KCS | KNOX COUNTY SCHOOLS

Literacy Landscape Executive Summary

In the Spring of 2024, Knox County Schools conducted a literacy landscape analysis by partnering with an external vendor, MGT Education. The analysis reviewed the current state of literacy instruction in the district and identified significant strengths and areas of opportunity relative to beliefs, knowledge, and skills. The landscape took place in each of the 52 elementary schools in KCS and consisted of perception surveys, interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations.
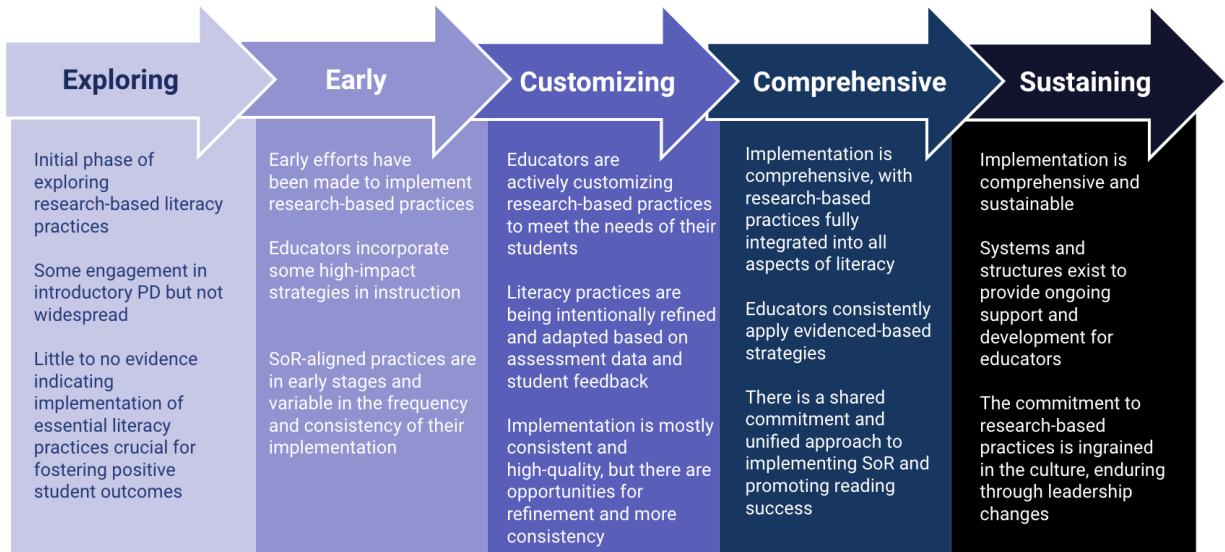
MGT systematically gathered data to analyze the alignment of the status of literacy instruction. A representative sampling of data was collected from teachers, school leaders, and instruction coaches as well as regional directors and facilitators to ensure the trends identified from analyzing the representative sample can be reliably applied to the entire district. This report provides a summary of the following data:

Perception Surveys	Interviews & Focus Groups	Observations
Teachers: **842** Principals, APs, and Instructional Coaches: **147** Facilitators and Regional Directors: **9**	Teachers: **103** interviews Instructional Coaches: **2** focus groups Principals: **5** focus groups Facilitators: **1** focus group	Classroom Observations: **188**

Project Design: **Key Indicators**

District Vision & Goals	District and stakeholders have clear vision for literacy and shared understanding of goals	Teachers understand and can explain KCS's vision and literacy goals	Teachers have knowledge and skills needed to prepare students to reach KCS's goals
Science of Reading (SoR)	District leaders and educators understand and prioritize the SoR	District provides sufficient PD and resources in the SoR	Teachers provide Tier 1 instruction covering the 5 pillars of literacy along with spelling and writing daily	Schools have sufficient support staff to provide small group instruction
HQIM	Schools have access to HQIM aligned to SoR and standards	Materials are used with integrity, consistency, frequency, and intensity needed to meet the needs of all learners	Leaders and teachers collect evidence that validates curriculum is implemented as intended
Literacy Instruction & Assessment	Teachers use instructional routines to teach key skills and deliver instruction on phonemic awareness, phonics, and spelling	Assessments given are effective and used regularly to monitor student progress	Diagnostic data is used for intentional lesson modification
Engagement	Students are motivated during literacy instruction and actively engaged (reading, writing, and speaking)	Leaders promote a collaborative culture and provide a safe space for staff to ask questions and continuously improve	Leaders engage in classroom observations and feedback

