring every student receives high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

Analogy: The constitution — sets the standards and non-negotiables that must be upheld.

Key Elements:

- Defines literacy and establishes district framework
- Establishes Board commitment & oversight
- Approved by Board of Education
- Target first read: June 15, 2026

LITERACY REGULATION

Goal:

Operationalizes each element of the Board Policy with clear implementation guidance

Detailed implementation instructions specifying instructional expectations, MTSS framework, and roles & responsibilities for every level of the district.

Analogy: The rulebook — specifies exactly how each policy commitment is carried out.

Key Elements:

- Instructional expectations for all students PreK–12
- Assessment & MTSS framework
- Roles & responsibilities district-wide
- Professional learning & governance structure

LITERACY PLAN

Goal:

Connects policy intent to classroom practice with goals, strategies, and milestones

A detailed document outlining specific steps, strategies, and actions the district will take to improve reading and writing outcomes over 3 years.

Analogy: A GPS route — turn-by-turn directions for how to reach the destination.

Key Elements:

- Goals, strategies & phased milestones (Years 1–3)
- Professional learning plan
- Family & community engagement strategy
- School-level action & accountability metrics

District Literacy Team: Meeting Outcomes

Six structured meetings — March through May 2026 — to develop DCSD's Literacy Policy, Regulation & Plan

Meeting 1

March 10, 2026

Launch & Policy Review

- Launched District Literacy Team and established group norms
- Reviewed district literacy journey and Georgia Milestones data
- Examined Draft Board Literacy Policy — definition, framework, and Board oversight language
- Collected initial feedback on policy clarity and K–12 scope

Meeting 2

March 24, 2026

Regulation Draft Review

- Shared Meeting 1 feedback themes; affirmed strengths and gaps
- Explored relationship between Board Policy and Regulation
- Reviewed Draft Literacy Regulation: instructional expectations, MTSS, roles & responsibilities
- Collected written feedback; assigned Draft Literacy Plan pre-work

Meeting 3

April 14, 2026

Literacy Plan Review

- Confirmed Literacy Policy complete and Regulation finalized
- Reviewed all 10 sections of the Draft Literacy Plan
- Small groups reviewed Core Instruction, Coaching & Professional Learning
- Previewed stakeholder feedback schedule — 19 groups across April–May 2026

Meeting 4

April 21, 2026

Plan Deep Dive & Regulation Revision

- Reviewed Regulation Draft 4 revisions shaped by team feedback
- Reached consensus: use Draft 2A tone with Draft 2B structure and format
- Agreed on 5 shared revisions: expand to Grades 4–12, rename to Unified Literacy Plan, update screening language, remove coaching section, remove attendance data language
- Used a Protocol to provide structured feedback on Draft Literacy Plan sections

Feedback & Response: Literacy Policy

How stakeholder and team input directly shaped Draft #4 of the Board Literacy Policy

FEEDBACK RECEIVED	HOW WE RESPONDED
Definition of literacy needed to go beyond reading to reflect the full scope of communication	Definition expanded to include reading, listening, viewing, writing, speaking, and creating across multimodal texts — grounded in evidence-based practices (Draft #4, Statement on Literacy)
Policy must explicitly address equity and access for all learners, including multilingual students and students with disabilities	Board Affirmation language now affirms districtwide commitment promoting access and opportunity for ALL learners PreK–12 — literacy as a shared responsibility across the District
Board oversight language needed to be clearer and more actionable — accountability was vague	Added dedicated Board Oversight section authorizing the Superintendent to develop administrative regulations and requiring alignment of fiscal, human, and instructional resources
Document title 'District Literacy Plan' lacked clarity about its districtwide coordinated scope	Renamed to 'Unified Literacy Plan' throughout the Policy to signal coordination and comprehensiveness across all schools and grade levels

Feedback & Response: Literacy Regulation

How team feedback shaped the revised Literacy Regulation — combining the best of Draft 2A and 2B

FEEDBACK RECEIVED

Adolescent literacy grade band (6–12) was too narrow — left out upper elementary students who need literacy support

Draft 2A was too brief in key sections (especially Foundational Literacy); Draft 2B was too prescriptive and detailed for a Regulation document

'Universal screening' language lacked precision and did not align to state law terminology in HB 307 and HB 1193 due to NWEA MAP for K-10 students also referred to as "Universal Screener".

