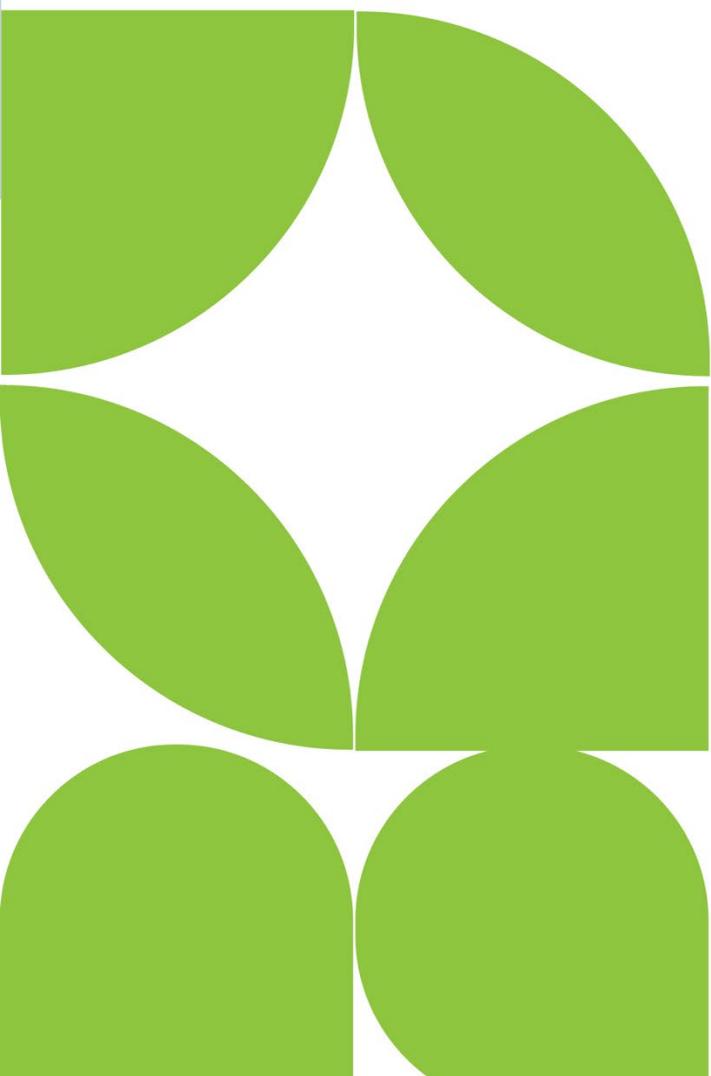


Alachua County Comprehensive Literacy Needs Assessment

Supplemental materials compiled by the
University of Florida Lastinger Center for Learning

in conjunction with

**Children's Trust of Alachua County,
Alachua County Board of County Commissioners,
Alachua County Public Schools, and
Citizens of Alachua County**



CHILDREN'S TRUST
OF ALACHUA COUNTY

UF Lastinger Center for Learning
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

Contents

UF LASTINGER/CTAC/COMMITTEE MEETINGS	2
USEFUL WEBSITES	4
ANALYSIS OF EXISTING DATA	6
Early Learning Data	6
K-12 Data from Alachua County Public Schools	9
FOCUS GROUP, INTERVIEW & OPEN-ENDED SURVEY DATA	12
Data Analyses	12
What’s Working to Improve Literacy	13
What Works for Families and Community Members	13
What Works for Educators	20
What Works for Organizations	24
Elected Officials’ Perceptions of What Works	25
Opportunities for Improvement	27
Challenges, Barriers, and Needs of Families and Community Members	27
Challenges, Barriers, and Needs of Educators	34
Challenges, Barriers, and Needs of Organizations	41
Elected Officials’ Perceptions of Current Challenges, Barriers, and Needs	44
Recommendations	47
Recommendations of Families and Community Members	47
Recommendations of Educators	51
Recommendations of Organizations	54
Recommendations of Students	57
Recommendations of Elected Officials	58
EARLY VERSIONS OF UF LASTINGER CENTER RECOMMENDATIONS	60
SURVEY PROTOCOLS	65
Mini Survey (Events)	65
Website Survey (Email/Social Media Recruitment)	69
Educator Survey	74

Student Survey	82
Focus Group Survey	84
Classroom Visit Survey	85
FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOLS	86
Adult Focus Groups	86
District Leader Focus Group Protocol	87
School Leader Focus Group Protocol	89
Teacher Focus Group Protocol	91
Teachers of Adult Learners Focus Group Protocol	92
Coach/Instructional Support Staff Focus Group Protocol	93
Tutoring/Outside of School Time Focus Group Protocol	95
Early Learning Leaders/Teachers Focus Group Protocol	97
Family Focus Group Protocol	99
Community Member Focus Group Protocol	100
Youth Focus Groups	101
Student Focus Group Protocol	101
INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS	103
Organization Interview Protocol	103
Elected Officials Interview Protocol	106

Supplemental Materials

The following materials were assembled to provide critical supporting data, research, and contextual information to inform decision-making in literacy improvement efforts in Alachua County. These materials were compiled in collaboration with key local stakeholders and include committee meeting summaries; relevant web-based resources; early learning and K-12 literacy data; survey, focus group and interview protocols; and expanded findings and recommendations. In addition, supplemental spreadsheets were created that include school-level data from Alachua County Public Schools (ACPS) and survey data from local organizations that provide literacy-related services.

These supplemental materials were also provided to enhance the transparency, depth, and applicability of the findings from the literacy needs assessment conducted by UF Lastinger Center. The data and analysis of early learning and K-12 literacy outcomes provide a foundation for understanding current literacy trends, whereas committee meeting documentation offers insights into stakeholder discussions and strategic planning efforts. The survey, interview, and focus group protocols in this document were used to support broad community engagement and to capture diverse perspectives from educators, organizations, local officials, parents, and students.

Collectively, these materials were designed to further ensure that literacy stakeholders—including policymakers, educators, and community organizations—have access to comprehensive, data-driven insights to guide targeted interventions and improve literacy outcomes across Alachua County.

UF LASTINGER/CTAC/COMMITTEE MEETINGS

As noted in the full report, the Children's Trust and UF Lastinger Center collaborated on a comprehensive literacy needs assessment to improve literacy in Alachua County from birth through adulthood. Key partners who engaged in the literacy needs assessment included the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners, School Board of Alachua County (SBAC), and Alachua County Public Schools (ACPS). Several community organizations provided guidance on this project, serving on the literacy needs assessment committee, including Alachua County Library District, AskMeno, Cuscowilla Nature and Retreat Center, the Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County, Episcopal Children's Services, Florida Campaign for Grade Level Reading, Alachua County Campaign for Grade Level Reading, Gainesville Thrives, Greater Gainesville Chamber of Commerce, One Community Health and Wellness Center, Peak Literacy, Sunshine Moss, UF Anita Zucker Center for Excellence in Early Childhood Studies, UF College of Education, UF Literacy Institute, and the United Way of North Central Florida.

Monthly meetings were held with representatives and staff members from the organizations listed above. UF Lastinger Center provided updates using the same format each month: presentation detailing the literacy needs assessment progress to date and break out rooms to have small group discussions about key topics. The slide decks are linked below.

August Committee (small group discussion was to review open-ended survey feedback):

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/19Lrzngvumi6QT0ZTaYnKD3nBeGpfe9qRiPNHWZ4x0UU/edit?usp=sharing>

September Committee (small group discussion was to provide feedback on focus group protocol):

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1KVwV1I6jAiuQ5ZLq1KoR99wDZEku6t0e-zagzclpEE/edit?usp=sharing>

October Committee (small group discussion was to review focus group and survey data):

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1-1XISfR8DcM4gJTwwV7Tdl8hq34Emk4V6Wu7HWO0YFU4/edit?usp=sharing>

November Committee (small group discussion was to review a draft appendix detailing community organizations):

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1qep4nx_gxkMRAyT6aNco9QzirxvOZ_TCsMIKv4IAfI/edit?usp=sharing

November Slide Deck for Local Officials (this meeting was to share information with local elected officials):

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1_HuXXroBDQcZkwNyqaxYwu3i2zMoI1i0gPzhO4axEkU/edit?usp=sharing

December Committee (small group discussion was to review draft recommendations):

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/10BbNKtDR-B3-RPRCfPTHPN--nCMIWsTN0T9S3fM8FH4/edit?usp=sharing>

January Committee (small group discussion was to prioritize draft recommendations, review draft report, and review district data):

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1-tUEsEKvvX7pocIDXU1vXv4EzI40_kehuEQNep5sN6s/edit?usp=sharing

USEFUL WEBSITES

Publicly-available data are excellent sources of information to build the story of how Alachua County educational entities, organizations, and city/county resources serve residents of the county. The following data sources were accessed by UF Lastinger Center members of the literacy needs assessment. Where possible, data were compiled for the report. However, not all of the possible data were presented in the report because it was not intended to be a lengthy report (and thus hard to read/understand). The following websites should be reviewed at least annually to understand change over time in educational achievement and school characteristics.

Public Sources of Data:

- Florida Department of Education [Advanced Reports](#), [Description of VPK Assessments](#), [Kindergarten Readiness](#), [FAST Star Early Literacy](#), [Assessment and Standards Alignment](#), [Assessment Cut Scores](#)
- Florida Department of Health [Charts](#)
- School Board of Alachua County [BoardDocs](#)
- City of Alachua Education Taskforce [Report](#)
- U.S. Department of Education [Civil Rights Data Collection](#) and [National Assessment of Educational Progress](#)
- U.S. Census Bureau [Alachua County Profile](#) and [2023 Estimates](#)
- Annie E. Casey Foundation [Kids Count Data Book](#)
- Florida Department of Children and Families [Childcare Provider Search](#)
- Head Start [CLASS Scores](#) and [CLASS Requirements](#)
- [Fun 4 Gator Kids](#)
- Previous Alachua Literacy Work Conducted by [Dr. Sunshine Moss](#), [Lectio Institute](#)

When starting the project, UF Lastinger Center wished to include a definition of literacy that was accessible to anyone participating in the project or reading the report. As mentioned in the full report, the definition of literacy was as follows: the ability to read, write, speak, and listen to fully participate in an information-rich society. This definition was gleaned from reviewing several of the websites below that offered perspectives on the concept:

- [UNESCO](#)
- [NCES](#)
- [OECD](#)
- [National Council of Teachers of English](#)
- [Vermont Department of Education](#)
- [Beecher Multiple Perspectives on Literacy](#)

Comprehensive literacy initiatives have occurred across the United States. Studying these initiatives may be useful as part of the next phase of literacy improvement:

- Guilford County, NC: [Ready for School, Ready for Life](#)
- Mecklenburg County, NC: [Read Charlotte](#)
 - A recent [post](#) was written by Read Charlotte's Executive Director, Munro Richardson, about developing unconstrained skills to reduce the opportunity gap
- Sacramento County, CA: [Early Literacy Support Block \(ELSB\) Grant](#)

Website offering suggestions for multi-sector resources to help build literacy:

- Excel in Ed: [Early Literacy Matters](#)
- U.S. Department of Education: [Comprehensive Literacy State Development](#)
- State Implementation and Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices Center (SISEP) and the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN): [Implementation Science Hub](#)

Websites offering reviews of materials or programs:

- EdReports: [Review of K-12 ELA instructional materials](#)
- Evidence for ESSA: [Evidence-based PK-12 programs](#)
- Proven Tutoring: [Clearinghouse for evidence-based tutoring programs](#)

UF Lastinger Center offers numerous programs to support literacy achievement, educator, professional learning, and district-based tutoring:

- [Early learning](#)
- [K-12 literacy](#)
- [Book delivery](#)
- [Tutoring](#)

ANALYSIS OF EXISTING DATA

In the full report, existing data was analyzed and added as tables and figures to help “tell the story” about the need to improve literacy skills in Alachua County, and to create some ideas about how this might be possible. Below, as in the full report, we present data on early learning (children ages 0-5) and K-12. In some cases, these data were presented in the full report as figures to aid interpretation and ease of viewing. Below, these data are presented as tables, which tend to include more information than the figures in the full report.

Early Learning Data

The tables below are largely represented in the full report but are included here to inform how to make improvements in language and literacy for early learning educators and their students.

Table 1. *Child Participation in VPK, Alachua and Florida, 2020 through 2024*

	2020		2021		2022		2023		2024	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Alachua	723	25.4%	177	6.3%	288	10.1%	328	12.2%	379	N/A
Florida	65,570	27.8%	50,403	21.5%	59,045	25.9%	63,304	28.0%	65,729	N/A

Source: [Florida Department of Health](#)

Table 2. *School Readiness at Kindergarten Entry, All Students, Alachua County and Florida*

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Alachua	56.9%	58.4%	54.8%	48.6%	52.5%
Florida	53.4%	56.9%	50.0%	49.2%	51.0%

Source: [Florida Department of Health](#)

Table 3. School Readiness at Kindergarten Entry, including by VPK, Alachua County, Fall 2022 and Fall 2023

		Fall 2022		Fall 2023	
		# Test Takers	% “Ready for Kindergarten”	# Test Takers	% “Ready for Kindergarten”
Alachua	Kindergarten Results from BOY FAST	2,047	49%	1,934	53%
	VPK Completers (Attended =>70% VPK)	854	60%	947	63%
	Kindergarten Students Who Did Not Attend VPK/ Unmatched to a VPK Record ¹	977	42%	686	46%
Florida	Kindergarten Results from BOY FAST	188,511	49%	186,417	51%
	VPK Completers (Attended =>70% VPK)	92,794	62%	101,348	64%
	Kindergarten Students Who Did Not Attend VPK/ Unmatched to a VPK Record	79,325	37%	65,520	36%

Source: BOY = beginning of year. [FAST 2022, 2023 data](#). ¹ Children who were not in VPK may have experienced other forms of childcare.

Table 4. % of Students “Ready for Kindergarten” Based on FAST Scores at Kindergarten Entry, including by VPK, Alachua County, Fall 2022 and Fall 2023

		Fall 2022	Fall 2023
		% “Ready for Kindergarten”	% “Ready for Kindergarten”
Alachua	All Students	49%	53%
	VPK Completers	60%	63%
	VPK Non-Attenders	42%	46%
Florida	All Students	49%	51%
	VPK Completers	62%	64%
	VPK Non-Attenders	37%	36%

Source: BOY = beginning of year. [FAST 2022, 2023 data](#).

Note: “All Students” refers to all children who took beginning of year (BOY) FAST assessment at the beginning of kindergarten. “VPK Completers” refers to children who attended =>70% of VPK the year before kindergarten. “VPK Non-Attenders” refers to children in kindergarten who did not attend VPK or were unmatched to a VPK record; these children may have experienced home care or other forms of childcare.

Table 5. *Quality by Provider Type, Alachua, 2020-2021 and 2021-2022*

Provider Type	2020-2021			2021-2022		
	Emotional Support	Classroom Organization	Instructional Support	Emotional Support	Classroom Organization	Instructional Support
Child Care Facility	5.65	5.77	3.67	5.53	5.62	3.75
Family Child Care Home	5.17	5.23	3.30	5.35	5.81	3.46
Public School	5.88	6.00	4.71	5.17	5.58	3.63

Source: Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County

Table 6. *Quality by Provider Type, Alachua, 2022-2023 and 2023-2024*

Provider Type	2022-2023			2023-2024		
	Emotional Support	Classroom Organization	Instructional Support	Emotional Support	Classroom Organization	Instructional Support
Child Care Facility	6.01	5.78	3.75	5.80	5.70	3.66
Family Child Care Home	5.81	5.54	2.67	5.82	5.61	3.47
Public School	5.96	5.88	4.10	6.15	5.95	4.11

Source: Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County

K-12 Data from Alachua County Public Schools

As with early learning data, the K-12 data presented below are more detailed than what is in the full report. Please also see the spreadsheet of ACPS data aggregated to the school level.

Table 7. *Percent of Students At or Above Grade-Level Reading Proficiency Rates (score 3 or higher), Alachua and Florida, 2020-21 through 2023-2024*

	2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023		2023-2024	
	Florida	Alachua	Florida	Alachua	Florida	Alachua	Florida	Alachua
3rd grade	54%	52%	53%	50%	51%	50%	55%	56%
4th grade	52%	51%	57%	55%	52%	49%	53%	51%
5th grade	54%	50%	55%	51%	50%	51%	55%	51%
6th grade	52%	51%	52%	51%	50%	49%	54%	52%
7th grade	48%	50%	48%	51%	47%	46%	50%	52%
8th grade	52%	58%	49%	52%	48%	48%	51%	50%
9th grade	50%	56%	51%	57%	48%	51%	53%	54%
10th grade	51%	59%	48%	51%	47%	50%	53%	52%

Source: [Florida Department of Education](#)

Table 8. *Third Grade Reading (At or Above Grade Level) by Student Subgroups, Alachua and Florida, 2020-2021 through 2023-2024*

	2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023		2023-2024	
	Florida	Alachua	Florida	Alachua	Florida	Alachua	Florida	Alachua
Total % of students	54%	52%	53%	50%	51%	50%	55%	56%
Race/ethnicity								
American Indian	52%	*	49%	*	47%	*	53%	*
Asian	75%	76%	75%	75%	74%	77%	76%	78%
Black	37%	29%	37%	27%	37%	26%	42%	33%
Hispanic/Latino	51%	54%	49%	49%	47%	50%	50%	58%
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	52%	-	55%	-	49%	-	59%	*
White	67%	70%	65%	67%	63%	65%	67%	74%
Two or more races	59%	51%	58%	51%	59%	63%	62%	62%
Not reported race	33%	23%	24 %	*	25%	21%	26%	37%
Economically disadvantaged	44%	34%	43%	32%	42%	35%	47%	42%
Students with disabilities	29%	23%	29%	21%	28%	26%	32%	27%
Current English Language Learner	22%	21%	24%	23%	21%	19%	24%	30%

Source: [Florida Department of Education](#)

Note: When the number of students is less than 10, data are suppressed and noted by an asterisk (*).
When the number of students is not provided, data are noted by a minus sign (-).

Table 9. *Student Enrollment and Attendance, Alachua and Florida, 2020-2021 through 2023-2024*

	2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023		2023-2024	
	Florida	Alachua	Florida	Alachua	Florida	Alachua	Florida	Alachua
Total Enrollment	3,140,340	32,244	3,212,177	32,639	3,235,479	32,781	3,153,549	31,516
% Students Absent =>21 Days	17%	16%	21%	19%	19%	19%	20%	20%
% Students Absent =>10%	25%	24%	32%	30%	31%	30%	31%	32%

Source: [Florida Department of Education](#)

Table 10. *On-Time Twelfth Grade High School Graduation Rates, Alachua and Florida, 2020-2021 through 2023-2024*

	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Alachua	87%	86%	84%	84%
Florida	90%	87%	88%	90%

Source: [Florida Department of Health](#)

Table 11. *On-Time Twelfth Grade High School Graduation Rates by Student Subgroups, Alachua and Florida, 2020-2021 through 2023-2024*

	2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023		2023-2024	
	Florida	Alachua	Florida	Alachua	Florida	Alachua	Florida	Alachua
Total % of students	90%	87%	87%	86%	88%	84%	89.7%	84%
Race/ethnicity								
American Indian	89%	*	86%	*	85%	*	87%	*
Asian	98%	97%	96%	99%	97%	98%	97%	98%
Black	87%	83%	82%	77%	83%	74%	85%	76%
Hispanic/Latino/a	89%	84%	86%	84%	87%	84%	89%	86%
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	90%	*	87%	*	87%	*	92%	*
White	92%	89%	91%	90%	91%	90%	92%	88%
Two or more races	90%	84%	88%	88%	88%	86%	90%	82%
Economically disadvantaged	87%	81%	83%	78%	84%	75%	86%	76%
Students with disabilities	82%	77%	84%	75%	86%	79%	87%	76%
Current English Language Learner	86%	85%	73%	74%	76%	74%	81%	79%

Source: [Florida Department of Education](#)

Note: When the number of students is less than 10, data are suppressed and noted by an asterisk (*).
When the number of students is not provided, data are noted by a minus sign (-).