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Project Design: **Stages of Implementation**

Exploring	Early	Customizing	Comprehensive	Sustaining
Initial phase of exploring research-based literacy practices	Early efforts have been made to implement research-based practices	Educators are actively customizing research-based practices to meet the needs of their students	Implementation is comprehensive, with research-based practices fully integrated into all aspects of literacy	Implementation is comprehensive and sustainable
Some engagement in introductory PD but not widespread	Educators incorporate some high-impact strategies in instruction	Literacy practices are being intentionally refined and adapted based on assessment data and student feedback	Educators consistently apply evidenced-based strategies	Systems and structures exist to provide ongoing support and development for educators
Little to no evidence indicating implementation of essential literacy practices crucial for fostering positive student outcomes	SoR-aligned practices are in early stages and variable in the frequency and consistency of their implementation	Implementation is mostly consistent and high-quality, but there are opportunities for refinement and more consistency	There is a shared commitment and unified approach to implementing SoR and promoting reading success	The commitment to research-based practices is ingrained in the culture, enduring through leadership changes

Data Analysis Executive Summary

Overall district implementation stages for each of the five domains are provided in the table below. Explanations for each of these levels are provided, by domain and stakeholder group, in the slides that follow.

	Exploring	Early	Customizing	Comprehensive	Sustaining
District Vision & Goals			☑		
Science of Reading & Structured Literacy		☑			
High-Quality Instructional Materials			☑		
Literacy Instruction & Assessment			☑		
Engagement			☑		

Literacy landscape <u>strengths</u> include the following:

- Knox County Schools' vision and goals are aligned with the building goals, which promotes consistency and synergy in efforts to contribute to the district's broader literacy outcomes.
- The core curriculum is rooted in current research on Science of Reading (SoR) principles, which incorporates evidenced-based practices into K-5 literacy instruction through applying Structured Literacy (SL) practices. Building literacy schedules reflect ample instructional time for K-2 (120-150 minutes) and 3-5 (90 minutes).
- The comprehensive nature of the High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) across grade levels is a notable advantage. The HQIM emphasizes vertical alignment and a systematic approach, ensuring a consistent, high-quality instructional experience for students in KCS.
- Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) monitor student growth and achievement, engage leaders and staff in professional learning, cultivate a culture of ongoing improvement, and ensure a team-based approach to meeting students' needs.

Literacy landscape <u>opportunities</u> include the following:

- Educators have articulated a need for improved correspondence and uniformity in professional development that aligns with the district's literacy vision and goals. Providing explicit direction and continuous assistance may mitigate confusion and provide educators with the essential knowledge to execute evidence-based literacy pedagogy proficiently.
- An acknowledged deficiency exists in teacher training regarding the foundational theories and practical implementation of SoR principles. By enhancing teachers' comprehension and assurance in SoR and SL strategies, this additional training would effectively bridge the divide between theory and practice.
- KCS leaders should ensure all educators and leaders have received comprehensive training for implementation of HQIM and continue to offer resources and assistance via ongoing professional development.
- There is a need to address concerns over consistency and accessibility of instructional support staff for small group instruction. Offering supplementary professional development opportunities tailored to instructional strategies within small group instruction may assist in providing the required expertise and competency to execute effective small group literacy instruction for students within Tier I.

KCS Next Steps Toward Literacy Improvement

District Vision & Goals	Within diverse professional learning opportunities, school and district leaders will make deliberate connections to convey the current teacher actions and needed teacher actions that align to the district's literacy vision and goals.
Science of Reading (SoR) & Structured Literacy (SL)	During PLCs, teachers and leaders will internalize HQIM with direct labeling of the elements that support the Science of Reading and promote Structured Literacy practices. PLCs will support teachers in building their knowledge through explicit practice with their colleagues.
High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM)	During PLCs, teachers and leaders will internalize HQIM with their knowledge of students in mind; thus, preparing to effectively implement lessons to support all students in being successful with grade level expectations through targeted small group support.
Literacy Instruction & Assessment	Within PLCs and data meetings, teachers and leaders will utilize a student work analysis protocol to explore student work from HQIM and determine and plan for instructional needs based on evidence of student knowledge. Additionally, regional leaders and content facilitators will promote leaders' proximity to instruction through IPG walks and PLC engagement.
Engagement	During various professional learning structures, leaders and teachers will ensure students are engaged in authentic learning opportunities that foster academic discourse, reading, and writing daily.