Standalone Literacy Coaching section and attendance/behavior language in Data Review didn't belong in a Regulation

HOW WE RESPONDED

Grade band expanded to Grades 4–12 in the Regulation (Section B: Adolescent Literacy) to align with GADOE guidance and ensure continuity of supports

Combined drafts: used 2A's concise high-level tone as the base, adopted 2B's format and structure. Specific implementation details moved to the Unified Literacy Plan

All references updated to 'Universal Literacy Screening' throughout the Regulation to reflect K-3 state adopted Universal Screener; document renamed 'Unified Literacy Plan' for consistency with Policy

Literacy Coaching section removed; coaching referenced under Educator Resources. Attendance and behavior sentences removed from Data Review section



Feedback & Response: Unified Literacy Plan

How stakeholder input shaped the structure and content of the Draft Unified Literacy Plan

FEEDBACK RECEIVED

Plan components needed to reflect the updated K–12 scope, align to HB 1193 requirements, and be reorganized to reduce from 12 to a more manageable number

Special populations — multilingual learners, students with disabilities, and gifted students — were not clearly addressed or named

Family engagement expectations were generic and not multilingual — families needed more specific, accessible communication

Professional learning plan lacked specificity — no calendar, no timeline, no partner alignment



HOW WE RESPONDED

Streamlined to 10 components with explicit HB 1193 and DCSD Strategic Plan 2024–2029 alignment. Component structure mirrors the Regulation for coherence

Added dedicated Component 8: Special Populations, Multilingual Learners & Gifted Education with specific instructional supports embedded across all tiers

Component 10 expanded: HB 307 family notifications within 15 days in 172 languages; family literacy nights, Beanstack reading platform, and FACE advocates included

Added detailed PL calendar: Summer Leadership Conference, July preplanning, Oct & Mar PL days, monthly coach meetings, Metro-RESA and 95PCP partnerships named

Literacy Policy: Draft #4 Overview

Board Policy sets the vision, commitments, and oversight for districtwide literacy PreK–12

Purpose & Board Affirmation

Sets the vision and expectations for literacy instruction across all schools and grade levels, Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12. The Board of Education affirms that literacy is foundational to academic achievement and postsecondary success. The Board establishes this policy to ensure a districtwide, coherent, and evidence-based approach to literacy instruction that promotes access and opportunity for all learners PreK–12. Literacy achievement is a shared responsibility across the District.

Statement on Literacy

Literacy is the ability to make and share meaning by interpreting and constructing texts, including multimodal, through reading, listening, viewing, writing, speaking, and creating for varied purposes, audiences, and contexts. Grounded in evidence-based practices, literacy develops through explicit and systematic instruction in both word recognition and language comprehension, and supports fluent and skilled reading comprehension, critical thinking, and purposeful communication across academic, civic, and real-world contexts.

Board Oversight

The Board shall monitor progress toward District literacy goals and ensure alignment of fiscal, human, and instructional resources with this policy. The Board authorizes the Superintendent to develop administrative regulations and procedures necessary to implement this policy.

Literacy Regulation: Draft #4 Overview

Operationalizes the Board Policy with specific instructional, assessment, and support requirements for all schools PreK–12

Core Literacy Instruction (Tier 1)

- Foundational Literacy (PreK–5): Explicit/systematic instruction — word recognition, language comprehension, fluency, skilled reading comprehension
- Adolescent Literacy (Grades 4–12): Academic vocabulary, background knowledge, skilled reading comprehension, college & career readiness skills
- Disciplinary Literacy (K–12): Content-specific reading, writing, and reasoning embedded across all subjects
- Writing (PreK–12): Explicit writing instruction across content areas for varied purposes and audiences