FOCUS GROUP, INTERVIEW & OPEN-ENDED SURVEY DATA

The following data has been systematically compiled, analyzed, and categorized to offer a more comprehensive understanding of literacy needs and opportunities in Alachua County. While it is not a complete representation of the entire needs assessment data set, it provides a meaningful overview of the county-wide literacy landscape and highlights key challenges, growth opportunities, and potential strategies for improvement.

Data Analyses

The data analysis for this project involved a systematic examination of qualitative data collected from various stakeholders, including community participants, organizations, educators, and students. Open-ended survey responses were compiled into Excel spreadsheets, while detailed notes and transcripts were generated from virtual and in-person focus groups and interviews. To facilitate a structured and comprehensive analysis, generative AI tools provided by the University of Florida (UF), specifically UF's GPT-4 model, were utilized to identify patterns, categorize responses, and generate thematic summaries.

The analysis process began with the de-identification of transcripts and survey data to ensure participant confidentiality. These datasets were then organized by data type (open-ended survey responses, focus groups, and interviews) and by respondent group, which included families and community members, ACPS teachers and district staff, students, committee and community organization staff members, and elected officials. Files were uploaded into the AI tools in their respective categories, and tailored prompts were used to extract key insights. The prompts directed the AI to analyze responses, identify strengths and challenges, and summarize recommendations for improving literacy skills. The following text is an example of a prompt used in the analysis:

“The attached files contain interview [or ‘focus group’] transcripts [or ‘a spreadsheet of survey responses’]. Analyze the text of each file, categorize and summarize what is working, what challenges exist, and what solutions are recommended to improve literacy. The analysis should focus exclusively on the provided transcripts [or ‘responses’]. For each category, list direct quotes from respondents separately. The analysis should be based on a cross-examination of all transcripts [or ‘responses’].”

Using this approach, the AI tool generated reports that categorized the data into key themes based on recurring patterns. The reports included direct quotes from survey responses, interviews, and focus groups to substantiate the themes that were identified.

What's Working to Improve Literacy

What Works for Families and Community Members

Children's Independent Literacy Activities – Children's independent engagement with literacy is another key factor in literacy development. Survey participants highlighted activities such as independent reading, creative writing, storytelling, and educational games. These activities help strengthen comprehension, vocabulary, and critical thinking skills.

Representative Quotes:

1. *"My child enjoys writing their own short stories and sharing them with us."*
2. *"My son does the UFLI pages. He reads a passage on one side, and on the other side, it asks him to tell about the beginning of the story, the middle of the story, or the end of the story."*
3. *"They play word games that reinforce spelling and vocabulary skills."*
4. *"Independent reading has helped my child build confidence in literacy."*
5. *"Journaling every day has improved my child's ability to express thoughts clearly."*
6. *"My child enjoys using reading apps that turn stories into interactive experiences."*
7. *"We encourage book discussions where they summarize what they read."*
8. *"He has little notebooks where he can trace the letters to learn how to write them correctly. He also has dry-erase boards."*
9. *"Using apps that turn reading into interactive activities keeps my child engaged."*
10. *"Storytelling with their siblings has enhanced their imagination and language skills."*
11. *"Reading graphic novels has made reading more enjoyable for my child."*

Community Library Support – Community libraries provide essential support for literacy development by offering structured learning opportunities, access to reading materials, and community engagement. Participants identified public library programs and events as critical resources that enhance children's reading skills and cultivate a culture of literacy by offering free book access, organizing reading initiatives, and fostering reading habits among children.

Representative Quotes:

1. *"Library reading programs have been instrumental in my child's literacy growth."*
2. *"The Literacy Department at Millhopper Library has volunteers team up with adults who need literacy help for one-on-one tutoring appointments."*
3. *"Our local library offers free books and interactive reading sessions for young readers."*
4. *"The library has different challenges that kids can do. Before my six-year-old started kindergarten, she completed the 'A Thousand Books Before Kindergarten' challenge. I'm working on my four-year-old to complete that."*
5. *"We visit the library weekly to borrow books and participate in reading events."*

6. *“Our local library’s story time sessions have helped my child develop an interest in books.”*
7. *“Being able to borrow books for free from the library has been a game-changer.”*
8. *“Access to diverse reading materials through the library has expanded my child’s vocabulary.”*
9. *“My child enjoys picking out their own books at the library, which encourages independence in reading.”*
10. *“Summer reading programs at the library help keep children engaged in literacy activities.”*
11. *“The library has resources like story-time programs and book-loaning services.”*
12. *“Public libraries offer events and initiatives to support literacy.”*
13. *“The library partnership had a summer reading program.”*
14. *“Library tutoring programs have given my child the extra support they need to improve literacy skills.”*
15. *“The Alachua Library District...”I’ve seen an offering of a virtual tutor to help your child with reading, math, science, history, and it has time blocks.”*

Community-Based Literacy Programs and Support – Participants also reported that programs such as HIPYPY and Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library contributed to children’s early literacy development by providing free books and interactive Storytime sessions that engage young readers. In addition, community-based literacy initiatives—including public reading events, literacy workshops, and school-supported programs—were highlighted as valuable tools for parents seeking to support their children’s literacy development. Participants expressed that these initiatives not only provide critical resources but also reinforce the importance of reading and writing in daily life.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Community reading groups make literacy a fun and social experience.”*
2. *“Mentorship programs help struggling readers get the support they need.”*
3. *“Free book distribution programs ensure every child has access to books.”*
4. *“Volunteers reading with children in after-school programs makes a big impact.”*
5. *“Public storytelling events help children develop listening and comprehension skills.”*
6. *“Summer slide camps, free of charge or summer school, and early testing for dyslexia and gifted students.”*
7. *“My child attends a literacy-focused tutoring program twice a week, and we’ve seen major improvements.”*
8. *“Extra tutoring support outside of school has made a noticeable difference in my child’s reading confidence.”*
9. *“Family reading nights help reinforce literacy as a shared activity.”*
10. *“Local volunteers host reading sessions for children who need extra support.”*
11. *“Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library has provided my child with books that we otherwise couldn’t afford.”*

12. *“Community book drives provide books to families who may not afford them.”*
13. *“We participate in library reading challenges that keep my child motivated to read more.”*
14. *“Community book drives and free literacy events have been instrumental in encouraging reading at home.”*
15. *“Aces in Motion provides students with structured academic support.”*
16. *“Peak Literacy provides 20-minute sessions 3-5 days a week to help students improve their reading levels.”*
17. *“Healthy Families provided resources for families to support literacy development.”*
18. *“Big Brothers Big Sisters provides mentorship and support.”*
19. *“Peak Literacy offers digital tutoring sessions.”*
20. *“The New World Reading program involves my six-year-old, and my four-year-old uses the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. Both of these programs encourage them to read because they get something in the mail, and they’re excited to see what it is about.”*
21. *“Girls Place after school. It’s a specialized aftercare program that Children’s Trust funds. They provide a reading mentor who meets with her for 30 minutes every week to read.”*
22. *“The Books and Cooks program that just started.”*
23. *“SWAG Resource Center... they help with everything, from after-school programs for the children to food assistance, rental and utility assistance, and they have a clothing closet.”*
24. *“Beyond the Bell tutoring was probably the best support I saw so far.”*
25. *“Social Security has better resources. For instance, next Thursday, he has speech therapy outside of school.”*
26. *“My 2-year-old is enrolled in the HIPPIE program through the school board, which involves activities and books.”*
27. *“[Naming community programs and organizations they used] Take Stock in Children, which I started in 7th grade, Kids Count program, and Girls Who Code club at Eastside.”*
28. *“My son goes to the Boys and Girls Club after Terwilliger, and there’s tutoring available there too.”*
29. *“The community center offers programs, homework help, and a library where I have access to books for free.”*
30. *“New World’s Reading program sends out a shipment of 4 or 5 books for free every school year.”*
31. *“Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library sends books for kids monthly.”*
32. *“Read with the Dog program at the library helps create a stress-free environment for kids to learn how to read.”*
33. *“United Way’s Reading Pals program teams up adults and kids to be reading buddies.”*
34. *“We use the New Worlds Reading program where they send books and items through the mail.”*
35. *“Humana provided tutoring over the phone, which didn’t help. Phone calls are not effective for a kid.”*

Digital and Online Literacy Tools – Technology-based tools were frequently mentioned as valuable resources for literacy development. Parents and educators cited the use of digital reading programs, educational apps, and interactive software that help children improve their reading and comprehension skills. Participants noted that such resources are critical in sustaining their children’s motivation and in reinforcing literacy skills outside of school settings. These tools provide personalized learning experiences which make reading more engaging and accessible.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“We also use ABC Mouse, which helps with sight words for my six-year-old and with my four-year-old learning letters and sounds.”*
2. *“I also signed him up for ABC Mouse to try and make learning more engaging.”*
3. *“We started with Hooked on Phonics before he started school.”*
4. *“We used ABC Mouse and Starfall, doing lots of alphabet and learning games and starting off with Bob Books.”*
5. *“My son does the UFLI pages. He reads a passage on one side, and on the other side, it asks him to tell about the beginning of the story, the middle of the story, or the end of the story.”*
6. *“They’ve also used some reading apps, such as iReady.”*
7. *“His teacher pushes for them to get on a program, I think it’s called Reading Excel or iExcel. He’s able to do reading comprehensions and lessons, and he gets points and awards through that with the computer that the school provides.”*
8. *“Subscription to ABC Mouse and I station for language arts and reading activities.”*
9. *“Fun 4 Gator Kids provides social media updates on activities and resources for younger children.”*
10. *“He loves words and uses ABC Mouse fairly regularly. A lot of the stuff he watches on YouTube involves words, numbers, and number blocks.”*
11. *“We use the ClassDojo app to send messages and ask about her progress and any issues.”*
12. *“Utilize school resources like the school-issued Chromebooks with learning apps.”*
13. *“My child enjoys using reading apps that turn stories into interactive experiences.”*
14. *“Online literacy programs have been a great supplement to schoolwork.”*
15. *“We use digital storybooks to make reading more fun and accessible.”*
16. *“Technology has allowed my child to practice reading at their own pace.”*
17. *“Using audiobooks alongside print books has improved my child’s comprehension skills.”*
18. *“We use an online phonics program that has significantly helped with decoding words.”*

Parental Engagement and Home Literacy Practices – Families and educators employ everyday interactions as opportunities for literacy development. Respondents highlighted that interactive and context-based literacy activities encourage children to develop strong and lasting reading and writing habits. They indicated how reading aloud and structured writing activities—such as composing thank-you notes and creating shopping lists—were beneficial literacy practices.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“We also read signs while we’re driving, and we try to implement reading throughout the day, whether it’s reading different things like menus or even putting the TV on with closed captions.”*
2. *“Writing thank-you notes, grocery lists, and letters to pen pals naturally builds literacy skills.”*
3. *“Sight words, encourage reading time, use learning apps, and encourage writing assignments.”*
4. *“Reading books and playing word games together make learning fun.”*
5. *“Allowing him to pick what he wants to read keeps him interested in reading.”*
6. *“We have reading time and mock quizzes and tests. I make things fun.”*
7. *“My kids do mini scavenger hunts at home with sight words.”*
8. *“We do positive reinforcements, such as 30 minutes of free laptop time if tasks are completed.”*
9. *“During Hurricane Irma, there were no phones because we didn’t have power. So, we did reading, sight words, comprehension, and context activities.”*
10. *“Well, we read, especially the books that he has received. I make sure to help him with all his homework, which includes reading.”*
11. *“We read together and I help him understand what he’s reading.”*
12. *“I read and point at the words, helping her with homework. I go over the words one by one, the spelling words, and everything like that.”*
13. *“We read all the Harry Potter books together.”*
14. *“I ask them questions about what they read to ensure comprehension.”*
15. *“I always try to make it as fun as possible because I think that’s where they’re going to learn—by enjoying it.”*
16. *“I read to my kids a lot, and I try to act out the books I read, or sometimes I’ll sing them—just anything to make it fun.”*
17. *“I read with him, and I also have him read to me and my husband.”*
18. *“We read at bedtime every night. We’ve been doing that since they were really young babies... I pick something that they choose to read and something they’re interested in so they’re more engaged with it.”*

Home Literacy Resources – Participants underscored the value of consistent book exposure and reading-related discussions in reinforcing school-based learning. Digital tools, including reading applications, were also acknowledged as effective literacy supplements. Many parents utilized educational workshops, instructional guides, and curated literacy materials to further strengthen their children’s reading and writing skills.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Audiobooks have been a fantastic tool to help my child follow along with text and build comprehension.”*
2. *“We use phonics-based flashcards and workbooks to strengthen reading skills at home.”*
3. *“Educational reading apps have been an engaging way for my child to practice reading skills independently.”*
4. *“Having access to a variety of books at home has helped foster a love for reading in our family.”*
5. *“...having books with a variety of topics helps develop literacy. We also use journals, workbooks, and interactive writing exercises.”*
6. *“Writing is done authentically—thank-you notes, shopping lists, pen pals, any chance to write.”*
7. *“Having a variety of books at home has made my child more eager to read.”*
8. *“We made flashcards for sight words and practice them.”*
9. *He also grew up surrounded by educated family/friends who talked a lot.*

School Resources and Strategies – Educational institutions play a fundamental role in literacy development by implementing structured programs and evidence-based interventions. Respondents highlighted teacher-led reading sessions, phonics-centered instruction, and targeted literacy support as essential components of effective literacy education. Schools employ structured phonics programs, small group reading interventions, and guided reading sessions to enhance students’ reading proficiency.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Our school’s guided reading program has significantly improved my child’s comprehension.”*
2. *“The school’s literacy intervention program has been beneficial for my child.”*
3. *“The implementation of structured reading programs has been beneficial in improving reading comprehension.”*
4. *“Having a dedicated literacy coach in our school has made a noticeable difference in student progress.”*
5. *“Our school uses a structured curriculum with phonemic awareness activities to improve literacy outcomes.”*
6. *“Tutoring after school offered at Buchholz and Fort Clarke.”*

7. *“He takes speech therapy in school, and for a while, he was doing it outside of school too.”*
8. *“The UFLI program being used at Norton seems to have helped my twins a lot.”*
9. *“Utilize school resources like the school-issued Chromebooks with learning apps.”*
10. *“The ClassDojo app to send messages and ask about her progress and any issues.”*
11. *“She is getting tutoring at the school, and they are very helpful.”*
12. *“The school provides access to digital books through student portals.”*
13. *“The structured literacy intervention program provided by our district has helped struggling readers progress.”*

Classroom Strategies – Participants underscored the significance of classroom libraries, intervention programs for struggling readers, and the presence of literacy specialists in fostering student progress. Additionally, schools offer specialized literacy support for children with learning disabilities, ensuring that instructional strategies align with their specific needs. Parents emphasized the critical role of school-based programs in identifying literacy challenges early and providing tailored interventions through trained educators and research-backed curricula.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Teachers incorporate daily read-aloud sessions to engage students.”*
2. *“Guided reading groups help students improve at their own pace.”*
3. *“Classroom literacy stations provide hands-on learning experiences.”*
4. *“We integrate literacy across subjects to ensure students build comprehension skills.”*
5. *“Educators use visual storytelling to make reading more engaging for students.”*
6. *“Reading buddies in the classroom create a supportive literacy environment.”*
7. *“Teachers provide extra reading materials to help struggling readers.”*
8. *“Classroom libraries offer students easy access to books during school hours.”*
9. *“Small reading groups led by teachers have boosted students’ confidence in reading.”*
10. *“Phonics-based instruction in school has helped early readers develop strong skills.”*
11. *“Our school provides small-group literacy interventions to help struggling readers catch up.”*
12. *“Phonics-based reading instruction in early grades has helped my child develop stronger literacy skills.”*

What Works for Educators

Classroom-Based Strategies – Teachers shared a variety of classroom-based literacy strategies that have been particularly effective. These include independent reading time, close reading techniques, and student choice in reading materials to boost engagement and literacy development.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Allowing students to choose their own books during independent reading has led to increased engagement and motivation.”*
2. *“Close reading activities have helped students learn how to analyze texts and find supporting evidence, which is crucial for comprehension.”*
3. *“Graphic novels and real-world texts have been particularly useful in helping struggling readers develop a stronger interest in literacy.”*
4. *“Using pop culture references and relatable texts has helped struggling readers develop a stronger interest in literacy.”*
5. *“Reading pop culture texts and using song lyrics has been effective in engaging reluctant readers.”*
6. *“Providing students with book choice during independent reading has led to greater engagement.”*
7. *Using pop song lyrics for fluency practice has been effective for my students.”*
8. *“Implementing structured independent reading time every week has had a noticeable impact on student attitudes toward books.”*

Community and Parental Involvement – Many educators emphasized the importance of community partnerships and parental involvement in supporting literacy outside the classroom. Programs that provide structured resources to families have been beneficial in reinforcing reading skills at home.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Library partnerships offering free books and reading events have been great for encouraging literacy beyond the classroom.”*
2. *“Providing parents with simple literacy resources, like magnetic letters and dry-erase boards, has helped reinforce skills at home.”*
3. *“Reading incentive programs with local businesses have encouraged students to read more outside of school.”*
4. *“Structured literacy nights involving both parents and students have had strong attendance and impact.”*
5. *“Community-based book distributions have been instrumental in ensuring students have access to reading materials at home.”*

Digital Literacy Tools – Several technology-based tools received positive feedback for their adaptability, engagement, and ability to personalize learning for students. iReady, Amira, and Reading Plus were among the most frequently cited as effective digital resources that track progress and support literacy growth. Educators found IXL and Reading Plus particularly useful in helping students build skills at their own pace. Teachers appreciated these programs’ ability to provide differentiated instruction and reinforce core literacy skills.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“iReady meets students where they are and allows them to work at their own level while reinforcing skills with instant feedback.”*
2. *“Amira has been effective in improving fluency and vocabulary, and I can track student progress over time.”*
3. *“Reading Plus helped improve comprehension, and my students seemed more engaged with the content.”*
4. *“One of the best things about iReady is that it supports writing by covering grammar, sentence structure, and organizing thoughts.”*
5. *“These programs allow me to target specific literacy gaps in students, making it easier to adjust my instruction accordingly.”*
6. *“IXL allows students to work at their own level, reinforcing skills while providing instant feedback.”*
7. *“Reading Plus improved student comprehension and engagement, [and made] reading more interactive.”*
8. *“Students enjoy the gamification aspect of IXL, which keeps them motivated to practice reading skills.”*
9. *“The adaptive nature of Reading Plus ensures that students are reading at their level, helping with gradual improvement.”*
10. *“We saw measurable gains in reading fluency and comprehension when using these digital tools consistently.”*