Literacy Assessment System

- Universal Literacy Screening (K–3): District-approved tools assessing foundational skills and dyslexia characteristics; family notification required
- Diagnostic Assessment: Identifies specific needs for students not meeting grade-level expectations
- Data Review: Structured school-team reviews at regular intervals to evaluate progress and adjust instruction
- Promotion & Retention: Literacy data informs decisions; evidence-based supports required before any retention

Multi-Tiered Literacy Supports (MTSS)

- Tier 1: Standards-aligned, evidence-based core instruction for all students
- Tier 2: Data-driven targeted interventions for students needing support beyond Tier 1
- Tier 3: Intensive, individualized interventions via SST for students with significant reading difficulties
- Enrichment: Access to extended learning for students meeting or exceeding grade-level expectations

Resources, Professional Learning & Family Engagement

- Professional Learning: Ongoing, job-embedded PL including science of reading (required K–3); all educators participate per Unified Literacy Plan
- Early Literacy & Kindergarten Readiness: Structured transition supports; literacy readiness processes aligned to state law
- Family Literacy Engagement: Clear communication on reading progress, workshops, multilingual outreach, and adult literacy support
- Monitoring & Improvement: Superintendent-established systems for data review, effectiveness evaluation, and proficiency goal progress

DCSD Literacy Plan 2026–2029: 10 Components

DRAFT — Aligned to the Georgia Early Literacy Act of 2026 (HB 1193) and the DCSD Strategic Plan 2024–2029

01

Vision & Literacy Goals

02

Core Instruction (Tier 1)

03

Universal Literacy
Screening

04

Literacy Progress
Monitoring

05

Multi-Tiered Literacy
Intervention System
(MTSS)

06

Literacy Coaching

07

Data Monitoring &
Accountability

08

Special Populations,
Multilingual Learners &
Gifted

09

Early Childhood &
Kindergarten Readiness

10

Family & Community
Literacy Engagement

Unified Literacy Plan: Overview

Connects Policy and Regulation to classroom practice — 10 components aligned to HB 1193 and DCSD Strategic Plan 2024–2029

The Unified Literacy Plan operationalizes the Regulation — translating expectations into schedules, programs, timelines, and resources. It is a living document updated annually.

01–
02

Vision, Goals & Core Instruction (Tier 1)

SMART literacy goals aligned to Georgia Milestones. 90-min ELA block + 30-min Foundations Block (K–5). Science of reading K–12 via HQIM: Wonders, myView Literacy, 95 Phonics Core Program. Literacy across all content areas.

03–
04

Universal Screening & Progress Monitoring

MAP Growth (K–10) + Amira ISIP (K–3) three times per year. Dyslexia characteristics screening included. Students at risk identification within 15 days. Tier 2 monitoring every 2–3 weeks; Tier 3 weekly. Data reviewed by teachers, coaches, and MTSS teams.

05–
06

MTSS & Literacy Coaching

Tier 1 core for all; Tier 2 EIP small-group intervention; Tier 3 intensive and individualized via SST. 80 QBE Literacy Coaches (K–3) + Title I Academic Coaches (school discretion).

07–
08

Data Monitoring & Special Populations

Quarterly data reviews using MAP Growth, Amira, Georgia Milestones, WIDA ACCESS. Annual Board literacy report. Dedicated supports for students with disabilities, multilingual learners, and gifted students embedded across all tiers.

09–
10

Early Childhood, Family & Community Engagement

Early Learning Center PreK3–4 oral language and phonological awareness focus. Kindergarten readiness supports aligned to HB 1193. HB 307 family notifications within 15 days in 172 languages. Family literacy nights, Beanstack, FACE advocates.