Literacy Interventions and Assessment Tools – Educators often referenced intervention programs as effective tools for improving literacy, with many responses underscoring their importance in addressing specific literacy challenges. Respondents widely recognized the value of DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) and Great Leaps as effective tools for identifying and intervening with struggling readers. These assessments and interventions provide valuable insights into students’ reading progress and allow for targeted instruction in small groups. Educators emphasized the importance of small-group instruction and structured phonics-based interventions for literacy improvement.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Supportive after-school intervention programs help bridge learning gaps.”*
2. *“Early interventions tailored to student needs.”*

3. *“Benchmark intervention strategies are essential for progress tracking.”*
4. *“Intervention programs like SIPPS target foundational reading skills.”*
5. *“Ability grouping, Intervention Programs delivered in small groups.”*
6. *“Reading Plus, working in small groups on specific concepts.”*
7. *“Extra intervention in small groups or one-on-one.”*
8. *“SIPPS used in small groups with time for repetition.”*
9. *“Small group direct instruction with UFLI and SIPPS.”*
10. *“Guided reading groups are integral, allowing me to meet students at their individual reading levels.”*
11. *“DIBELS helps pinpoint specific reading challenges, allowing for tailored interventions that actually work.”*
12. *“Great Leaps is excellent for fluency building and provides structured reading practice that benefits struggling students.”*
13. *“We use DIBELS data to create effective small-group instruction that meets students at their exact reading level.”*
14. *“Phonics-based intervention is crucial for students in primary grades, and Great Leaps has been useful for improving reading rate and accuracy.”*
15. *“The data from these assessments help us track student growth and ensure they’re receiving the right interventions.”*
16. *“The combination of DIBELS assessment and structured interventions ensures we’re addressing literacy gaps early.”*
17. *“Using diagnostic tools like DIBELS helps us track growth and adjust instruction as needed.”*

UF Literacy Instruction – One of the most frequently mentioned and positively reviewed programs was the UFLI (University of Florida Literacy Institute) Foundations program. Educators across multiple focus groups praised its systematic approach to phonics, its consistency in instruction, and its effectiveness in improving decoding skills for early readers. Many noted significant progress in students’ ability to recognize letter sounds, blend phonemes, and read fluently. Unlike other curricula, UFLI provides a structured, research-based approach that has shown measurable improvement in foundational literacy skills.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“UFLI has been a game-changer for at-risk students. I see real benefits in encoding and decoding, especially for students who have had little literacy exposure.”*
2. *“The structured routine of UFLI ensures that students know what to expect each day, and I’ve seen huge growth between the beginning of the year and now.”*
3. *“We use UFLI as an intervention tool for struggling readers, and I can see a stark difference in those who consistently receive the instruction.”*
4. *“When used consistently, UFLI provides clear progress in phonemic awareness and phonics application.”*

5. *“UFLI’s multisensory approach has made a big difference for students with learning difficulties.”*
6. *“I see UFLI has been really helpful, especially in the early grades.”*
7. *“Close reading strategies and UFLI have been effective, though long-term benefits are still being assessed.”*
8. *“Consistency and repetition of UFLI help students build confidence.”*
9. *“Using UFLI in conjunction with guided reading has shown improvement.”*
10. *“UFLI, when used consistently, has been instrumental in improving literacy levels.”*

Teacher-Guided Instruction – Teachers also favored teacher-guided instruction and highlighted the critical role of educators in providing direct, personalized support. Their responses indicate teachers use scaffolding, modeling, and differentiated strategies to meet diverse student needs.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Direct instruction based on a teacher-created curriculum.”*
2. *“Guided reading groups are integral to my instruction.”*
3. *“Explicit vocabulary instruction paired with close reading strategies.”*
4. *“Teachers use scaffolded assignments to improve student confidence.”*
5. *“Teacher-created strategies often outperform district-provided programs.”*

Vocabulary Development – Teachers frequently emphasized the role of vocabulary in literacy development. Explicit vocabulary instruction helps students understand complex texts and improves comprehension by building a robust foundation of word knowledge.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Explicit vocabulary instruction is a priority, where subject-specific terms can be challenging.”*
2. *“Read aloud, chunking, vocabulary, and higher-order questioning.”*
3. *“Specific vocabulary instruction focusing on word roots, prefixes, and suffixes.”*
4. *“Repetition, writing out vocabulary, counting spelling.”*
5. *“Students teaching students, focusing on morphology and vocabulary skills.”*
6. *“Reading Plus encourages discussion of words used in broader educational contexts.”*
7. *“Flocabulary to introduce and reinforce key vocabulary through engaging, interactive videos and activities.”*

What Works for Organizations

Collaborative Community Partnerships in Literacy – Organizations further reported that they often collaborate with community partners and also find ways to involve parents and families. Participants noted that collaboration fosters a supportive network, enhances resource availability, and promotes the sharing of best practices and effective instructional methods. Their staff and student development collaborations include joint training sessions, collaborative projects, and shared access to educational materials. Their broader community engagement initiatives have involved organizing public reading events, literacy fairs, community/parent workshops, and volunteer programs aimed at promoting literacy both within and outside the school environment.

Funding and Resource Optimization for Literacy Initiatives – Organizations noted that financial support is critical for sustaining high-quality literacy programs and ensuring that necessary resources are available to both educators and students. To limit costs for public participation, many organizations regularly employ cost-cutting and cost-sharing strategies and seek financial support to fund their literacy programs. This includes securing grants, budgeting for educational materials, and streamlining funds for staffing and professional development.

Leveraging Available Literacy Tools for Learning – Many organizations and programs utilize specific literacy-related tools and resources to support reading and writing development. These include access to a variety of books, educational software, interactive e-books, digital apps, and multimedia resources that cater to different learning styles. Participants highlighted the importance of having diverse and current instructional materials and technology in keeping students engaged and providing tailored learning experiences. Even when organizations indicate that they do not have dedicated literacy programs, they find ways to integrate literacy activities within their existing programs.

Staff and Volunteer Development Initiatives -The organizations we spoke with emphasized the importance of training for staff and volunteers to improve their ability to identify and address literacy issues among students. Most reported providing internal training for full-time, part-time, and volunteer staff whenever possible. This typically includes workshops, certification courses, and on-the-job training sessions designed to enhance their skills and knowledge.

Elected Officials' Perceptions of What Works

Community and School Partnerships – Collaboration between schools, local governments, and community organizations has proven to be an effective strategy for improving literacy rates. Interviewees emphasized the importance of continuing to leverage external resources to support literacy initiatives. Community organizations provide mentorship and supplemental reading programs. Libraries, businesses, and nonprofit groups serve as literacy hubs; and schools benefit from additional funding, volunteers, and literacy-focused programs.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“The Children’s Trust has been a game-changer in coordinating literacy resources.”*
2. *“Partnerships with local universities help bring in research-based literacy practices.”*
3. *“After-school programs supported by the city and county provide valuable literacy interventions.”*
4. *“Churches, nonprofits, and businesses have stepped up to support literacy efforts.”*
5. *“We need to coordinate better among all these groups to maximize impact.”*

Early Childhood Literacy Programs – Early literacy development was consistently identified as a key factor in improving overall literacy rates. Because community-supported early literacy programs deliver interventions that help close achievement gaps before they begin to widen and provide literacy-rich environments that enhance vocabulary and reading readiness in pre-kindergarten settings, they essentially reduce disparities among students entering elementary school. Respondents stressed the importance of ensuring children enter kindergarten with foundational literacy skills, as gaps at this stage can lead to long-term struggles.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Reading by age three or grade three. I really believe we need to focus our efforts right there.”*
2. *“The things we can do for our community from zero to five will have the greatest impact so that children are ready for kindergarten.”*
3. *“Providing books and literacy activities in daycare centers and preschools can make a huge difference.”*
4. *“Early exposure to books and reading helps children develop stronger vocabulary and comprehension skills.”*
5. *“If we don’t address literacy early, we’ll be playing catch-up for years.”*
6. *“High-quality early childhood education is critical to ensuring long-term academic success.”*

Targeted Literacy Interventions for High-Need Students – One of the most frequently mentioned efforts was the implementation of targeted literacy interventions for students who struggle the most. Many respondents emphasized that specialized programs tailored to students’ needs help close literacy gaps. Tiered intervention strategies help students who are behind in literacy catch up. Schools that provide one-on-one or small group tutoring see significant improvement. Data-driven instruction ensures resources are directed where they are needed most.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Small-group reading interventions have been effective in helping struggling readers catch up to their peers.”*
2. *“Providing structured, one-on-one literacy intervention has made a measurable difference in student outcomes.”*
3. *“Students who receive targeted literacy interventions show marked improvements in reading comprehension and fluency.”*
4. *“Our intervention efforts are particularly important for low-income students who may not have literacy support at home.”*
5. *“A data-driven approach helps us identify students who need additional reading support.”*

Opportunities for Improvement

Challenges, Barriers, and Needs of Families and Community Members

Resource Accessibility – Limited access to age-appropriate books, educational tools, and updated learning materials poses a significant barrier to literacy development. Respondents emphasized that without sufficient resources, children have fewer opportunities to refine their reading and writing skills, both in school and at home. Many participants also highlighted the financial and logistical constraints of obtaining books and educational materials. While public libraries provide some support, restricted hours and limited book selections may not adequately meet the literacy needs of all learners. These challenges underscore the need for more accessible and diverse literacy resources to support both students and parents in fostering literacy growth.

- **Financial and Logistical Limitations** - One of the most frequently cited challenges is the lack of sufficient financial resources to access literacy programs. This financial constraint limits the ability to access high-quality educational materials, effective literacy interventions, and adequately trained staff. The cost of assessments, transportation, participation fees, etc. sets resources out of reach for many families, particularly those in marginalized communities. Families also regularly mentioned more practical issues associated with work and programming schedules and challenges with limited transportation options to participate in community programs—even those available through public libraries.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Parental involvement is crucial, but many families do not engage due to various barriers.”*
2. *“Accessibility issues, such as transportation or location, can hinder resource use.”*
3. *“Busy schedules and time constraints limit participation in literacy programs.”*
4. *“Financial challenges may restrict access to certain resources.”*
5. *“Technological constraints can make digital resources inaccessible.”*
6. *“We have great library programs, but I meet parents who struggle to even catch the bus to attend them.”*
7. *“We don’t have enough books at home, and buying them regularly is too expensive.”*
8. *“Our library has limited resources, and it’s hard to find books that engage my child.”*
9. *“Access to reading materials is a challenge, especially in rural communities.”*
10. *“My child’s school doesn’t have a strong library, making it difficult to encourage reading.”*

11. *“Class sizes are too large, making it difficult to provide the necessary support for struggling students.”*
 12. *“Many families don’t have the transportation to reach local libraries regularly.”*
- **Resource Visibility and Communications Limitations** – Focus group participants frequently reported the lack of a coordinated communication system that allows greater access to and understanding of available literacy resources, how to use them, and participation in support programs. The lack of clear, up-to-date, and consistent communication on existing resources limits and delays access to much needed literacy resources. This points to the need for better communication between schools, community organizations, and parents to bridge the gap and ensure that families are fully informed about opportunities that can support their children’s education.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Awareness of available resources is often lacking.”*
2. *“It’s essential that teachers and parents are continually made aware of the resources at their disposal.”*
3. *“Properly curated and up-to-date resources are crucial for literacy programs.”*
4. *“Language barriers prevent some families from accessing resources.”*
5. *“Families might lack the literacy skills to effectively utilize available resources.”*
6. *“I’m sure the resources are out there, so maybe just making it easier to find out about said resources.”*
7. *“I don’t always find out anything through the school... I learned about you guys from one of our little community centers...”*
8. *“They send homework, but no additional resources on how to help my child with literacy at home.”*
9. *“It’d be nice if parents got a list of all the online resources their children could use for extra learning.”*
10. *“We assume people have access to the internet, but if your community is your house, it’s hard to get information.”*
11. *“Even though the district pays for some helpful subscriptions, parents often don’t know how to access them or use them.”*
12. *“Many parents want to help their kids but don’t know where to find literacy resources.”*
13. *“Many families lack knowledge of the importance of early reading and how to support it at home.”*

Early Identification and Support – Early identification and support for literacy challenges are critical for timely intervention. However, many families and educators report difficulties in recognizing literacy issues early on, leading to delayed support and intervention. Without early identification, children with learning disabilities, underserved, or most at risk of falling behind may not receive the necessary assistance promptly, impacting their long-term literacy development. A contributing factor in this is inadequate training and support for teachers in implementing literacy programs. Teachers need ongoing professional development and support to stay updated with evidence-based practices and to handle diverse student needs effectively.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Identification of literacy issues early on is crucial, but it remains a significant challenge.”*
2. *“As a parent, you always have a hunch, but teachers can really pinpoint it with their training.”*
3. *“We need more targeted support to identify and address literacy issues early.”*
4. *“Early assessment tools are outdated or not precise enough to spot specific literacy issues.”*
5. *“Recognizing literacy problems at an early stage can dramatically change outcomes.”*
6. *“Parents often lack the knowledge to identify literacy issues, relying heavily on schools.”*
7. *“Without early identification, some students don’t receive the necessary support quickly enough.”*
8. *“We have students graduating who are illiterate because they didn’t get the proper interventions in time.”*

Families of Children with Special Needs – Families with children who have special needs face multiple challenges in accessing resources and consistent support. Parents must navigate medical treatments, educational support, therapies, and diligently advocate for their child’s needs. This highlights the gap in accessible, consistent services that align with children’s unique learning and developmental needs.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“I asked for her to be screened for dyslexia last year, but the public school didn’t screen for it, so I had to go and pay for a private screening.”*
2. *“My younger one hates to read and write. She’s super smart but struggles with motivation, and the type of reading they do in class doesn’t help—it’s all teaching to the test.”*
3. *“He ended up with some hearing loss, so that has affected his ability to read because we caught it later.”*
4. *“It’s hard with autistic kids because sometimes their days can be so different, and having a set schedule for tests really puts a damper on things.”*

5. *“He’s got some behavioral issues coupled with everything else. So, it’s been a little hard for us trying to find a learning process that works best for him.”*

Limited Parental Involvement and Guidance – Parental involvement plays a vital role in children’s literacy development, yet many parents face challenges in providing consistent support. Balancing work and family responsibilities often limits their ability to engage in academic activities, particularly for children who require additional reinforcement. Respondents frequently expressed frustration over the lack of accessible guidance on how to support literacy at home, leading to missed opportunities for skill development outside the classroom. Some parents also struggle due to their own educational background or uncertainty in teaching reading skills. Others find it difficult to maintain a literacy-rich environment when their children show little interest in reading. Participants highlighted the need for practical, family-friendly literacy resources to help parents navigate these challenges and effectively support their children’s literacy growth.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Parents want to help, but they need accessible and practical guidance on supporting their children’s reading development.”*
2. *“Not all families have the resources or education to provide literacy support at home.”*
3. *“I want to help my child with reading, but I don’t always know the best approach.”*
4. *“Getting my kids interested in books is difficult when they prefer digital entertainment.”*
5. *“My child prefers playing video games over reading, and it’s hard to change that habit.”*
6. *“I didn’t grow up with strong literacy skills myself, so teaching reading feels overwhelming.”*
7. *“Encouraging literacy habits is tough when children resist structured reading time.”*
8. *“Some parents struggle with literacy themselves, making it harder to help their children.”*
9. *“Finding books that my child enjoys reading has been a challenge.”*
10. *“I feel like people don’t know where to find resources outside of school. We have great library programs, but many families struggle to access them due to transportation issues.”*
11. *“A lot of parents don’t go to open houses where they explain things, so many miss out on the resources shared there.”*

Insufficient Educational Support – Participants noted disparities in the availability and quality of educational resources and support across different schools and communities. For example, while some schools offer strong literacy programs and access to tutors, others lack sufficient support, particularly for children with learning disabilities like dyslexia. This deficiency delays critical interventions necessary for effective literacy development. Participants noted that without proper support, children with learning difficulties fall behind their peers, leading to further academic challenges and decreased confidence in their reading

and writing abilities. This variation in resources exacerbates educational inequalities, particularly for families in underserved or low-income communities.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“I was in the gifted program and had extra support, but other mainstream classes didn’t get nearly the same level of attention from teachers.”*
2. *“The tutoring for me and other people, including my sister...was amazing, but they took that away, and now we don’t have accessible tutoring options.”*
3. *“The inequity in resources is apparent between different schools, like the number of books available and access to reading materials.”*
4. *“There’s not a lot of great resources coming out of Alachua County school district... It’s a lot of tear-out workbooks and stuff like that.”*
5. *“The school doesn’t provide enough individualized reading support for struggling students.”*
6. *“Teachers are stretched too thin to focus on literacy development in depth.”*
7. *“My child is behind in reading, but the school doesn’t have enough resources to help.”*

Limitations Of Existing Literacy Programs – Existing literacy programs often face limitations in terms of scope, reach, and effectiveness. Many programs are not specifically focused on literacy or lack the comprehensive structure needed to address all aspects of literacy development. Effective literacy outcomes are hampered by inconsistent curriculum implementation and a lack of evidence-based practices. Additionally, large class sizes and a one-size-fits-all approach make it challenging to provide the individualized attention that many students require.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“We have no literacy-specific program, but the skills we cover help indirectly.”*
2. *“Many programs lack the focus or structure needed for effective literacy development.”*
3. *“Large class sizes make it hard to provide individualized attention and support.”*
4. *“Standardized curriculum doesn’t always address students’ individual literacy needs.”*
5. *“Our current programs are stretched thin and can’t cater to the unique needs of every student.”*
6. *“We need more targeted literacy initiatives that address specific learning challenges.”*
7. *“Existing programs provide limited scope, often missing comprehensive literacy strategies.”*
8. *“We need more literacy programs in schools that focus on comprehension skills.”*
9. *“Without dedicated literacy programs, progress remains inconsistent.”*
10. *“Implementing a standardized literacy framework can help.”*

Limited Community, School, and Parent Collaboration– Engaging the community, school, and parents in collaborative literacy initiatives is vital but challenging. Many families report encountering obstacles such as lack of awareness, language barriers, or simply not knowing how to support their children’s literacy development effectively. Community engagement is crucial for reinforcing literacy skills outside formal educational settings, yet consistency and active participation are often limited.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Community engagement is a significant challenge; involving parents in their children’s literacy development is difficult.”*
2. *“We need more support from the community to sustain our literacy programs.”*
3. *“Parental involvement is crucial, but many families do not engage due to various barriers.”*
4. *“Without strong community and parental engagement, it’s tough to create a lasting impact on literacy development.”*

School and Organizational Funding and Resource Limitations – One of the most frequently cited challenges is the lack of sufficient funding and resources to support comprehensive literacy programs. The financial constraint limits the ability to provide high-quality educational materials, effective literacy interventions, and adequately trained staff. Insufficient funding also hinders the development and expansion of literacy initiatives needed to cater to diverse learning needs.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Insufficient funding limits our ability to provide comprehensive literacy programs.”*
2. *“Resource limitations, like the availability of books and technology, hinder literacy instruction.”*
3. *“Community engagement is essential, but it’s challenging to secure consistent financial support.”*
4. *“More funding would allow us to expand our literacy initiatives and offer high-quality resources to our students.”*
5. *“Funding shortages restrict access to the latest teaching tools and materials.”*
6. *“Limited budget impacts our ability to run extensive literacy workshops and training for educators.”*
7. *“We often struggle with resource limitations, including essential learning materials.”*
8. *“Resource limitations severely impact what we can achieve in literacy development.”*

Time Constraints and Work Schedules – Many families struggle to find the time for literacy activities due to busy schedules and competing priorities. Parents often juggle work, household responsibilities, and school commitments, leaving little room for reading with their children. Respondents expressed frustration that structured reading time often falls by the wayside, making consistent literacy improvement difficult.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Work schedules and work hours make it difficult to set aside daily reading time.”*
2. *“Between work and chores, I barely have time to sit down and read with my child.”*
3. *“We try to make time for reading, but homework and other activities take priority.”*
4. *“Finding a balance between screen time and reading is a daily challenge.”*
5. *“By the end of the day, everyone is too tired to focus on books.”*
6. *“There just aren’t enough hours in the day to dedicate to reading as much as we’d like.”*
7. *“Working late shifts makes it difficult to establish a consistent reading routine.”*
8. *“Extracurricular activities take up a lot of after-school time, leaving little for reading.”*

Challenges, Barriers, and Needs of Educators

The focus group discussions with educators revealed several recurring themes that highlight systemic challenges in curriculum implementation, student literacy development, assessment practices, and professional support. These themes reflect common experiences and concerns across different grade levels and schools, providing valuable insights for improving educational practices and outcomes.

Behavioral and Attendance Barriers – Behavioral issues and inconsistent attendance disrupt learning environments and create obstacles for student progress.

Representative Responses:

1. *“Attendance issues—if they are not here, they cannot learn.”*
2. *“Unaddressed behavior issues prevent learning.”*
3. *“Students act out when the work is too hard.”*
4. *“Behaviors impede learning in the classroom.”*
5. *“Disruptive behavior from some students takes away from the learning environment.”*
6. *“...behavior issues create significant barriers to academic progress.”*
7. *“Behavioral challenges often stem from unmet academic and social-emotional needs.”*

Curriculum Effectiveness and Challenges – One of the most frequently discussed topics was the effectiveness of the district’s curriculum, particularly *Benchmark Advance*. Educators noted that while the curriculum provides structure, it often lacks alignment with students’ developmental needs. Many teachers felt that the reading materials were too complex for younger students, requiring substantial modifications to be effective in daily instruction. Additionally, teachers found that the writing components were beyond students’ skill levels, making it challenging to develop foundational literacy skills.

Key Concerns:

- The curriculum is not developmentally appropriate for younger students.
- Teachers must supplement additional resources to meet students’ needs.
- The writing component is particularly challenging for early-grade learners.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Benchmark has been a struggle to teach because I don’t feel like it’s the best use of time. The reading assessments don’t align with what we’ve actually taught.”*
2. *“I just think that, as a second-grade teacher, the benchmark curriculum is so over their heads that we set them up for failure.”*
3. *“The writing component of the benchmark was so over their heads. They were asking them to write a three- or four-paragraph essay, and some kids couldn’t even write a complete sentence.”*

4. *“The reading assessments don’t align with the skills we’ve taught, making it difficult for students to succeed.”*
5. *“The texts in the curriculum are complex and beyond the students’ comprehension level, making reading a chore rather than an engaging learning experience.”*
6. *“Benchmark doesn’t provide enough pencil-to-paper activities, which are crucial in elementary school. Everything is done verbally, and it just doesn’t sink in for the students.”*
7. *“We are constantly supplementing because the curriculum alone is not enough to help students grasp fundamental reading and writing skills.”*

Limited Foundational Literacy Skills – Educators observed that a substantial number of students struggle with foundational literacy skills, often performing below grade level in reading fluency, comprehension, and decoding. These difficulties hinder their ability to engage with grade-level content and progress academically. Teachers also pointed to systemic challenges, such as poverty and high student mobility, as factors exacerbating literacy gaps. Many educators voiced frustration over declining student engagement with reading and writing. In upper grades, a lack of fundamental writing skills—such as sentence structure, punctuation, and comprehension—was identified as a key barrier to academic success in more advanced coursework.

Key Concerns:

- Declining independent reading habits.
- Insufficient emphasis on writing instruction.
- Students struggle with comprehension and fluency

Representative Responses:

1. *“Difficulty in reading (vocabulary and comprehension), writing, cognitive (ADHD and Dyslexia), and environmental factors such as mobility and poverty are common challenges.”*
2. *“A curriculum that moves too fast with little time for real remediation; once they are behind/below grade level, it seems impossible for them to catch up.”*
3. *“Basic phonological awareness deficits.”*
4. *“Core curriculum tests passages are at lexiles beyond that of what is grade level appropriate.”*
5. *“I get students every single day who don’t put periods at the end of their sentences or write full sentences.”*
6. *“Not enough direct literacy instruction for struggling readers and students with exceptionalities.”*
7. *Lack of background knowledge and foundational skills.”*
8. *“Children are reading below grade level, content is written above grade level and students are not able to access the reading curriculum with ease.”*
9. *“Being behind since elementary school and reading below grade level.”*

10. *“Many of my 12th graders still don’t put periods at the end of their sentences. Writing is the hardest thing to teach, and it often gets neglected because of the focus on comprehension.”*
11. *“Even in high school, comprehension is a big issue, but I think a lot of it has to do with exposure.”*
12. *“Writing is the hardest thing to teach, and it’s often neglected due to the strong focus on comprehension.”*
13. *“Students should be exposed to more engaging and developmentally appropriate reading materials.”*

Limited Support at Home – Limited home support remains a critical factor affecting students’ academic success. Educators identified key challenges, including low parental literacy, limited literacy exposure, unstable home environments, and socioeconomic hardships, all of which contribute to difficulties in reading and writing development. Educators stressed the importance of parental involvement but observed a decline in engagement and expressed that parents feel unprepared to assist with literacy activities, and the absence of structured resources further limits their ability to provide meaningful support.

Key Concerns:

- Parents feel overwhelmed and unsure how to help.
- More structured resources for families are needed.
- Community partnerships could provide additional literacy support.

Representative Responses:

1. *“Lack of resources/exposure to academic skills prior to beginning kindergarten.”*
2. *“Parents are overwhelmed because they keep getting reports that their child is struggling, but they don’t know how to help.”*
3. *“Home life/support, apathy, attendance.”*
4. *“Lack of support from home, lack of interest and respect for education in general.”*
5. *“Not reading outside of school or having parents read to them when young.”*
6. *“Limited language exposure prior to entering PK/Kindergarten impacts grade-level comprehension.”*
7. *“Many students lack respect for education at home.”*
8. *“The lack of home reinforcement significantly affects academic outcomes.”*
9. *“Some parents are very involved, but many struggle due to time constraints.”*
10. *“Some families lack the time or knowledge to support their child’s literacy development.”*

Professional Support and Training – Another recurring theme was the need for stronger professional development and ongoing training for educators. Many teachers felt ill-equipped to navigate new curricula, digital tools, and assessment methods due to a lack of structured training. The absence of ongoing professional learning opportunities made it challenging for educators to effectively implement literacy programs.

Key Concerns:

- Inadequate training on new curriculum tools and assessment platforms.
- Lack of professional development on teaching writing effectively.
- Need for mentorship and peer collaboration.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“I haven’t had any training on ClearSight, even though we’re supposed to start using it this week. Teachers are left to figure things out on their own, which isn’t sustainable.”*
2. *“We had training on the curriculum at the beginning of the year, but after that, there was no follow-up.”*
3. *“There’s a huge gap in professional development. We’re expected to use these programs, but no one trains us on how to do it effectively.”*
4. *“I wish we had more structured professional learning opportunities tailored to our needs.”*
5. *“DIBELS gives us great data, but we’re not always trained on how to interpret it for targeted interventions.”*
6. *“Many teachers are left to figure out instructional strategies on their own, which isn’t sustainable.”*
7. *“The district needs to provide more practical workshops on teaching writing skills effectively.”*
8. *“There was no follow-up training after the initial Benchmark curriculum rollout.”*
9. *“We need to go back to the old ways of professional development days on Wednesdays, where we could actually collaborate and learn from each other.”*
10. *“We need ongoing training, not just a one-time session. There’s no follow-up on how to actually implement what we learn.”*

Staffing and Resource Constraints – Teachers cited staffing shortages and resource constraints as major obstacles to delivering effective literacy instruction. The reduction of interventionists and instructional support, coupled with funding limitations, has made it increasingly difficult to address the needs of struggling students. Educators stressed the importance of additional staffing to facilitate small-group instruction and targeted interventions. Many also noted that limited instructional time, heavy workloads, and administrative demands further restrict their ability to support students’ literacy development. To improve instructional effectiveness, teachers advocated for increased planning time, reduced administrative tasks, and access to high-quality professional development.

Key Concerns:

- Loss of interventionists has reduced individualized support.
- Class sizes are too large to provide targeted literacy interventions.
- More funding is needed for additional instructional staff.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“The loss of Covid-related funding means we no longer have interventionists, which were crucial in helping students who need additional support.”*
2. *“There are not enough trained teachers to give interventions to every student who needs them.”*
3. *“Schools are understaffed, making it difficult to provide adequate interventions.”*
4. *“The loss of interventionists has hurt students who need extra support.”*
5. *Funding cuts have made it harder to access necessary literacy resources.”*
6. *“We are expected to do more with fewer resources, and it’s not sustainable.”*
7. *“We need staffing. The district always says they want to see gains, but without proper staffing, that’s never going to happen.”*
8. *“Some sort of interventionist who comes in just for the really low kids would be ideal, so I could focus on the Tier 2 kids and fill those gaps.”*
9. *“We chuckle about needing an assistant, but the end of COVID funding has had a drastic effect. We lost so much instructional support.”*
10. *“Small groups are crucial, but time constraints mean we barely see one group a day. More staff would change that.”*
11. *“We desperately need interventionists back in our schools. Without them, struggling students are not getting the help they need.”*
12. *“Small groups are critical for early literacy, but with limited staff, it’s nearly impossible to reach every student who needs it.”*

Student Engagement and Motivation – Educators routinely identified student disengagement as a significant obstacle to literacy development. From their perspective, many students perceive reading and writing as tedious tasks, which reduces their motivation to engage and develop literacy skills. Teachers emphasized the importance of incorporating student choice, interactive learning materials, and innovative instructional strategies to enhance engagement and interest. Additionally, systemic factors and a lack of perceived relevance in literacy skills further contribute to student disinterest.

Key Concerns:

- Lack of intrinsic motivation for reading and writing.
- Students need more choice in reading materials.
- Creative instructional strategies are necessary to sustain engagement.

Representative Responses:

1. *“Students do not want to practice, and the skills are lackluster.”*
2. *“Students lack interest and motivation to read.”*

3. *“They are not motivated to think critically or to learn.”*
4. *“Stamina of attention span for reading longer excerpts.”*
5. *“The tools provided do not interest students and do not encourage them to want to learn.”*
6. *“The lack of interest and respect for education in general has led to a generation of non-committed students.”*
7. *“Cultural shifts mean students do not value reading outside the classroom.”*
8. *“Many students dislike reading, often due to early negative experiences.”*
9. *“Students are disengaged because the material feels irrelevant to their interests.”*
10. *“Reading should be fun, but students see it as another school task.”*
11. *“Students just don’t read. Phones have replaced books, and reading has become a lost habit.”*

Systemic Issues (Curriculum and Resources) – Systemic issues like large class sizes and inequitable resource distribution, curriculum pacing, and inappropriate testing frameworks create barriers for achievement and students struggle to catch up and thrive academically. Students and teachers alike encounter difficulties with curricula that move too fast or are not developmentally appropriate. Limited tools and resources and large class sizes exacerbate these issues.

Representative Responses:

1. *“The core curriculum does not meet the needs of our students.”*
2. *“A curriculum that moves too fast with little time for real remediation.”*
3. *“There are not enough trained teachers to give interventions to every student who needs them.”*
4. *“Students are behind their whole educational career and will never catch up.”*
5. *“Systemic inequities in resource allocation create challenges for schools and students.”*
6. *“Teaching to the test. The pacing guide is way too fast.”*
7. *“Schools are understaffed, making it difficult to provide adequate interventions.”*
8. *“Many systemic issues in education disproportionately affect struggling students.”*

Technology and Learning Tools – While technology has the potential to enhance literacy instruction, educators expressed concerns about its limitations. Many students lacked digital literacy skills, and frequent technical issues disrupted learning. Teachers emphasized the need for structured training on how to effectively integrate technology into literacy instruction.

Key Concerns:

- Digital assessments are challenging for younger learners.
- Students lack basic digital literacy skills.
- Training is needed to effectively integrate technology in instruction.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Technology should be a support tool, not a replacement for direct instruction. Many students struggle to navigate digital reading tools effectively.”*
2. *“The transition to digital testing has been difficult for students who are used to paper-based assessments.”*
3. *“Many students lack the technical skills to effectively navigate digital learning tools.”*
4. *“The loss of IXL and other learning platforms has made it harder for us to provide supplemental practice.”*
5. *“Digital tools should be used as a support, not a replacement for traditional literacy instruction.”*
6. *“We need more structured technology training for both teachers and students to maximize learning outcomes.”*
7. *“Students struggle with digital assessments due to technical issues.”*
8. *“The transition to online testing has been difficult for younger learners.”*
9. *“Many students lack the digital literacy skills needed to navigate online reading tools.”*

Testing and Assessment Challenges – The use of standardized testing as a measure of student literacy was another area of concern. Teachers reported that assessments often failed to accurately reflect students’ abilities, particularly when administered digitally. Many students struggled with test-taking strategies, and there was a perceived disconnect between classroom learning and assessment outcomes.

Key Concerns:

- Computer-based assessments do not always reflect actual learning.
- Students struggle with digital test formats.
- Misalignment between instruction and standardized testing.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“High-stakes testing puts undue pressure on students and doesn’t capture their full learning potential. We need better alignment between instruction and assessment methods.”*
2. *“Computer-based assessments don’t always reflect what students actually know.”*
3. *“The tests are set up in a way that overwhelms students, making it hard to gauge their true understanding.”*
4. *“Students often guess on digital assessments rather than engage with the content.”*
5. *“Even if they master skills in small groups, the knowledge doesn’t always transfer to the standardized test setting.”*
6. *“Students struggle with the format of the test, especially when transitioning from paper-based to digital assessments.”*
7. *“We need better alignment between instruction and assessment methods.”*

Challenges, Barriers, and Needs of Organizations

Early Identification and Assessment – Interviewees stressed the importance of early literacy assessments in identifying students at risk of falling behind. While timely intervention can significantly improve outcomes, many organizations face challenges in implementing effective screening measures. Without accurate early identification, students with learning disabilities or literacy difficulties may not receive the support they need. Training educators to recognize literacy challenges enables targeted interventions, ensuring students receive appropriate assistance before gaps widen.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Identification [and] assessment early on of possible reading challenges is crucial. Being more informed in that area is important.”*
2. *“Recognizing literacy problems at an early stage can dramatically change outcomes, but it’s something we currently struggle with.”*
3. *“Early assessment tools are either outdated or not precise enough to spot specific literacy issues promptly.”*
4. *“Teachers need more support in identifying literacy challenges early, as this can make a huge difference in [students’] learning trajectory.”*
5. *“We lack the necessary tools to assess literacy challenges among early learners accurately, which delays crucial interventions.”*

Insufficient Funding and Resources – The lack of adequate funding remains a significant barrier to the successful implementation of literacy programs. Many organizations struggle to secure financial resources necessary for purchasing instructional materials, hiring specialized educators, and delivering targeted literacy interventions. Limited access to books, digital tools, and other essential resources further constrains literacy development efforts. The absence of interactive technology restricts student engagement, reducing the effectiveness of literacy instruction. Moreover, the lack of sustainable funding models creates financial instability, making long-term program planning difficult. Without reliable funding, literacy initiatives risk inconsistent implementation and diminished long-term impact.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Insufficient funding limits our ability to provide comprehensive literacy programs.”*
2. *“Community engagement is essential, but without enough funding, it’s hard to maintain effective literacy initiatives.”*
3. *“We often struggle with resource limitations, including books and technology needed for literacy instruction.”*
4. *“More funding would allow us to expand our literacy initiatives and offer high-quality resources to our students.”*
5. *“Better resource allocation can help us address the specific literacy needs of our students more effectively.”*

Parental, Community, and Resource Support – Securing community support and resources is vital for the sustainability and success of literacy programs. Several interviews highlighted the importance of building partnerships with local entities and ensuring sufficient resources to sustain literacy initiatives. Organizations often face challenges in garnering sufficient backing from local stakeholders, including parents, businesses, and government agencies. Additionally, there is frequently a lack of necessary resources, such as books, technology, and funding, to support comprehensive literacy efforts.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Community engagement is a significant challenge; involving parents in their children’s literacy development is difficult.”*
2. *“We need more support from the community to sustain our literacy programs. Parental involvement is crucial but hard to achieve.”*
3. *“We need to develop more effective strategies to engage parents and make them active participants in their children’s literacy education.”*
4. *“Securing community support has been difficult, yet it is critical for the success of our literacy programs.”*
5. *“Families need to partner with schools to support learning.”*
6. *“Resource limitations, whether it’s books or funding, severely limit what we can achieve in literacy development.”*
7. *“Partnership with local entities is essential, but we often struggle to get the necessary support.”*
8. *“Building a network of supportive stakeholders is key, but it’s a significant challenge we face.”*

Student Engagement and Participation – Engaging students sufficiently and ensuring their active participation are critical for literacy success. However, many organizations report difficulties in maintaining high levels of engagement, which is essential for meaningful learning. Lack of engagement can result from various factors, including outdated teaching methods, lack of interest, or external distractions. Encouraging active participation requires innovative approaches that incorporate motivational strategies, interactive learning experiences, engaging content, and materials that capture students’ interest and make literacy learning enjoyable and relevant to their lives.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Ensuring participant engagement and comprehension is a significant challenge.”*
2. *“Keeping students motivated and interested in literacy activities is something we continually work on.”*
3. *“Engagement is critical, but many students find traditional literacy exercises boring.”*
4. *“Participation drops when students don’t see the immediate relevance of literacy activities.”*
5. *“Reading is not fun for kids when they’re younger, and as they grow older, they associate reading with being boring or uninteresting...but it’s difficult to change that perception.”*