Stakeholder Feedback: 19 Groups

All groups review Literacy Policy, Regulation & Plan simultaneously — structured feedback compiled before Board submission

Educators & C&I Coordinators

- Curriculum & Instruction Coordinators
- ELA Content Coordinators Job Alike
- Academic Coaches
- Department Chairs (TBD)

External Stakeholders

- External Stakeholder Survey
- Three Virtual Sessions
- In-Person Focus Group
- Partners in Education

Division & Advisory Groups

- DCSD Divisional Meetings
- MTSS Team
- LTSE
- Schools & Leadership LLO
- T&L Steering Committee

Family & Parent Advisory

- EL Parent Advisory
- Parent Advisory — Virtual (Apr 29, 6:00–7:30 PM)
- Student Advisory (TBD)

Principal & Staff Leadership

- Principal Advisory
- Staff Advisory
- Teacher Advisory / TOTY

District Literacy Team

- Literacy Committee Meeting
- Meeting #5 (May 12)
- Meeting #6 (May 28)
- All input compiled before May/June Board submission

External Stakeholders: Key Themes and Feedback

Emphasis on early fluency: Several respondents stressed the importance of achieving fluency by 2nd grade as a prerequisite for comprehension work.

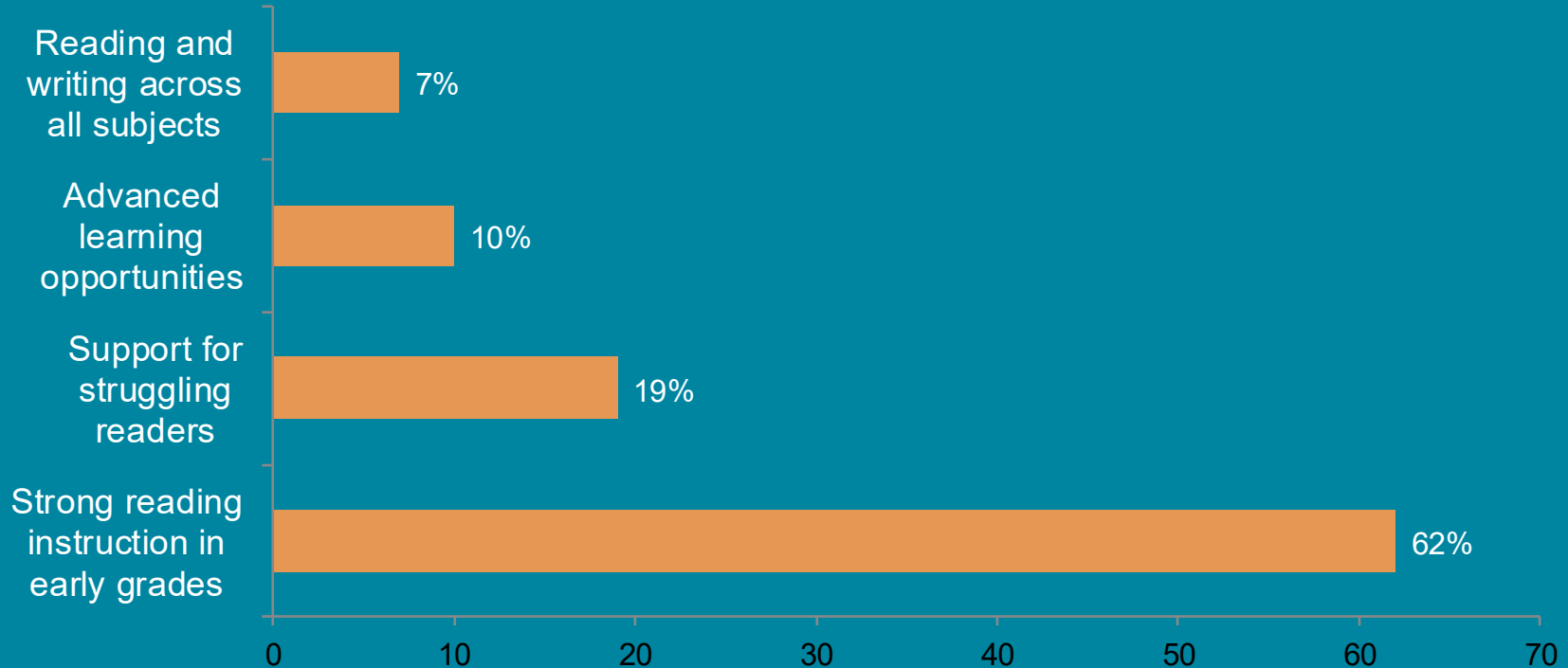
Sustained reading and reading identity: Stakeholders want students to engage with full texts to build stamina and a love of reading.