Targeted Literacy Programs –The absence of dedicated literacy programs remains a significant challenge for many organizations. Respondents emphasized that while some initiatives incorporate literacy development, it is often a secondary outcome rather than a primary objective. This lack of focus prevents literacy leaders from directing resources toward specialized interventions and limits their ability to address literacy challenges effectively.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“We have no literacy-specific program... But many of the skills we talk about in our program can help students with their literacy.”*
2. *“While we do support a range of educational skills, there isn’t a dedicated program just for literacy improvement, which we desperately need.”*
3. *“Our organization focuses on holistic development, but without a targeted literacy agenda, some students fall through the cracks.”*
4. *“Developing literacy needs a specialized approach, which we currently lack in our existing programs.”*
5. *“Our organization does a lot of different things, but literacy isn’t our main focus. It’s just one of the skills we hope to improve incidentally.”*
6. *“Specialized literacy programs are essential for consistent improvement in literacy skills...We see improvement in general education, but without literacy-specific initiatives, progress in reading and comprehension is slow.”*

Training and Professional Development – The effectiveness of literacy programs is highly dependent on the skills and knowledge of educators. Insufficient training and professional development opportunities for teachers in literacy education remain a significant barrier. Continuous training is necessary to familiarize educators with the latest literacy teaching strategies and tools. Without ongoing professional development, educators may be ill-equipped to handle diverse literacy challenges, which can hinder the overall effectiveness of literacy initiatives.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Teachers in our community aren’t adequately supported in their growth areas, especially concerning literacy instruction.”*
2. *“Our staff requires more frequent and updated training to keep up with the evolving challenges in literacy education.”*
3. *“Professional development opportunities are scarce, leaving our educators underprepared for literacy teaching.”*
4. *“Our staff would benefit greatly from more professional development opportunities in literacy education.”*
5. *“Without adequate training, our staff cannot implement the most effective literacy strategies.”*

Elected Officials' Perceptions of Current Challenges, Barriers, and Needs

Early Childhood Literacy Gaps – One of the most frequently mentioned challenges in the interviews was the gap in literacy skills among young children before they enter formal education. Several interviewees emphasized the importance of early literacy development, particularly in the critical years between birth and age five. Without adequate support during these formative years, children often begin kindergarten already behind, which leads to long-term struggles with reading and writing proficiency. Early childhood literacy gaps are exacerbated by limited access to structured early learning programs, a lack of parental awareness about literacy development, and disparities in pre-kindergarten educational opportunities. Many stakeholders agreed that reading proficiency by third grade is a crucial benchmark, as students who are not reading at grade level by this point are more likely to struggle throughout their academic careers. Addressing this challenge requires targeted interventions, community-supported early learning initiatives, and enhanced parental engagement to foster early literacy habits at home.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Students who don’t develop literacy skills early are at risk of falling behind in every subject.”*
2. *“Our students need to be reading on grade level by the time they get to 3rd grade.”*
3. *“Children are finishing elementary school not reading competently, and by middle school or high school, it’s really too late.”*
4. *“We have students progressing through elementary school with gaps in their skill sets.”*
5. *“Some enter kindergarten without the necessary prerequisite skills and struggle throughout school.”*

Impact of Socioeconomic Disparities – Literacy development is closely linked to socioeconomic status. Families with higher incomes benefit from greater access to books, tutoring, and educational resources that support literacy growth, while children from low-income households often face early disadvantages due to resource limitations. Generational poverty further contributes to these disparities, as parents with lower literacy proficiency may be less equipped to support their children’s reading development. Without strategic intervention, these gaps persist, leading to long-term academic and economic challenges. Interviewees emphasized the necessity of directing literacy funding and educational support to low-income communities to ensure all children receive equitable opportunities for success.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“If you are wealthy in America, you get the tutoring and the skills where you are weak.”*
2. *“In poor communities, they don’t have those opportunities because of the wealth gap.”*
3. *“Children from low-income families enter school already behind and struggle to catch up.”*

4. *“The cycle of generational poverty is fueled by lack of access to literacy resources.”*
5. *“Schools in affluent neighborhoods often have better-funded literacy programs.”*

Inconsistent Literacy Programs and Strategies –Interviews revealed significant inconsistencies in literacy instruction across schools. While some effectively use evidence-based programs, others lack structured approaches, leading to disparities in student achievement. Without a cohesive district-wide literacy strategy, schools implement varied instructional methods, resulting in uneven application of best practices. Participants stressed the importance of standardized literacy curricula, clear instructional guidelines, and accountability measures to ensure consistent, high-quality literacy education.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“There is no comprehensive strategy for addressing literacy gaps across our district.”*
2. *“Instruction is not being differentiated appropriately for struggling readers.”*
3. *“Principals and teachers are left to determine their own literacy interventions, leading to inconsistency.”*
4. *“Some schools are effectively using evidence-based reading programs, while others are not.”*
5. *“A lack of accountability means that some schools do not fully implement literacy initiatives.”*
6. *“We need a standardized approach to literacy instruction to ensure all students receive adequate support.”*

Enhance Parental Support and Education – Parental involvement is a key factor in literacy development, yet many parents face obstacles that hinder their ability to support their children effectively. Interviews highlighted challenges such as limited literacy proficiency, demanding work schedules, and lack of awareness regarding their child’s reading progress. Some parents, particularly those with limited formal education or multiple job commitments, struggle to provide academic support at home. A significant concern is that many parents are unaware of literacy intervention programs or how to access them.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“If a parent can’t read well or dropped out of high school, they can’t help with homework.”*
2. *“Parents who struggle with literacy themselves cannot fully support their children’s reading development.”*
3. *“Single parents juggling multiple jobs have little time to assist their children with reading.”*
4. *“Without parental reinforcement, school-based literacy efforts have limited success.”*
5. *“Teaching parents to support literacy at home is just as important as teaching students.”*

Teacher Training and Retention Issues – A shortage of qualified literacy educators poses a significant challenge to literacy improvement, particularly in traditionally underserved areas. Many schools rely on teachers with alternative certifications who may lack the specialized training necessary for effective literacy instruction. High turnover rates and insufficient access to professional development further disrupt instructional continuity. There is a need for comprehensive teacher training programs that prioritize evidence-based literacy instruction, particularly for early-career educators.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“We have a shortage of trained teachers who specialize in literacy instruction.”*
2. *“Many of our teachers are on temporary certification and lack the necessary skills.”*
3. *“High turnover rates in struggling schools make it difficult to establish consistent literacy instruction.”*
4. *“Without proper training, teachers are unable to implement effective reading strategies.”*

Recommendations

Recommendations of Families and Community Members

Community and Library Engagement – Community-based literacy initiatives were a common recommendation among survey participants. Many called for more library events, community reading groups, and mentorship programs to support children’s literacy development. Participants emphasized the importance of collaboration between schools, libraries, and local organizations to create an environment where literacy is prioritized.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Community centers should offer free literacy workshops for families.”*
2. *“Public libraries should host more interactive reading programs for children.”*
3. *“Mentorship programs where older students read with younger children could be effective.”*
4. *“Providing free community resources, such as tutoring and educational support, is necessary for families that can’t afford private help.”*
5. *“It’s important for schools and libraries to work together to support literacy, especially by offering programs outside of school hours.”*
6. *“Events to demonstrate valuable tips for reading together, such as interactive strategies, should be incorporated into school and community activities.”*
7. *“Access to affordable tutoring services should be expanded so more children can benefit from additional literacy support.”*
8. *“More volunteer-led reading programs in libraries and schools would be beneficial.”*
9. *“Local businesses should sponsor literacy initiatives and book giveaways.”*
10. *“More community spaces on the east side of town, with better transportation, would make it easier for students to access learning opportunities.”*
11. *“Reading challenges [competitions] within communities would encourage children to read more.”*
12. *“Community literacy programs need to expand, but they should also be accessible to families who may struggle with transportation and scheduling conflicts.”*
13. *“Public spaces should have reading corners to make books more accessible.”*
14. *“Collaboration between schools and libraries would strengthen literacy outreach efforts.”*

Desired Literacy Resources and Tools – Respondents expressed a strong need for more accessible and engaging literacy resources. Many emphasized the importance of early exposure to books, interactive reading materials, and diverse literacy formats such as audiobooks, magazines, and digital resources. Additionally, several participants highlighted the role of book clubs and community-based reading initiatives in encouraging a love of reading. Suggestions included expanding library services, providing free or affordable books, and ensuring children have access to a diverse range of literature to encourage reading engagement.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Local book clubs, access to books at home, and providing audiobooks and magazines would make a huge difference.”*
2. *“Schools should provide more take-home books so children can practice reading at home.”*
3. *“We need more community book exchanges to make reading materials accessible to all families.”*
4. *“Our local library needs better funding to expand its children’s book collection.”*
5. *“Book donation programs can help families who cannot afford to buy books regularly.”*
6. *“Parents ... need easy, low-stakes ways to learn how to support literacy at home.”*
7. *“We need more resources that are parent-friendly so families can reinforce learning at home.”*
8. *“Workshops for parents and kids would be a great idea, offering hands-on activities to engage them with literacy.”*
9. *“Public libraries should have extended hours so working parents can take their children.”*
10. *“We need more engaging and interactive literacy tools to keep students involved.”*
11. *“There should be more initiatives to distribute free books in underserved communities.”*
12. *“Parental guidance on effective use of educational tools.”*
13. *“Increasing parental involvement through interactive literacy activities.”*
14. *“Properly curated and up-to-date resources are crucial for literacy programs.”*
15. *“Affordable book fairs would encourage parents to buy more books for their kids.”*
16. *“Enhanced support systems for educators to help guide parents.”*
17. *“Increasing access to book clubs, library programs, and providing more teachers and resources in classrooms will improve literacy outcomes.”*
18. *“School libraries should have more diverse books so children can relate to the stories.”*

Digital and Technological Literacy Tools – Technology was frequently mentioned as a valuable tool for literacy development. Respondents recommended the integration of educational apps, digital storybooks, and interactive software to make literacy more engaging. Many suggested that schools and parents should have greater access to high-quality digital literacy tools to supplement traditional reading activities.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Schools should incorporate more interactive digital literacy tools in classrooms.”*
2. *“Educational apps have made reading more engaging for my child.”*
3. *“Online libraries should be expanded to provide free digital books for students.”*
4. *“Interactive e-books can help struggling readers by providing audio support.”*
5. *“Interactive educational software helps reinforce literacy skills at home.”*
6. *“Adaptive learning platforms provide personalized literacy instruction.”*
7. *“Free online literacy resources should be expanded to reach more children.”*
8. *“Free online programs that give audiobooks that visually show kids the words help when parents work two jobs and don’t have time to read with them.”*
9. *“Digital story time sessions could help busy families integrate literacy into daily life.”*
10. *“More free online literacy resources should be available for students and parents.”*
11. *“Virtual reading mentors would provide additional literacy support.”*
12. *“Schools should partner with tech companies to improve access to digital reading tools.”*

Educational Programs and Support Services – Many participants highlighted the need for enhanced educational programs and support services, including smaller class sizes, one-on-one reading interventions, and teacher training to address diverse learning needs. There was also an emphasis on early childhood literacy screening and ensuring that struggling readers receive targeted support before falling behind.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Less students per classroom, more support in classrooms, and more individualized reading interventions would benefit struggling readers.”*
2. *“As a former reading teacher, I saw firsthand how overcrowded classrooms make it difficult to close literacy gaps. We need more targeted support.”*
3. *“Ensure that children are developmentally ready before pushing reading and writing instruction too early. Early literacy screenings and teacher training in learning disabilities are essential.”*
4. *“Community literacy programs need to expand, but they should also be accessible to families who may struggle with transportation and scheduling conflicts.”*
5. *“Increasing access to book clubs, library programs, and providing more teachers and resources in classrooms will improve literacy outcomes.”*

Teacher Training and School-Based Literacy Programs – Many responses underscored the need for improved teacher training and structured school-based literacy programs. Participants mentioned that educators should be better equipped with literacy-focused teaching strategies and that schools should adopt more effective literacy interventions for struggling readers. Respondents also recommended incorporating literacy development across all subjects.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Teachers need better training to help struggling readers with personalized strategies.”*
2. *“Additional training for educators would help in early identification of literacy challenges.”*
3. *“Teachers are better equipped to handle student challenges with the right training.”*
4. *“More training enables teachers to customize their teaching methods to suit various learning styles.”*
5. *“Ongoing professional development is essential for teacher effectiveness.”*
6. *“Continuous training on effective literacy instruction strategies is crucial for our educators.”*
7. *“Schools should integrate reading comprehension exercises into all subjects, not just English.”*
8. *“More reading intervention specialists in schools would help students falling behind.”*
9. *“Literacy should be a priority across the curriculum, not an afterthought.”*
10. *“One-on-one reading support for struggling students would make a significant impact.”*
11. *“Professional development for teachers should include evidence-based literacy instruction.”*
12. *“Teachers need access to more classroom literacy resources.”*
13. *“Reading coaches in schools could provide additional support to teachers and students.”*

Recommendations of Educators

Focus on Literacy and Writing Skills – Educators indicated that improving literacy and writing skills involves explicit vocabulary instruction, repeated practice, and opportunities to engage in writing tasks. The strategies focus on helping students master literacy through consistent practice, structured lessons, and opportunities to apply their skills in writing-based activities.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Read-alouds and critical thinking questions develop vocabulary and comprehension.”*
2. *“Repeated practice of skills that students struggle to master.”*
3. *“Repetition and vocabulary-focused tasks build foundational skills.”*
4. *“Specific vocabulary instruction focusing on word roots, prefixes, and suffixes.”*
5. *“Students teaching students can reinforce morphology and vocabulary.”*
6. *“Children need to be challenged with writing-based assessments.”*
7. *“Incorporating competitions and real-world writing tasks enhances engagement.”*
8. *“Encouraging creativity through writing workshops builds confidence.”*

Parental, School, and Community Engagement – Educators frequently highlighted the critical role of parental involvement and broader community engagement in supporting literacy and in creating a collaborative environment where students benefit from consistent support both inside and outside the classroom. Strategies include empowering parents with skills and encouraging collaboration between families and schools. The responses underscore the importance and need for collaboration between schools and communities to create targeted support programs, smaller class sizes, and equitable learning environments.

Representative Responses:

1. *“Rezone schools to make individual classrooms more equitable for all learners.”*
2. *“Engage local leaders to promote literacy through public campaigns.”*
3. *“Parent involvement has declined, but structured literacy nights and take-home resources could help bridge that gap.”*
4. *“Create community-wide reading initiatives to make literacy a shared priority.”*
5. *“Encourage local businesses to sponsor literacy programs and book donations.”*
6. *“Community-based reading initiatives, like partnerships with local libraries and bookstores, could encourage students to read outside of school.”*
7. *“If we could provide families with literacy kits—magnetic letters, dry-erase boards, or simple phonics resources—it could really help support learning at home.”*
8. *“Encourage partnerships between schools and libraries for after-school programs.”*
9. *“Involve local organizations in sponsoring literacy events and resources.”*
10. *“Offer transportation for students to stay after school for additional help.”*
11. *“Encourage schools to collaborate with nonprofits to provide tutoring services.”*
12. *“Emphasize the importance of reading by providing more free opportunities, especially in underserved areas.”*

13. *“Offer community workshops to teach individuals how to use literacy resources effectively.”*
14. *“Encourage parents to engage with their children’s academics through events and resources.”*
15. *“More at-home practice and increased parental involvement for lowest achievers.”*

Promoting Reading Programs and Access to Books – Educator responses emphasize the importance of community initiatives to improve access to books and encourage reading habits. Libraries, book clubs, and reading challenges are frequently suggested strategies.

Representative Responses:

1. *“Emphasize the importance of reading by providing more free opportunities, especially in underserved areas.”*
2. *“Community-wide reading initiatives: book clubs for all ages, little free libraries, and community reading challenges.”*
3. *“Provide reading challenges with different businesses like ‘read 20 books and get a free pizza.’”*
4. *“We need community-based reading incentives—programs like ‘Read for Pizza’ or bookstore rewards that encourage students to engage in literacy outside of school.”*
5. *“Organize community book clubs for readers of all ages.”*
6. *Set up free book-sharing programs, like Little Free Libraries, in neighborhoods.”*
7. *“Create digital libraries for easier access to educational resources.”*
8. *“Collaborate with public libraries to expand access to digital and physical books.”*
9. *“Promote community-wide literacy challenges with accessible reading materials.”*

Targeted Reading Programs and Interventions for Students – Teachers frequently indicated that students who fall behind require additional resources, such as early interventions, specialized programs, and classroom support, to bridge the achievement gap. Providing adequate resources ensures that struggling students receive the support necessary to catch up with their peers. This includes financial investment, early interventions, and classroom assistance. Educator responses frequently highlighted the need for specialized programs and strategies aimed at improving literacy and reading skills. These programs emphasize phonics, comprehension, and fluency, often using technology to supplement learning. They may include structured interventions, tools like UFLI, and efforts to make reading engaging and meaningful.

Representative Responses:

1. *“Animated reading programs engage students and improve their comprehension.”*
2. *“Daily individual novel reading, weekly group novel study, instructional center-based reading and writing exercises.”*
3. *“Intensive reading programs.”*
4. *“UFLI, Achieve 3000, IXL, IREADY.”*

5. *“Chunking and buddy reading strategies assist with reading complex passages.”*
6. *Reading Plus has shown to improve literacy skills for some students.”*
7. *“Daily novel reading combined with instructional center-based exercises supports literacy.”*
8. *“Early interventions address skill deficits before they widen.”*
9. *“Offer programs for individualized support to struggling students.”*
10. *Provide specific, phonics-based instruction and regular comprehension interventions.”*
11. *“Additional financial resources are necessary to support intervention programs.”*

Recommendations of Organizations

Address and Support Literacy Through Experiential Engagement

- Incorporate arts, PE, and experiential activities like clay modeling or music: These types of activities can improve comprehension and vocabulary by connecting students' practical knowledge to concepts.
- Use STEM as a literacy bridge for low-level readers
- Leverage STEM subjects to help low-level readers grasp complex vocabulary through context-based, interactive learning.
- Promote hands-on, experiential learning: Many educators emphasized that STEM and literacy development benefit from hands-on, real-world applications, which improve understanding and engagement.
- Increase hands-on, multisensory learning opportunities
- Shift toward a student-led, inquiry-based learning model

Develop Targeted Literacy Programs

- Provide resources and capacity for GED and adult education programs: Many adults within the community require GED and literacy support. Expanding GED and adult education programs, along with offering flexible learning options (e.g., online and evening classes), could increase adult literacy rates.
- Target middle school and teen demographics with literacy programs: Addressing literacy needs for older children who may have been overlooked or lack confidence is seen as crucial.
- Expand early engagement: Starting student engagement in earlier grades, such as 8th grade, could help bridge knowledge gaps and prepare students more thoroughly.

Enhance Parent/Family Involvement and Community Engagement

- Engage families in literacy activities through incentives, partnerships, and community events can foster a supportive environment for both children and adults. Consider exploring outreach initiatives via faith-based organizations and creating shared family literacy activities to increase engagement.