Differentiation for advanced learners: Families of gifted students want assurance the plan includes enrichment, not just intervention.

Writing instruction: Desire for explicit writing instruction across all grades and content areas, not just ELA.

Concerns about implementation capacity: Questions about teacher workload, professional learning timeline, and whether science of reading methods will truly be implemented with fidelity.

Stakeholder Priorities: What Matters Most

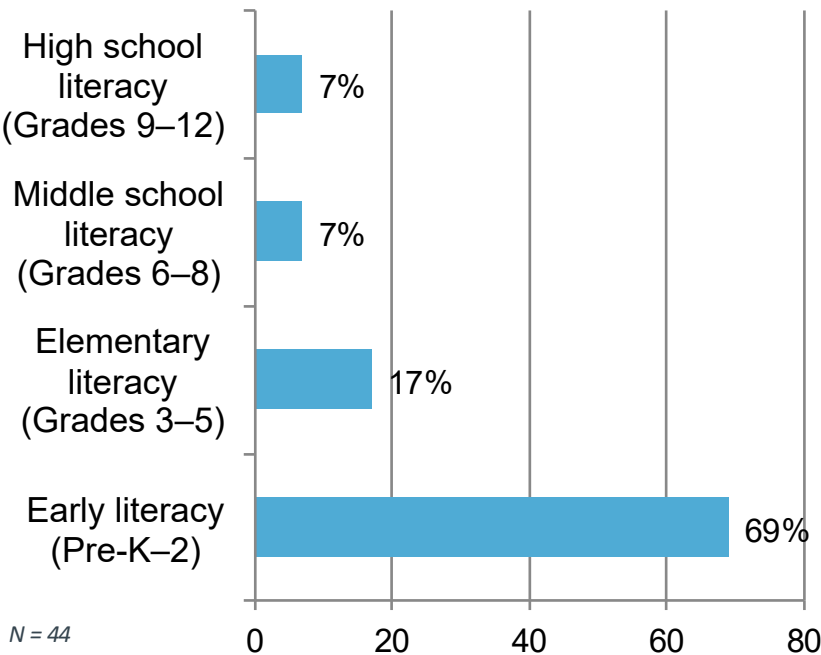


Early literacy instruction dominates stakeholder priorities at 62%, with intervention support second at 19%.

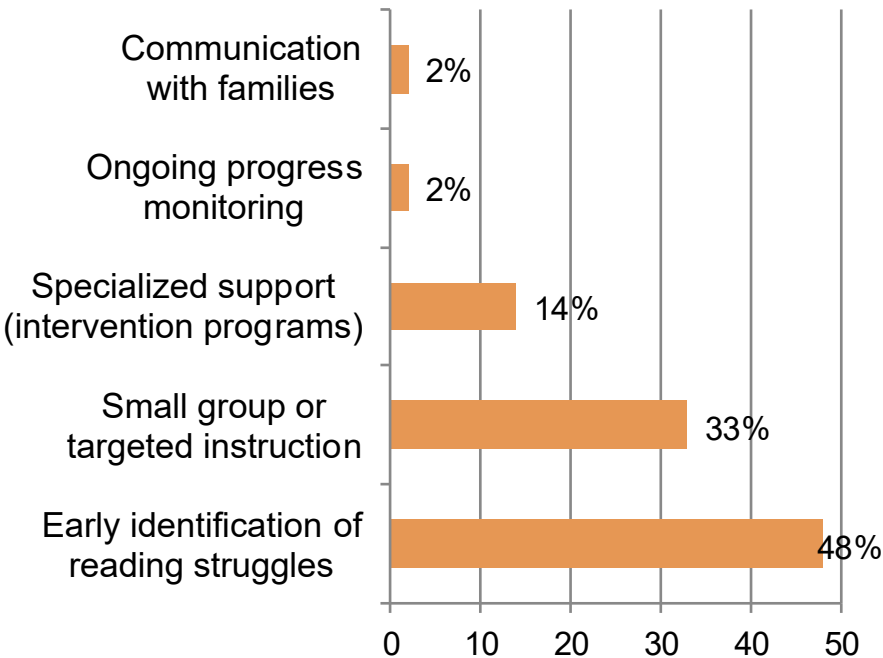
Stakeholder Priorities: What Matters Most