Establish a Rural Community Alliance/Support Network

- Establish a coalition representing rural areas within Alachua County to present unified requests to funders and policymakers. This alliance could effectively advocate for equitable distribution of resources and better representation at decision-making tables.
- Expand Literacy Resources and Programs to Rural Communities: There is a need for mobile or community-based resources to reach underserved areas lacking transportation and program access.

Improve Access and Awareness of Literacy Resources

- Programs require access to effective literacy tools and resources, especially for students in grades five and up who struggle with reading. Securing appropriate

materials, such as curriculum-based tools and supplementary learning aids, can aid in closing literacy gaps.

- Provide access to diverse literacy tools and engagement strategies: Many organizations recommend expanding literacy programming to include engaging activities like music, arts, and interactive technology.
- Create a centralized literacy/youth program resource book, website, or calendar - This could improve access, participation, and outcomes. It could also improve communication among organizations hosting literacy and youth events.
- Expand literacy resources and access to physical books.

Professional Development for Staff and Volunteers

- Provide specialized training: Organizations expressed a need for specialized training in reading, literacy strategies, and trauma-informed care for both staff and volunteers.
- Target literacy and disability support: Provide targeted professional development for staff in teaching literacy, contextualized learning, and supporting students with disabilities.
- Highlight retention: Training should cover effective retention strategies, particularly for adult learners balancing multiple responsibilities.
- Show and model hands-on teaching methods: Teachers need guidance and resources to implement effective hands-on and experiential learning, particularly in STEM.
- Enhance ESL support and training: The need for ESL-specific training for staff was highlighted to better support the increasing number of non-native English speakers, particularly Spanish speakers and Haitian Creole learners.

Promote Collaboration Between Schools and Community Centers

- Enhance partnerships between Alachua County public schools, charter schools, and community centers: This could include sharing professional development opportunities for staff and volunteers, collaborating on literacy initiatives, and creating integrated pathways for students moving between programs.

Promote Public Support and Awareness of Literacy Gaps/Needs

- Raise public awareness around literacy issues, especially for ESL and minority students. This could attract more community support and resources for literacy and college-readiness initiatives
- Increase awareness of literacy gaps among community members: Raising awareness about the prevalence and impact of literacy issues, especially in underserved areas, is essential for mobilizing support and resources.

Strengthen Organizational Partnerships

- Bridge gaps through multisector collaboration & coordination: There is a need for greater partnership between organizations to effectively support literacy and youth programs.
- Utilize community round tables for resource sharing and networking: Regular round-table discussions among literacy providers, public school representatives, community

leaders, and service organizations can create a supportive network for sharing resources and coordinating efforts to meet the diverse literacy needs of the community.

Other Recommendations

- Provide individualized and trauma-informed support for literacy
- Foster literacy enrichment programs with local and cultural relevance
- Integrate emotional and social learning into literacy programs
- Increase funding and staffing: Many community and educational organizations express a critical need for additional funding and staff, particularly in rural areas. This additional support could reduce the strain on current employees, enable more consistent programming, and improve retention of qualified personnel.
- Address basic needs to improve educational outcomes: The pressing need for accessible food, medical care, and transportation was repeatedly highlighted, especially for rural areas. Addressing these basic needs is foundational to improving literacy and overall community well-being.
- Recognize and reward positive behavior and engagement in education: Implement community recognition programs to incentivize both students and families who actively engage in educational opportunities and literacy programs. Recognizing such efforts can reinforce positive behavior and engagement in education.
- Encourage consistency in educational programs: Addressing the issue of inconsistency in program availability and resources can lead to more reliable support for children and families.
- Develop and fund community-wide literacy initiatives: The community should establish literacy-focused roundtables and initiatives, including those from city and county leaders and other stakeholders.

Recommendations of Students

Emphasize Reading as a Key Literacy Skill – One of the dominant themes emerging from the students responses was the emphasis on reading as a foundational skill for students. Many participants highlighted the importance of incorporating reading into both school and home environments. Several responses suggested making reading a regular habit, like that of one participant who stated, *“Make visiting the library part of your family’s weekly routine,”* and another that emphasized, *“Encourage children to read at least two chapters of a book every week.”* Additionally, survey participants frequently mentioned the role of books in developing literacy, with one respondent recommending, *“Provide small daily/weekly reading logs where students track their progress.”* This theme underscores a strong belief in the power of reading to improve student academic success.

Encourage Writing as a Means of Expression – Another common theme focused on writing as an essential literacy skill that should be fostered both at school and at home. Several responses suggested that students should engage in frequent writing exercises to enhance their skills. One respondent wrote, *“Regularly assign brief writing exercises in your classroom to help students articulate their thoughts.”* A similar sentiment was echoed in another student’s response, *“Keep reading with me and making me write,”* indicating that writing is most effective when practiced in conjunction with reading. There was also an emphasis on making writing enjoyable, with one suggestion advocating for *“using creative storytelling prompts to make writing more engaging for children.”*

Interactive and Engaging Learning Approaches – A final theme emerging from student responses is the value of interactive and engaging learning methods. Many responses emphasized the need for schools and families to make literacy education enjoyable. For example, one participant recommended, *“Practicing phonetics with fun activities.”* This aligns with other responses that suggested creative strategies such as roundtable discussions, book clubs, and hands-on activities to make learning more dynamic and engaging. The emphasis on interactive methods suggests that respondents see literacy as a skill best cultivated through enjoyable and meaningful experiences.

The Role of Families in Literacy Development – Several responses also highlighted the role of families in supporting literacy development outside of school. The feedback encouraged parents and guardians to actively participate in their children’s learning process. Some responses suggested engaging in educational outings, such as, *“Going with family to museums or historical places to encourage discussion and writing about experiences.”* Others recommended integrating literacy activities into daily life, with one participant stating, *“Make reading a habit.”* These responses reflect a shared understanding that literacy development extends beyond the classroom and into everyday family interactions.

Recommendations of Elected Officials

Expand Early Childhood Literacy Initiatives – One of the most consistently mentioned recommendations was the need to invest more resources into early childhood literacy. Many respondents emphasized that intervention between birth and age five is crucial in setting children up for long-term success in reading and writing.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“We need to ensure all children have access to high-quality early learning programs.”*
2. *“Expanding literacy programs for toddlers and preschoolers will prevent the cycle of struggling readers.”*
3. *“Investing in early literacy will ultimately save money by reducing the need for later remediation.”*
4. *“We need more investment in training teachers in evidence-based literacy instruction.”*

Implement Targeted Literacy Interventions for At-Risk Students – Respondents emphasized the importance of targeted interventions for students who are most at risk of falling behind in literacy. Providing additional support to address gaps early helps to ensure more balanced access to literacy education for all students. They highlighted the need for structured, data-driven approaches to support struggling readers.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“We need a system-wide approach to track and support struggling readers.”*
2. *“We need to ensure that students with disabilities receive the literacy support they require.”*
3. *“A data-driven approach helps us identify students who need additional reading support.”*
4. *“High-quality tutoring and intervention programs can turn literacy trajectories around.”*
5. *“With the right interventions, we can close the achievement gap and ensure all students reach grade-level literacy.”*

Increase Community and School Collaboration – Interviewees consistently highlighted the need for better partnerships between schools, local governments, and community organizations to improve literacy. They have the potential to provide additional resources, volunteers, and support programs to local schools, and allow us to leverage expertise from universities, businesses, and nonprofits to strengthen literacy education. Many pointed to successful collaborations that have already made a difference and emphasized the importance of expanding such initiatives.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“The Children’s Trust has been a game-changer in coordinating literacy resources.”*
2. *“We need to coordinate better among all groups to maximize literacy efforts.”*
3. *“Partnerships with UF and Santa Fe College could bring in much-needed research-backed literacy practices.”*
4. *“Libraries, after-school programs, and community centers should be better integrated into the literacy strategy.”*
5. *“More collaboration between schools and local businesses could help fund literacy initiatives.”*

Strengthen Parental Engagement and Home-Based Literacy Support – Respondents highlighted the importance of family involvement in literacy development. They frequently suggested that schools and community organizations need to do more to engage parents and equip them with the tools to help their children develop literacy skills. Such efforts would strengthen home-school partnerships, encourage parents to take an active role in their child’s reading progress, and create a culture of literacy within families and communities

Representative Quotes:

1. *“We need programs to engage parents in supporting early literacy at home.”*
2. *“We need better communication between schools and parents about literacy progress.”*
3. *“Providing parents with literacy workshops can empower them to support their children’s reading development.”*
4. *“Home libraries and book distribution programs can help families create literacy-rich environments.”*
5. *“We need to ensure parents understand the critical role they play in their child’s literacy success.”*
6. *“Building strong parent-teacher relationships will help families feel more confident in supporting literacy at home.”*

EARLY VERSIONS OF UF LASTINGER CENTER RECOMMENDATIONS

Enhanced Communication and Collaboration

- **Create Centralized Resource Hub** – <https://flbt5.floridaearlylearning.com/> and <https://www.fldoe.org/academics/standards/just-read-fl/families/>.]
- **Promote existing book delivery programs** – The New Worlds Literacy Initiative employs engagement specialists with whom school districts can work to increase awareness and uptake. Alachua County stakeholders should work closely with these specialists to promote knowledge of the program in schools and the school board’s knowledge of the program. The New Worlds Reading Initiative and other book delivery programs should be focal points at family nights, open houses, and other community events.
- **Host a community summit on literacy** – This would bring together educators, parents, community leaders, and organizations to discuss challenges and solutions. Scheduling and logistics of these community summits should take into consideration the transportation and scheduling challenges of the rural sections of Alachua County. To the furthest extent possible, meetings should be held in locations that are easy to access for families with limited means of transportation.
- **Create literacy “campaigns” across various media** – Use social media, local newspapers, and other platforms to highlight best practices for language and literacy development for families.
- **Use social media and local media outlets** – Encourage news segments, articles, and community events that focus on literacy. Promote literacy initiatives, events, and resources through social media, local newspapers, and radio stations.

Targeted Support

- **English Language Learner Support** – The U.S. Office of Special Education Programs has published a comprehensive policy document that outlines best practices in relationship building: *Fostering Collaborative Partnerships with Families of English Learners Within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports* - <https://www.mtss4els.org/files/resource-files/Series2-Brief4.pdf>
- **Resources for Educators of English Language Learners** – Tap into existing resources, such as the following:
 1. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/WWC/PracticeGuide/19>
 2. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/WWC/PracticeGuide/6>
 3. <https://www.centeroninstruction.org/files/Lang%20and%20Rdng%20Interventions%20for%20ELLs%20and%20ELLs%20with%20Disabilities.pdf>
 4. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED517791.pdf>

5. <https://www.asha.org/Practice/multicultural/Phono/>
 6. <https://www.mtss4els.org/>
 7. <https://www.colorincolorado.org/>
 8. <https://www.cselcenter.org/>
- **Resources for Students with Disabilities** – There are ample existing professional learning resources for teachers of students with disabilities: Council for Exceptional Children and the CEEDAR Center: High Leverage Practices for Students with Disabilities- <https://ceedar.education.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/High-Leverage-Practices-for-Students-with-Disabilities-updated.pdf>
National Center on Intensive Intervention’s course content: <https://intensiveintervention.org/training/course-content>
 - **Attract and retain ESE teachers** – Recommendations are offered through the CEEDAR Center (2020). For additional information, please see the CEEDAR Center’s policy brief (*Preparing and Retaining Effective Special Education Teachers: Short Term Strategies and Long Term Solutions*): <https://ceedar.education.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/CEEDAR-GTL-Shortages-Brief.pdf>
 - **Expanded Professional Learning (Alachua County Schools)**
 - **Data-Driven Decision Making** – The Problem Solving/Response to Intervention Project (<https://floridarti.usf.edu/>) is a project funded by the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services through the University of South Florida that supports school districts’ use of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). Alachua County Schools could work with the PS/RtI Project to improve all aspects of its data-based decision-making processes.
 - **Professional Learning Opportunities for Organizations** – Further guidance on tutor and volunteer training can be found here:
 1. <https://studentsupportaccelerator.org/tutoring/tutors/training-support/pre-service-training-guidance>
 2. Reading 101 from Reading Rockets: <https://www.readingrockets.org/reading-101/reading-101-learning-modules>
 3. Ohio Department of Education Literacy On-Demand Courses: <https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/Literacy/Literacy-Academy/Literacy-Academy-on-Demand>
 - **Training on Assessments** – Reading Rockets Reading Assessment 101 Module: <https://www.readingrockets.org/reading-101/reading-101-learning-modules/course-modules/assessment>
 - **Support children’s literacy development at home.** Examples include:
 - Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) and Institute of Educational Science’s (IES) Family Involvement Guides:

- Kindergarten: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/regions/southeast/pdf/REL_2020016.pdf
- 1st grade: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/regions/southeast/pdf/REL_2021042.pdf
- 2nd grade: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/regions/southeast/pdf/REL_2021053.pdf
- 3rd grade: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/regions/southeast/pdf/REL_2021086.pdf

Enhance Community Engagement in Reading

- **Engage Families and Communities**
 - **Create “Book Clubs” for Families** – Encourage families to read together and discuss books.
 - **Organize intergenerational reading events** – Bring together grandparents, parents, and children to read aloud or share their favorite stories.
 1. Study to model from: <https://web.p.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=3bfefbd2-c1e7-453f-8f10-bd5280d7aa80%40redis>
 2. This method is a great way to involve volunteers in the classroom or school community.
 - **Offer incentives for reading** – Provide rewards or prizes for students who reach certain reading goals.
- **Parent and Family Support**
 - **Create parent support groups** – Facilitate peer-to-peer learning and provide a space for parents to share their experiences and challenges.
 - **Provide translation services** for parent communication – Ensure that parents from diverse linguistic backgrounds have access to information and support in their native language. The district can evaluate current translation services for ease of use, availability, and effectiveness and make changes if needed. The district can also develop a relationship with UF International Center to recruit English-proficient student volunteer translators to help parents at school events and parent-teacher meetings.
- **Community support**
 - **Establish collaborations with local businesses** – Engage businesses in sponsoring literacy events, providing resources, or offering volunteer opportunities. Develop relationships with local bookstores [Barnes & Noble, Books-a-Million, Book Gallery West, The Lynx Books] to host literary events for various age groups.
 - **Strengthen relationships with libraries** – Partner with libraries to offer joint programs, share resources, and promote literacy initiatives. Alachua County Schools and other community stakeholders can partner with Alachua County

Libraries to offer joint programs (i.e. “night at the library” events field trips, etc.), share resources, and promote literacy initiatives.

- **Collaborate with community centers** – Work with community centers to provide literacy programs, access to resources, and support for families. Connect literacy coalition with community centers like YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, O2B Kids, sports leagues, etc. to share literacy resources and host literacy focused events.
- **Connect with faith-based organizations** – Partner with churches, synagogues, mosques, and other faith-based organizations to reach families and provide literacy support.
- **Administer Volunteer Recruitment Campaigns** – Launch campaigns to recruit volunteers from the community to support literacy programs. Volunteers can provide valuable manpower and expertise, reducing the burden on staff.
- **Implement Corporate Social Responsibility Programs** – Encourage local businesses to include literacy support in their corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. CSR programs often include financial contributions and volunteer efforts that benefit literacy programs.
- **Promote Intergenerational Literacy** – Host events where grandparents can read to children or share their personal stories. Create additional opportunities for older adults to volunteer in schools or community programs.
- **Develop a Unified Community Approach** – Develop a comprehensive community literacy plan to identify key areas of need, strategies for addressing needs and ways to track progress.
- **Promote Reading Engagement**
 1. Identify laundromat book programs and work to establish them in local businesses.
 2. Develop a relationship with Friends of the Library to establish and stock free libraries in public parks, stores, and restaurants. Work with other organizations to gather book donations as needed to replenish shelves. For example, include a shelf of borrow-able books in the waiting area of a restaurant.
 3. Encourage ALL healthcare providers to keep a variety of books in their waiting rooms. Many parents bring their children with them to appointments.
 4. Encourage faith-based organizations to maintain a lending library in their public space, supplemented by donations from other organizations when possible.
 5. Headquarters library has at least one large event each year.

6. Develop a relationship with The Lynx Books, a local bookstore, to identify children's and YA authors who would be willing to visit a few schools and read aloud from their books. Also work with the Lynx to share information about The Lynx Tails Story Time events with families.

SURVEY PROTOCOLS

Mini Survey (Events)

Description: The mini survey is used only at events where respondents complete the survey using Lastinger laptops. This survey is *not* provided on the Lastinger website or in email recruitment.

Mini Survey Welcome Block

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts with the University of Florida Lastinger Center and Children’s Trust of Alachua County. This survey asks about how children, youth, and adults in Alachua County learn how to read and write. This survey is completely anonymous, which means your name will not be recorded with your answers. If you have any questions about this survey, please contact Julie Banks (juliebanks@coe.ufl.edu).

This survey is available in English and Español. Select your preferred language using the menu at the top right corner.

Mini Survey Eligibility Block

1. Which of these applies to you? Select all that apply.
 - a. I live in Alachua County.
 - b. I work in Alachua County.
 - c. I attend school in Alachua County.
 - d. I graduated from school in Alachua County in the last five years.
 - e. I have a child or children who currently attend school in Alachua County.
 - f. I had a child or children attend school in Alachua County in the last five years.
 - g. None of the above.

Mini Survey Literacy Block

The first set of questions asks for your thoughts about literacy (language, reading, writing) in Alachua County. How much do you agree or disagree that **in Alachua County:**

1. **Children** have the early literacy skills they need to be **ready for kindergarten.**
2. **Children** can read age-appropriate and grade-level texts by the **end of third grade.**
3. **Children** can read-age-appropriate and grade-level texts, including non-fiction text, by the **end of eighth grade.**
4. **Students graduate** with the literacy skills they need to succeed academically in **college.**
5. **Students graduate** with the literacy skills they need to succeed in a **variety of careers.**
6. **Students graduate** with the literacy skills they need to succeed in **daily life.**
7. **Adults** have the literacy skills they need to succeed in a **variety of careers.**
8. **Adults** have the literacy skills they need to succeed in **daily life.**

- a. Strongly Disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Neutral
- d. Agree
- e. Strongly Agree

The next question asks you to share your thoughts about how to improve literacy learning (language, reading, and writing) in Alachua County.

9. How can our community help children, youth, and adults achieve their full potential when it comes to reading and writing?

Mini Survey Family Block

The next questions ask you to share your thoughts about literacy learning (language, reading, and writing) in your family.

1. What are the most important activities, if any, your family does to help your children with reading and writing?
2. What, if anything, prevents families such as yours from helping children with reading and writing?

Mini Survey Demographics Block

The next set of questions asks for your background information so we make sure we are hearing from people all over Alachua County.

1. What is the zip code where you live?
2. What schools have your child or children attended? This list includes most of the schools in Alachua County. Start typing a school name to select it more quickly. Select all that apply.
3. What is your highest level of formal education?
 - a. No schooling completed
 - b. Up to 8th grade
 - c. Some high school, no diploma
 - d. High school graduate, diploma or equivalent (such as GED)
 - e. Some college credit, no degree
 - f. Trade, technical, or vocational training
 - g. Associate's degree
 - h. Bachelor's degree
 - i. Master's degree
 - j. Professional degree
 - k. Doctoral degree
4. What language or languages do you speak the most at home? Select all that apply.
 - a. Albanian
 - b. Arabic

- c. Chinese
 - d. Dravidian (Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam)
 - e. Dutch
 - f. English
 - g. Filipino, Tagalog
 - h. French
 - i. German
 - j. Hebrew
 - k. Hindi or related
 - l. Italian
 - m. Korean
 - n. Persian, Iranian, Farsi
 - o. Portuguese
 - p. Russian
 - q. Spanish
 - r. Vietnamese
 - s. Not listed
5. What is your racial/ethnic group? Select all that apply.
- a. American Indian or Alaska Native
 - b. Asian
 - c. Black or African American
 - d. Hispanic or Latino/a/x
 - e. Middle Eastern or North African
 - f. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - g. White
 - h. Prefer not to say
 - i. Prefer to describe
6. What is your gender identity?
- a. Female
 - b. Male
 - c. Prefer not to say
 - d. Prefer to describe
7. What is your total household annual income?
- a. Less than \$10,000
 - b. \$10,000 to \$24,999
 - c. \$25,000 to \$49,999
 - d. \$50,000 to \$74,999
 - e. \$75,000 to \$99,999
 - f. \$100,000 to \$149,999
 - g. \$150,000 or more
 - h. Prefer not to answer
8. How old are you?
- a. Less than 18
 - b. 18-24
 - c. 25-29

- d. 30-34
- e. 35-39
- f. 40-44
- g. 45-49
- h. 50-54
- i. 55-59
- j. 60-64
- k. 65 or over

Mini Survey Closing Block

Mini Survey Non-Alachua Respondents

You indicated that you do not live, work, study, or have a child attending school in Alachua County.

1. What is the zip code where you live?
2. What does your community do **really well** to help children, youth, and adults learn how to read and write successfully?
3. What could your community **improve** to help children, youth, and adults learn how to read and write successfully?

Thank you for sharing your thoughts with us!

Mini Survey Alachua Respondents

Are you interested in receiving \$50 to further share your ideas in a focus group? If so, you will be sent to a brief survey after you click Submit.

1. Yes
2. No

Thank you for participating in our survey! Your feedback will help us create an action plan to help everyone in Alachua County be LIFELONG READERS.

To end the survey, please click the SUBMIT button at the bottom right corner of the page.
Thank you!

Website Survey (Email/Social Media Recruitment)

Description: The website survey is linked on the Lastinger Center website. Postcard QR codes and social media recruitment will link to this survey.

Website Survey Welcome Block

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts with the University of Florida Lastinger Center and Children's Trust of Alachua County. This survey asks about how children, youth, and adults learn how to read and write in Alachua County. This survey is completely anonymous, which means your name will not be recorded with your answers. If you have any questions about this survey, please contact Julie Banks (juliebanks@coe.ufl.edu).

This survey is available in English and Español. Select your preferred language using the menu at the top right corner.

Website Survey Eligibility Block

1. Which of these applies to you? Select all that apply.
 - a. I live in Alachua County.
 - b. I work in Alachua County.
 - c. I attend school in Alachua County.
 - d. I graduated from a school in Alachua County in the last five years.
 - e. I have a child or children who currently attend school in Alachua County.
 - f. I had a child or children attend school in Alachua County in the last five years.
 - g. None of the above.

Website Survey Literacy Block

The first set of questions asks for your thoughts about literacy (language, reading, writing) in Alachua County. How much do you agree or disagree that **in Alachua County:**

1. **Children** have the early literacy skills they need to be **ready for kindergarten.**
2. **Children** can read age-appropriate and grade-level texts by the **end of third grade.**
3. **Children** can read age-appropriate and grade-level texts, including non-fiction text, by the **end of eighth grade.**
4. **Students graduate** with the literacy skills they need to succeed academically in **college.**
5. **Students graduate** with the literacy skills they need to succeed in a **variety of careers.**
6. **Students graduate** with the literacy skills they need to succeed in **daily life.**
7. **Adults** have the literacy skills they need to succeed in a **variety of careers.**
8. **Adults** have the literacy skills they need to succeed in **daily life.**
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree

How much do you agree or disagree that **in Alachua County these groups of children have access to education** that helps them gain literacy skills (language, reading, writing)?

9. Children with disabilities
10. Children learning English
11. American Indian and Alaska Native children
12. Asian children
13. Black or African American children
14. Hispanic or Latino children
15. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander children
16. White children
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree

The next set of questions ask about what it was like for you to learn to read and write.

17. Please select the schools, if any, that you attended in Alachua County
18. What was it like for you to learn to **read**?
 - a. Very difficult
 - b. Difficult
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Easy
 - e. Very easy
19. What was it like for you to learn to **write**?
 - a. Very difficult
 - b. Difficult
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Easy
 - e. Very easy

The next question asks you to share your thoughts about how to improve literacy learning (language, reading, and writing) in Alachua County.

20. How can our community help children, youth, and adults achieve their full potential when it comes to reading and writing?

Website Survey Family Block

The next questions ask you to share your thoughts about literacy learning (language, reading, and writing) in your family.

1. What are the most important activities, if any, your family does to help your children with reading and writing?

2. What, if anything, prevents families such as yours from helping children with reading and writing?

Website Survey Recent Graduate Block

The next set of questions asks about the degree to which you agree with the following statements.

1. I graduated with the literacy skills I needed to succeed academically in **college**
2. I graduated with the literacy skills I needed to succeed in the **workplace**
3. I graduated with the literacy skills I needed for **daily life**
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree

The next items ask you to add your additional thoughts about your literacy learning.

4. What, if anything, could **schools in Alachua County** have done to help you learn to read and write better?
5. What, if anything, could **your family** have done to help you learn how to read and write better?

Website Survey Demographics Block

The next set of questions asks for your background information so we make sure we are hearing from people all over Alachua County.

1. What is the zip code where you live?
2. What schools have your child or children attended? Select all that apply.
3. What is your highest level of formal education?
 - a. No schooling completed
 - b. Up to 8th grade
 - c. Some high school, no diploma
 - d. High school graduate, diploma or equivalent (such as GED)
 - e. Some college credit, no degree
 - f. Trade, technical, or vocational training
 - g. Associate's degree
 - h. Bachelor's degree
 - i. Master's degree
 - j. Professional degree
 - k. Doctoral degree
4. What language or languages do you speak the most at home? Select all that apply.
 - a. Albanian
 - b. Arabic

- c. Chinese
 - d. Dravidian (Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam)
 - e. Dutch
 - f. English
 - g. Filipino, Tagalog
 - h. French
 - i. German
 - j. Hebrew
 - k. Hindi or related
 - l. Italian
 - m. Korean
 - n. Persian, Iranian, Farsi
 - o. Portuguese
 - p. Russian
 - q. Spanish
 - r. Vietnamese
 - s. Not listed
5. What is your racial/ethnic group? Select all that apply.
- a. American Indian or Alaska Native
 - b. Asian
 - c. Black or African American
 - d. Hispanic or Latino/a/x
 - e. Middle Eastern or North African
 - f. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - g. White
 - h. Prefer not to say
 - i. Prefer to describe
6. What is your gender identity?
- a. Female
 - b. Male
 - c. Prefer not to say
 - d. Prefer to describe
7. What is your total household annual income?
- a. Less than \$10,000
 - b. \$10,000 to \$24,999
 - c. \$25,000 to \$49,999
 - d. \$50,000 to \$74,999
 - e. \$75,000 to \$99,999
 - f. \$100,000 to \$149,999
 - g. \$150,000 or more
 - h. Prefer not to answer
8. How old are you?
- a. Less than 18
 - b. 18-24
 - c. 25-29

- d. 30-34
- e. 35-39
- f. 40-44
- g. 45-49
- h. 50-54
- i. 55-59
- j. 60-64
- k. 65 or over

Website Survey Closing Block

Website Survey Non-Alachua Respondents

You indicated that you do not live, work, study, or have a child attending school in Alachua County.

1. What is the zip code where you live?
2. What does your community do **really well** to help children, youth, and adults learn how to read and write successfully?
3. What could your community **improve** to help children, youth, and adults learn how to read and write successfully?

Thank you for sharing your thoughts with us!

Website Survey Alachua Respondents

Thank you for participating in our survey! Your feedback will help us create an action plan to help everyone in Alachua County be LIFELONG READERS.

Are you interested in receiving \$50 to further share your ideas in a focus group? If so, you will be sent to a brief survey after you click Submit.

1. Yes
2. No

Thank you for participating in our survey! Your feedback will help us create an action plan to help everyone in Alachua County be LIFELONG READERS.

To end the survey, please click the SUBMIT button at the bottom right corner of the page.
Thank you!

Educator Survey

Description: The teacher survey is intended to be shared directly by education partners with teacher or education administrator constituents (e.g., Alachua County Public Schools, Early Learning Coalition, Episcopal Children’s Services, Lastinger Center Flamingo Learning).

Educator Survey Welcome Block

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts with the University of Florida Lastinger Center and Children’s Trust of Alachua County. This survey asks about how children, youth, and adults learn how to read and write in Alachua County. This survey is completely anonymous, which means your name will not be recorded with your answers. If you have any questions about this survey, please contact Julie Banks (juliebanks@coe.ufl.edu).

This survey is available in English and Español. Select your preferred language using the menu at the top right corner.

Educator Survey Eligibility Block

1. Which of these applies to you? Select all that apply.
 - a. I live in Alachua County.
 - b. I work in Alachua County.
 - c. I have a child or children who currently attend school in Alachua County.
 - d. I had a child or children attend school in Alachua County in the last five years.
 - e. None of the above.

Educator Survey Qualifications and Demographics Block

The following questions ask about your workplace, role, and qualifications.

1. Which of the following best describes your role?
 - a. Teacher
 - b. Paraprofessional/Teacher Assistant
 - c. Tutor/Volunteer
 - d. Instructional Support/Coach
 - e. Another teaching role
 - i. Please describe:
 - f. District Administrator
 - g. School Administrator
 - h. Center/Program Administrator
 - i. Another administrative role
 - i. Please describe:
2. Do you provide any amount of literacy instruction or learning support (language, reading, writing)?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

3. Do you provide any amount of guidance for literacy instruction or learning support (language, reading, writing)?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
4. What is the zip code for your school or program? <5-digit number only>
5. What is the name of the school or program where you currently work? (This survey is anonymous, and your answers will not be shared with anyone at your place of work.)
6. What student ages/grades do you work with?
 - a. Early Learning Program or Center (ages 0-5)
 - b. Elementary School (grades K-5)
 - c. Middle School (grades 6-8)
 - d. High School (grades 9-12)
7. At what type of school or program do you work?
 - a. Early Learning Program or Center (ages 0-5)
 - b. Elementary School (grades K-5)
 - c. Middle School (grades 6-8)
 - d. High School (grades 9-12)
 - e. District Office
8. Which of the following credentials, if any, do you currently hold? Select all that apply.
 - a. Director Credential from the Florida Department of Children and Families
 - b. Staff Credential from Florida Department of Children and Families
 - c. Florida Child Care Professional Credential (FCCPC)
 - d. Emergent Literacy Micro-Credential
 - e. Voluntary Pre-K (VPK) Endorsement
 - f. Child Development Associate (CDA)
9. What type of teaching certificate, if any, do you currently hold in Florida?
 - a. Professional Certificate
 - b. Temporary Certificate
 - c. Military Temporary Certificate
 - d. Not Certified
10. How did you receive your certification?
 - a. Bachelor's Degree plus Licensure
 - b. Master's Degree plus Licensure
 - c. Alternative Certification
11. How many years have you been in your current role/position?
 - a. <1 year
 - b. 1-3 years
 - c. 4-6 years
 - d. 7-9 years
 - e. 10-12 years
 - f. 13-15 years
 - g. 16-18 years
 - h. 19 years or more

Educator Survey Literacy Block

The next set of questions asks for your thoughts about literacy (language, reading, writing) in Alachua County. How much do you agree or disagree that **in Alachua County**:

1. **Children** have the early literacy skills they need to be **ready for kindergarten**.
2. **Children** can read age-appropriate and grade-level texts by the **end of third grade**.
3. **Children** can read age-appropriate and grade-level texts, including non-fiction text, by the **end of eighth grade**.
4. **Students graduate** with the literacy skills they need to succeed academically in **college**.
5. **Students graduate** with the literacy skills they need to succeed in a **variety of careers**.
6. **Students graduate** with the literacy skills they need to succeed in **daily life**.
7. **Adults** have the literacy skills they need to succeed in a **variety of careers**.
8. **Adults** have the literacy skills they need to succeed in **daily life**.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree

How much do you agree or disagree that **in Alachua County these groups of children have access to education** that helps them gain literacy skills (language, reading, writing)?

9. Children with disabilities
10. Children learning English
11. American Indian and Alaska Native children
12. Asian children
13. Black or African American children
14. Hispanic or Latino children
15. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander children
16. White children
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree

Educator Survey Professional Block

The next set of questions asks for your thoughts about literacy (language, reading, writing) **at your school or program**. How much do you agree or disagree that:

17. Children leave my program prepared for their next level of education.
18. My program's **curriculum** helps children gain language and emergent literacy skills.
19. My program's **approaches to teaching** helps children gain language and emergent literacy skills.

20. Students leave my school or program prepared for their next level of education.
21. My school or program's **core literacy curriculum** helps students learn how to **read**.
22. My school or program's **core literacy curriculum** helps students learn how to **write**.
23. My school or program's **phonics program** helps students learn how to **read**.
24. My school or program's **phonics program** helps students learn how to **write**.
25. My school or program's **intervention program** helps students learn how to **read**.
26. My school or program's **intervention program** helps students learn how to **write**.
27. Students leave my school or program prepared for their next level of education.
28. What are the most common literacy challenges your students face?
29. What strategies or programs have been most effective in improving literacy for your students?
30. Looking at the bigger picture, how can our community help children, youth, and adults achieve their full potential when it comes to reading and writing?
31. What are the most common literacy challenges students face?
32. What strategies or programs have been most effective in improving literacy for students?
33. Looking at the bigger picture, how can our community help children, youth, and adults achieve their full potential when it comes to reading and writing?
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree
 - f. Not applicable

The next set of questions asks about professional learning opportunities.

34. What mode of professional learning do you prefer?
 - a. In-person synchronous
 - b. Virtual synchronous
 - c. Virtual asynchronous
 - d. Mix of both in-person and virtual
35. What type of literacy-related professional learning opportunities would you like to access? Select all that apply.
 - a. Coaching
 - b. Competency-based credentials
 - c. Conferences
 - d. Courses
 - e. Professional learning communities
 - f. Webinars
 - g. Workshops
 - h. I'm not interested in literacy-related professional learning opportunities
36. What topics of literacy-related professional learning opportunities would you like to access? Select all that apply.
 - a. Oral language development

- b. Phonemic awareness
- c. Phonics
- d. Fluency
- e. Vocabulary
- f. Reading comprehension
- g. Written language
- h. Behavior management
- i. Small group instruction
- j. Whole group instruction
- k. Curriculum implementation
- l. Supplemental reading programs
- m. Effective instruction for typically developing learners
- n. Effective instruction for gifted learners
- o. Effective instruction for students with disabilities
- p. Effective instruction for English learners
- q. I'm not interested in literacy-related professional learning opportunities

The next set of questions asks about professional learning opportunities.

37. What mode of professional learning do teachers prefer?
- a. In-person synchronous
 - b. Virtual synchronous
 - c. Virtual asynchronous
 - d. Mix of both in-person and virtual
38. What type of literacy-related professional learning opportunities would you like teachers to access? Select all that apply.
- a. Coaching
 - b. Competency-based credentials
 - c. Conferences
 - d. Courses
 - e. Professional learning communities
 - f. Webinars
 - g. Workshops
 - h. I'm not interested in literacy-related professional learning opportunities for teachers
39. What topics of literacy-related professional learning opportunities would you like teachers to access? Select all that apply.
- a. Oral language development
 - b. Phonemic awareness
 - c. Phonics
 - d. Fluency
 - e. Vocabulary
 - f. Reading comprehension
 - g. Written language
 - h. Behavior management

- i. Small group instruction
- j. Whole group instruction
- k. Curriculum implementation
- l. Supplemental reading programs
- m. Effective instruction for typically developing learners
- n. Effective instruction for gifted learners
- o. Effective instruction for students with disabilities
- p. Effective instruction for English learners
- q. I'm not interested in literacy-related professional learning opportunities for teachers.

Educator Survey Demographics Block

The next set of questions asks for your background information so we make sure we are hearing from people all over Alachua County.

1. What is your highest level of formal education?
 - a. No schooling completed
 - b. Up to 8th grade
 - c. Some high school, no diploma
 - d. High school graduate, diploma or equivalent (such as GED)
 - e. Some college credit, no degree
 - f. Trade, technical, or vocational training
 - g. Associate's degree
 - h. Bachelor's degree
 - i. Master's degree
 - j. Professional degree
 - k. Doctoral degree
2. What language or languages do you speak the most at home? Select all that apply.
 - a. Albanian
 - b. Arabic
 - c. Chinese
 - d. Dravidian (Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam)
 - e. Dutch
 - f. English
 - g. Filipino, Tagalog
 - h. French
 - i. German
 - j. Hebrew
 - k. Hindi or related
 - l. Italian
 - m. Korean
 - n. Persian, Iranian, Farsi
 - o. Portuguese
 - p. Russian
 - q. Spanish

- r. Vietnamese
 - s. Not listed
3. What is your racial/ethnic group? Select all that apply.
- a. American Indian or Alaska Native
 - b. Asian
 - c. Black or African American
 - d. Hispanic or Latino/a/x
 - e. Middle Eastern or North African
 - f. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - g. White
 - h. Prefer not to say
 - i. Prefer to describe
4. What is your gender identity?
- a. Female
 - b. Male
 - c. Prefer not to say
 - d. Prefer to describe
5. What is your total household annual income?
- a. Less than \$10,000
 - b. \$10,000 to \$24,999
 - c. \$25,000 to \$49,999
 - d. \$50,000 to \$74,999
 - e. \$75,000 to \$99,999
 - f. \$100,000 to \$149,999
 - g. \$150,000 or more
 - h. Prefer not to answer
6. How old are you?
- a. Less than 18
 - b. 18-24
 - c. 25-29
 - d. 30-34
 - e. 35-39
 - f. 40-44
 - g. 45-49
 - h. 50-54
 - i. 55-59
 - j. 60-64
 - k. 65 or over

Educator Survey Closing Block

Educator Survey Non-Alachua Respondents

You indicated that you do not live, work, study, or have a child attending school in Alachua County.

1. What is the zip code where you live?
2. What does your community do **really well** to help children, youth, and adults learn how to read and write successfully?
3. What could your community **improve** to help children, youth, and adults learn how to read and write successfully?

Thank you for sharing your thoughts with us!

Educator Survey Alachua Respondents

We want to learn from you! We are conducting school and classroom visits this fall. Do you want to share what is exciting, innovative, or beneficial about how your students are reading, writing, and communicating? If you want us to visit you to see what is working well for you and your students, click Yes below, and you will be sent to a brief survey after you click Submit.