Grade-Level Prioritization

If the district could prioritize ONE area, which should come first?

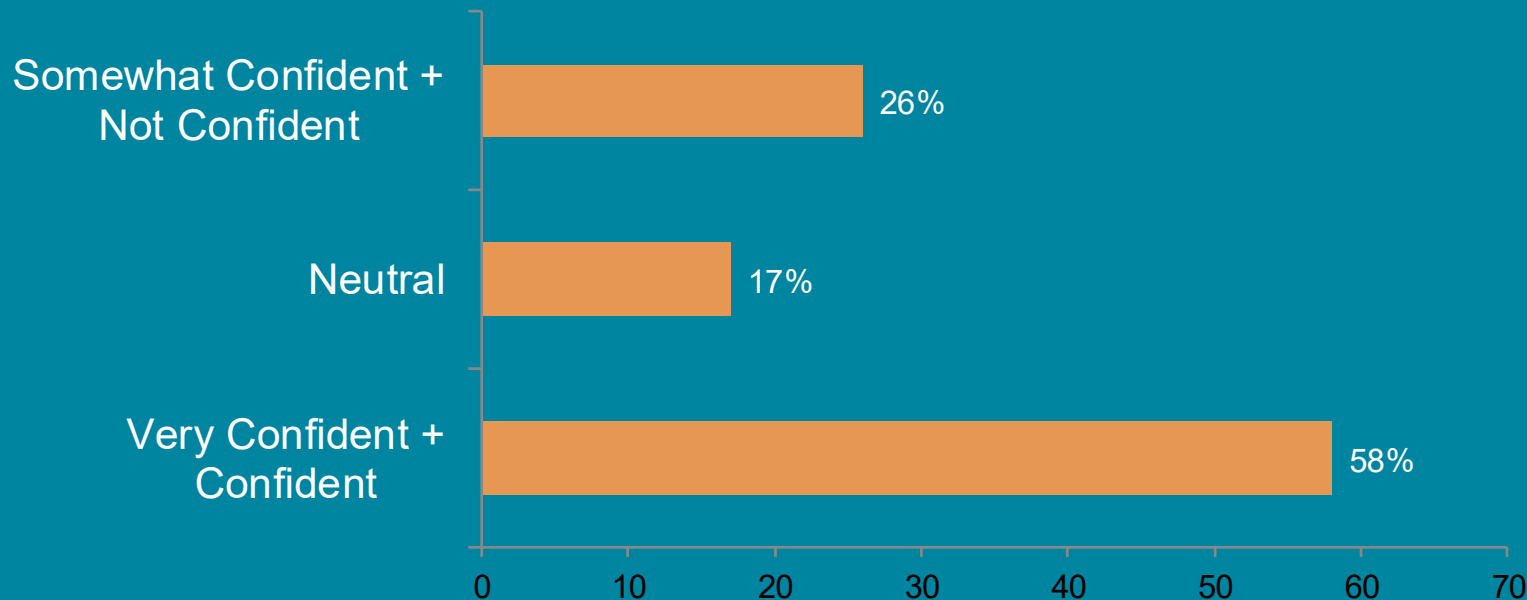


When You Think About Support for Students, What Matters Most?



Overall Confidence in Literacy Priorities

How confident are you that the literacy policy and plan is focused on the right priorities?

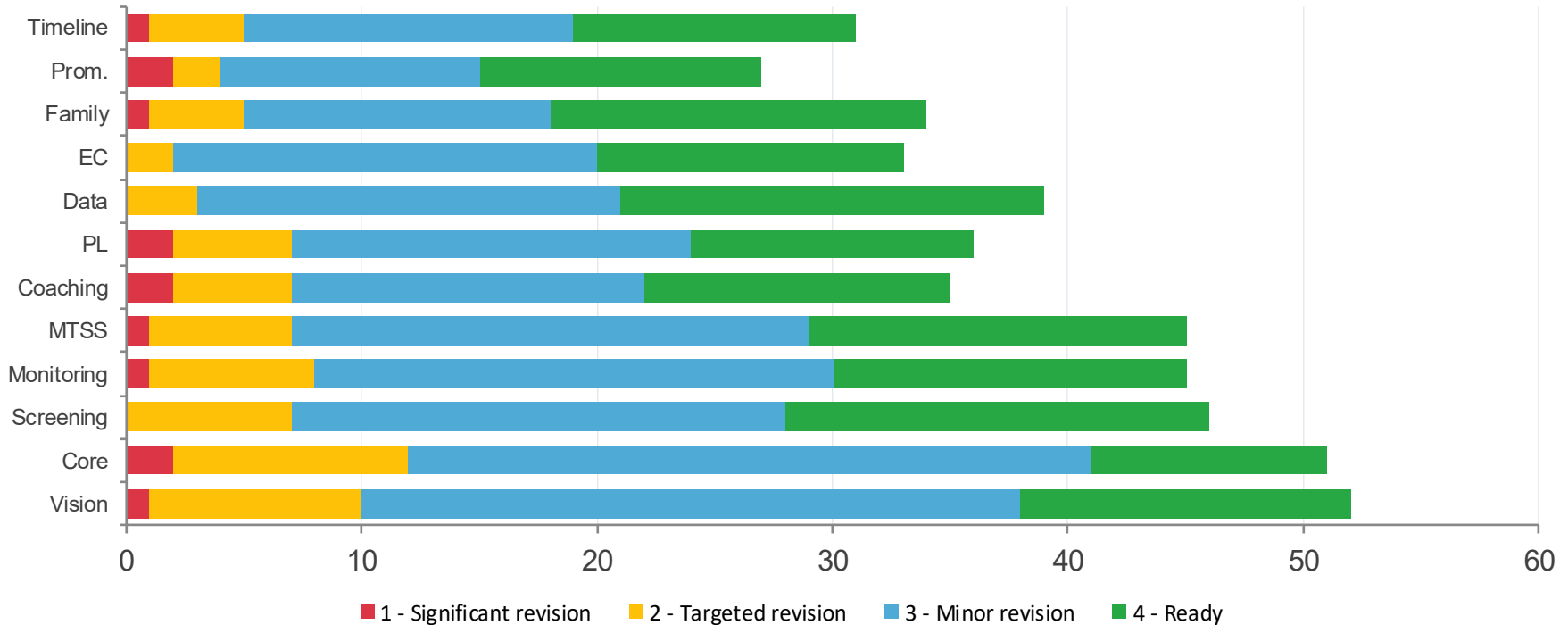


A majority (58%) express confidence, with 17% neutral and 26% expressing reservations. N = 42

Feedback Distribution Pattern

Internal Stakeholders

Most sections rated 3.0+ on a 4-point scale, indicating strong foundation with targeted revisions needed.



Recurring Themes Across Feedback

Alignment & Structure

Reviewers from Schools & Leadership noted the plan would benefit from clearer articulation of goals and action steps.

Implementation Capacity

Multiple stakeholders raised questions about staffing, timeline feasibility, and organizational capacity to implement at scale with fidelity.

Division Coordination

Need for clearer delineation of cross-divisional roles and collaboration mechanisms, particularly between Teaching & Learning, Professional Learning, and Schools & Leadership.

Population Coverage

Several respondents noted students with disabilities, multilingual learners, and gifted students need to be addressed more consistently across all sections.

Plan Strengths

Sections rated 3.2+ on a 4-point scale demonstrate strong foundation

Data Monitoring & Accountability (3.38)

Clear assessment framework and data use protocols are well-articulated and ready for implementation.

Early Childhood & Kindergarten (3.33)

Readiness supports and kindergarten transition processes are comprehensive and aligned with HB 1193.

Family & Community Engagement (3.29)

Engagement strategies reflect realistic and responsive approaches across DCSD's diverse communities.

Universal Literacy Screening (3.24)

Assessment tools, timelines, and decision protocols are clearly defined with appropriate role assignments

Recommended Revisions

- 1 Address high-priority revisions to Core Instruction section and consider structure.
- 2 Conduct targeted follow-up with Teaching & Learning, Professional Learning, and Schools & Leadership to clarify cross-divisional coordination mechanisms.
- 3 Validate implementation timeline against current organizational capacity and staffing models.
- 4 Ensure consistent treatment of special populations across all sections (SWD, ELs, gifted learners) through additional review with related department members.
- 5 Prepare presentation of plan with revised sections for final review at Teaching & Learning Steering Committee before Board adoption.

Work Timeline: Path to Board Adoption

Target: Board Adoption — June 15, 2026

Jan–Mar 2026

Mar–Apr 2026

Apr–May 2026

May–Jan 2027

- Research & benchmarking
- Draft Policy, Regulation & Plan developed
- District Literacy Team Meetings 1-2

- District Literacy Team Meetings 3-6
- Stakeholder feedback & revision
- Cross-divisional review & alignment
- 19 stakeholder groups provide feedback

- Continue stakeholder feedback sessions
- Continue revision
- Policy Committee review
- May 6: SIMBLI submission
- May 12: Agenda Setting

- Jun 11: Final Updates to BOE
 - Jun 15: Board First Read ★ Policy & Regulation
 - Literacy Plan implementation begins @ Summer Leadership Retreat
- ★ BOE must adopt Unified Literacy Plan by Jan 2027 according to HB1193

Next Steps

Priority actions following Board adoption — grounded in the Georgia Early Literacy Act of 2026

1

Hire 80 QBE Literacy Coaches

Open positions Spring 2026; hire and onboard 80 QBE-funded K–3 Literacy Coaches in all elementary schools during July 2026 preplanning. Schools with 200+ students receive full-time coach.

2

Launch GaPSC Endorsement Pathway

Enroll all QBE Literacy Coaches in GaPSC literacy coaching endorsement program beginning Fall 2026. Deadline for coaches to actively pursue endorsement: December 30, 2026 (HB 1193).

3

Hire and Train Kindergarten Paraprofessionals

Hire 118 kindergarten paraprofessionals and provide initial structured literacy training through an external partner before the 2026–27 school year opens. Ongoing coaching continues throughout the year.

4

Revise Board Regulation IHE-R(0): Promotion/Placement/Retention Policy

Operationalize first-grade readiness assessment process, and K–1 retention procedures consistent with HB 1193. 2026–27 Board adopts amended IHE-R(0) by Fall 2026.

5

Summer Leadership Conference

Intentional focus on closing literacy gaps by race, income, disability, and English learner status — ensuring the plan reaches every student in every school.

Next Steps

Continuing the work toward June 15, 2026 - first read for the Board of Education.

Upcoming Team Meetings:

District Literacy Team Meetings 5–6 will continue draft review and refinement of the Literacy Plan and finalize all three documents for Board submission.

Stakeholder Feedback:

Broader stakeholder input will be gathered from principals, teachers, families, and community members to inform final revisions before Board submission.

Policy Committee Review:

The Policy Committee will review final language and accountability structures April 30th before the full Board votes on adoption on June 15, 2026.

Our Commitment:

Every student in DeKalb County deserves access to high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction. This policy work ensures the Board's commitment is clear, coherent, and lasting.

Thank you for your support.