1. Yes
2. No

Thank you for participating in our survey! Your feedback will help us create an action plan to help everyone in Alachua County be LIFELONG READERS.

Thank you!

Student Survey

Description: The Student Survey is intended to be distributed via links shared on the website, by partnering organizations, and by parents.

Student Survey Welcome Block

This survey asks about how students learn how to read and write in Alachua County. This survey is anonymous, which means your name will not be included with your answers.

Student Survey Eligibility Block

1. Do you go to school in Alachua County (including homeschooling)?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I already finished 12th grade

Student Survey Literacy Block

The first questions ask you about learning to read and write.

1. What grade are you in?
2. What school do you attend? <drop down>
3. What has it been like for you to learn to read?
 - a. Very difficult
 - b. Difficult
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Easy
 - e. Very easy
4. What has it been like for you to learn to write?
 - a. Very difficult
 - b. Difficult
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Easy
 - e. Very easy
5. What has it been like for your friends or peers at school to learn to read?
 - a. Very difficult
 - b. Difficult
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Easy
 - e. Very easy
6. What has it been like for your friends or peers at school to learn to write?
 - a. Very difficult
 - b. Difficult
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Easy
 - e. Very easy

The next items ask you to add your thoughts about literacy.

7. What, if anything, can **your school** do to help you learn to read and write better?
8. What, if anything, can **your family** do to help you learn how to read and write better?

Finally, we ask a few questions about your background so we make sure we are hearing from people across Alachua County.

9. What language or languages do you speak the most at home? Select all that apply.
 - a. Albanian
 - b. Arabic
 - c. Chinese
 - d. Dravidian (Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam)
 - e. Dutch
 - f. English
 - g. Filipino, Tagalog
 - h. French
 - i. German
 - j. Hebrew
 - k. Hindi or related
 - l. Italian
 - m. Korean
 - n. Persian, Iranian, Farsi
 - o. Portuguese
 - p. Russian
 - q. Spanish
 - r. Vietnamese
 - s. Not listed
10. What is your racial/ethnic group? Select all that apply.
 - a. American Indian or Alaska Native
 - b. Asian
 - c. Black or African American
 - d. Hispanic or Latino/a/x
 - e. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - f. White
 - g. Prefer not to say
 - h. Prefer to describe

Thank you for sharing your thoughts with us!

Focus Group Survey

Thank you for your interest in joining a focus group to share your ideas about literacy needs in Alachua County. You will receive \$50 if you participate in a focus group.

1. What is your name?
2. What is your phone number?
3. What is your email address?
4. By checking “Yes”, you agree to receive text messages from the UF Lastinger Center about participating in a focus group.
5. What is your preferred way to attend a focus group? Select all that apply.
 - a. In-person
 - b. Zoom
 - c. Phone call
6. Do you need transportation to attend an in-person focus group?
7. Do you need childcare in order to attend an in-person focus group?
8. Which of the following describes you? Select all that apply.
 - a. I currently live or work in Alachua County.
 - b. I am a parent/caregiver of a student who attends or has attended an early learning program (ages 0-5) or K-12 school in Alachua County.
 - c. I am a student who attends or recently attended school in Alachua County.
 - d. I am a community or business leader, policy maker, or other elected government official in Alachua County.
 - e. I am an early learning teacher or an employee of the Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County.
 - f. I am an early learning director or family childcare home provider in Alachua County.
 - g. I am a K-12 teacher, teacher aide, or paraprofessional at a school or program in Alachua County.
 - h. I am a K-12 school or district literacy or instructional coach at a school or program in Alachua County.
 - i. I am a K-12 school administrator or other school leader at a school or program in Alachua County.
 - j. I am a K-12 district administrator or other district leader at a school or program in Alachua County.
 - k. I am a tutor or volunteer at a school or program in Alachua County.
 - l. Something else not listed.
 - i. Please describe:

We will contact you in the next few months if you are selected to participate in a focus group. To end the survey, please click the NEXT button at the bottom right corner of the page.

Thank you for your interest!

Classroom Visit Survey

Thank you for your interest in having us visit you to see what is working well for you and your students.

1. What is your name?
2. What is your phone number?
3. What is your email address?
4. What is the name of your school or program?
5. What age(s) or grade level(s) do you teach?
6. Tell us about what you are doing! What is exciting, innovative, or beneficial about how your students are reading, writing, and communicating?

We are hoping to visit a range of schools and age levels. We will contact you in the next couple of months if you are selected to participate in a school visit.

To end the survey, please click the NEXT button at the bottom right corner of the page.
Thank you for your interest!

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOLS

Adult Focus Groups

Welcome/Introduction Prior to Recording (Adult Participants)

[This protocol is meant for groups of up to 8 people for around 45 minutes]

Welcome Message & Purpose

Hi everyone and thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to talk with us today. My name is [NAME], and I'm here with [INTRODUCE COLLEAGUE]. This project is being sponsored by the Children's Trust of Alachua County, the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners, and the School Board of Alachua County. The UF Lastinger Center is collecting surveys and doing focus groups to better help children, youth, and adults gain literacy skills. By "literacy," we mean reading, writing, communication, and language.

Please don't feel like you have to answer every question. There are no right or wrong answers. We hope you feel comfortable sharing your point of view even if it's different from what other people share. Any follow-up questions we might ask are just for the purpose of ensuring that we clearly understand what has been said. We expect this session to take 45 to 60 minutes.

As a reminder, we will record this session for transcription purposes. No one outside of our team will have access to the recording. We will be on a first name basis, and we will not use any names in our reports. Everything you say here will be kept confidential.

There are several focus groups taking place. The notes from these sessions will be compiled and studied to identify what's working and what needs to be improved so everyone in Alachua County can be lifelong readers. Your feedback will be used to create a list of recommendations and an action plan.

Does anyone have any questions?

Media Release

We are asking you to review and sign a media release form, which will allow us to use your quotes directly, though without your name attached. [Share link in chat.] Now that you've had a chance to look over the form, do you have any questions?

If people have not already had a chance to read the media release form (digitally or in paper format), have them do that now. Make sure everyone who stays in the room/on Zoom has signed the media release before continuing.

Start Recording

We will now start recording, and I will begin with some basic questions about you and your background.

For general focus groups (i.e., not held with specific organizations or school district staff), start with the following explanation and question: We want to make sure to ask questions that are relevant to your experiences in Alachua County. How many of you have children or are in families with children who are attending or attended school in Alachua County?” If one or more people indicate YES, then go to the Family Focus Group Protocol. If no one indicates YES, then go to the Community Member Focus Group Protocol.

Ending the Focus Group

Final Opportunity to Share

Before we finish up today, is there anything else you would like to share with us?

Stop Recording & Thank Participants

Thank you so much for your time today.

District Leader Focus Group Protocol

Part I: Background and Opening Move

1. Please introduce yourself and describe:
 - a. Role
 - b. Years in current role
 - c. Grade(s)/course(s) previously taught, if any
 - d. Total years teaching, if at all

Part II: Literacy Implementation

2. Please identify the (a) curricula, (b) programs, (c) strategies, and (d) assessments schools and teachers use for reading instruction and intervention [differentiated by grade level].
 - a. Of all the tools that have been used in the district, what has worked best to support children’s reading and writing?
 - b. How, if at all, do district and/or school leaders support teachers in using these tools with fidelity, or as intended?
 - c. Describe the professional learning opportunities teachers are provided to use these tools.
 - i. What would make professional learning opportunities more effective for teachers?
1. What additional literacy-related professional learning opportunities do you wish administrators and teachers could access?
 - a. What type (e.g., coaching, competency-based credentials, conferences, courses, professional learning communities, webinars, workshops)?
 - b. On what topics?

2. Discuss your processes for implementing high-quality tier 1 instruction, as well as matching students to tier 2 and tier 3 intervention.
 - a. What professional learning is provided, if any, that helps teachers differentiate tier 1 instruction when large numbers of students are reading below grade level?
 - b. How prepared are schools/teachers in identifying students' underlying reading, writing, or language difficulties and implementing strategies that target them?
 - c. How do you determine which intervention is most appropriate and how is that communicated to schools/teachers?
 - d. What proportion of students in tier 2 or tier 3 make satisfactory or accelerated progress?
 - i. How, if at all, do you track this?
 - ii. Using what measures?
3. What is your greatest need in your role, which would yield the biggest improvement for Alachua County Public Schools students?
4. Describe how, if at all, district and/or school leaders support collaborative grade-level planning.
 - a. What does collaborative grade-level planning look like?
5. How, if at all, do district and/or school leaders build the capacity of *all* staff to implement evidence-based literacy instruction?
6. How, if at all, do district and/or school leaders promote teachers as leaders in the implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction?
7. How, if at all, do district, school leaders, and/or teachers ensure family and community engagement in literacy-related activities? Can you describe the role of the family liaison?
8. How, if at all, do district and/or school leaders establish and sustain positive and effective relationships with early education providers in Alachua County?
9. How, if at all, do district and/or school leaders establish and sustain positive and meaningful relationships with community organizations that provide students with supplemental educational opportunities related to literacy?

Part III: Perceptions of Literacy Needs and Possible Solutions

1. How can our community help children, youth, and adults achieve their full potential when it comes to reading and writing?
2. What additional resources or support are needed?
3. Who is responsible for providing those resources?

School Leader Focus Group Protocol

Part I: Background and Opening Move

1. Please introduce yourself and describe:
 - a. Role
 - b. Years in current role
 - c. Grade(s)/course(s) previously taught, if any
 - d. Total years teaching, if at all

Part II: Literacy Implementation

1. Identify the (a) curricula, (b) programs, (c) strategies, and (d) assessments your school uses for reading instruction and intervention [differentiated by grade level].
 - a. Of all the tools you've used, what has worked best to support children's reading and writing? How do you know that it worked?
 - b. How, if at all, do district and/or school leaders support teachers in using these tools with fidelity, or as intended?
 - c. Describe the professional learning opportunities teachers are provided to use these tools.
 - i. What would make professional learning opportunities more effective for teachers?
2. What additional literacy-related professional learning opportunities do you and/or your teachers could access?
 - a. What type (e.g., coaching, competency-based credentials, conferences, courses, professional learning communities, webinars, workshops)?
 - b. On what topics?
3. Discuss your processes for implementing high-quality tier 1 instruction, as well as matching students to tier 2 and tier 3 intervention.
 - c. What professional learning is provided, if any, that helps teachers differentiate tier 1 instruction when large numbers of students are reading below grade level?
 - d. How do you determine which intervention is most appropriate and how is that communicated to schools/teachers?
 - e. What proportion of students in tier 2 or tier 3 make satisfactory or accelerated progress?
 - i. How, if at all, do you track this?
 - ii. Using what measures?
4. What is your greatest need in your role, which would yield the biggest improvement for Alachua County Public Schools students?
5. How prepared are teachers in identifying students' underlying reading, writing, or language difficulties and implementing strategies that target them?
6. Describe how, if at all, district and/or school leaders support collaborative grade-level planning.
 - f. What does collaborative grade-level planning look like?

7. How, if at all, do district and/or school leaders build the capacity of *all* staff to implement evidence-based literacy instruction?
8. How, if at all, do district and/or school leaders promote teachers as leaders in the implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction?
9. How, if at all, do district, school leaders, and/or teachers ensure family and community engagement in literacy-related activities? Can you describe the role of the family liaison?
10. How, if at all, do district and/or school leaders establish and sustain positive and effective relationships with early education providers in Alachua County?
11. How, if at all, do district and/or school leaders establish and sustain positive and meaningful relationships with community organizations that provide students with supplemental educational opportunities related to literacy?
12. As your building's instructional leader, do you feel like you're equipped with the necessary literacy content/background knowledge to guide your school?
13. What barriers do your school and students face in accessing resources that help them learn to read and write? How can those barriers be resolved?
14. Can we visit 1-2 classrooms at your school that are engaging in high-leverage and/or innovative literacy instruction?

Part III: Perceptions of Literacy Needs and Possible Solutions

1. How can our community help children, youth, and adults achieve their full potential when it comes to reading and writing?
2. What additional resources or support are needed?
3. Who is responsible for providing those resources?

Teacher Focus Group Protocol

Part I: Background and Opening Move

1. Please introduce yourself and describe:
 - a. School where you work
 - b. Grade/learners/course(s) you currently teach
 - c. Years in current role
 - d. Total years teaching

Part II: Literacy Implementation

1. Of all the reading tools that have been used in the district, including curricula, supplemental programs, and assessments, what has worked best to support student's reading and writing? Or what hasn't worked? How do you know?
1. How, if at all, have district and/or school leaders supported how you use these tools with fidelity, or as intended?
2. What additional literacy-related professional learning opportunities do you need? Probes: On what topics? What type of professional learning do you prefer? (e.g., coaching, competency-based credentials, conferences, courses, professional learning communities, webinars, workshops)
3. How are you able to differentiate to meet student needs?
4. What is your greatest need in your role, which would yield the biggest improvement for your students?
5. How, if at all, do you, your school, or the district ensure family and community engagement in literacy-related activities? Can you describe the role of the family liaison?
6. (Secondary teachers) To what extent should secondary content-area teachers be trained in, and implement reading strategies to help students access content?
7. Do you feel adequately prepared to teach your content to students with reading difficulties? Why or why not?
8. What barriers do your school and students face in accessing resources that help them learn to read and write? How can those barriers be resolved?

ASK PART II ONLY IF TIME – NOT A PRIORITY

Part II: Perceptions of Literacy Needs and Possible Solutions

1. How can our community help children, youth, and adults achieve their full potential when it comes to reading and writing?
2. What additional resources or support are needed?
3. Who is responsible for providing those resources?

Teachers of Adult Learners Focus Group Protocol

Part I: Background and Opening Move

1. Please introduce yourself and describe:
 - a. Current role
 - b. Years in current role
 - c. Total years teaching

Part II: Literacy Implementation

1. Identify the (a) curricula, (b) programs, (c) strategies, and (d) assessments you use for assisting adult learners.
 - a. Of all the tools that you have used, what has worked best support their language and reading skills? How do you know?
 - b. How, if at all, do you get support for using tools with fidelity, or as intended?
 - c. Describe the professional learning you have received to use these tools.
 - i. How helpful, if at all, has your professional learning been?
 - ii. What would make your professional learning more effective?
2. What additional professional learning opportunities do you wish you could access to better serve adult learners?
 - a. What type (e.g., coaching, competency-based credentials, conferences, courses, professional learning communities, webinars, workshops)?
 - b. On what topics?
3. What is your greatest need in your role, which would yield the biggest improvement for the adults you serve?

Part II: Perceptions of Literacy Needs and Possible Solutions

1. How can our community help children, youth, and adults achieve their full potential when it comes to reading and writing?
2. What additional resources or support are needed?
3. Who is responsible for providing those resources?

Coach/Instructional Support Staff Focus Group Protocol

Part I: Background and Opening Move

1. Please introduce yourself and describe:
 - a. School where you work
 - b. Current role
 - c. Grade(s) supported
 - d. Years in current role
 - e. Total years teaching

Part II: Literacy Implementation

1. Identify the (a) curricula, (b) programs, (c) strategies, and (d) assessments you use for supporting teachers' reading instruction and intervention.
 - a. Of all the tools you've used, what has worked best to support children's reading and writing?
 - b. How, if at all, do district and/or school leaders support how you and/or teachers use these tools with fidelity, or as intended?
 - c. Describe the professional learning you and/or teachers have received to use these tools.
 - i. How helpful, if at all, has your professional learning been?
 - ii. What would make your professional learning more effective?
 - iii. Have you been provided with any additional professional learning above that which was provided to teachers?
2. What additional literacy-related professional learning opportunities do you wish you and/or teachers could access?
 - a. What type (e.g., coaching, competency-based credentials, conferences, courses, professional learning communities, webinars, workshops)?
 - b. On what topics?
3. Discuss your processes for supporting high-quality tier 1 instruction, as well as matching students to tier 2 and tier 3 intervention.
 - a. What professional learning is provided, if any, that helps you differentiate tier 1 instruction, especially if large numbers of students are reading below grade level?
 - b. How prepared do you feel in identifying students' underlying reading, writing, or language difficulties and implementing strategies that target them?
 - c. How do you determine which intervention is most appropriate?
 - d. What proportion of students in tier 2 or tier 3 make satisfactory or accelerated progress?
 - i. How, if at all, do you track this?
 - ii. Using what measures?
4. What is your greatest need in your role, which would yield the biggest improvement for teachers and/or students?
5. How prepared do you feel in supporting teachers to identify students' underlying reading, writing, or language difficulties and implementing strategies that target them?

6. Describe how, if at all, district and/or school leaders support collaborative grade-level planning.
 - a. What does collaborative grade-level planning look like?
7. How, if at all, do district and/or school leaders build the capacity of all staff to implement evidence-based literacy instruction?
8. How, if at all, do district and/or school leaders promote teachers as leaders in the implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction?
9. How, if at all, do you, your school, or the district ensure family and community engagement in literacy-related activities? Can you describe the role of the family liaison?
10. How, if at all, do district and/or school leaders establish and sustain positive and effective relationships with early education providers in Alachua County?
11. How, if at all, do district and/or school leaders establish and sustain positive and meaningful relationships with community organizations that provide students with supplemental educational opportunities related to literacy?
12. Do you feel like you have the professional autonomy to support teachers in ways that you know are effective?
13. What proportion of time do you engage in directly supporting teachers as opposed to other duties as assigned by school leader(s)?

Part III: Perceptions of Literacy Needs and Possible Solutions

1. How can our community help children, youth, and adults achieve their full potential when it comes to reading and writing?
2. What additional resources or support are needed?
3. Who is responsible for providing those resources?

Tutoring/Outside of School Time Focus Group Protocol

Part I: Background and Opening Move

1. Please introduce yourself and describe:
 - a. School or organization where you work
 - b. Current role
 - c. Grade(s) supported
 - d. Years in current role
 - e. Total years teaching, if any

Part II: Literacy Implementation

2. Identify the (a) curricula, (b) programs, (c) strategies, and (d) assessments you use for reading instruction and intervention.
 - a. Of all the tools you've used, what has worked best to support children's language and emergent literacy?
 - b. How, if at all, do you receive support for how you use these tools with fidelity, or as intended?
 - c. Describe the professional learning you have received to use these tools.
 - i. How helpful, if at all, has your professional learning been?
 - ii. What would make your professional learning more effective?
3. What additional literacy-related professional learning opportunities do you wish you could access?
 - a. What type (e.g., coaching, competency-based credentials, conferences, courses, professional learning communities, webinars, workshops)?
 - b. On what topics?
4. What is your greatest need in your role, which would yield the biggest improvement for your students?
5. How prepared do you feel in supporting teachers to identify students' underlying reading, writing, or language difficulties and implementing strategies that target them?
6. How, if at all, does your organization build the capacity of all staff to implement evidence-based literacy instruction?
7. How, if at all, does your organization promote staff in your role as leaders in the implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction?
8. How, if at all, does your organization ensure family and community engagement in literacy-related activities?
9. How, if at all, does your organization establish and sustain positive and effective relationships with early education providers in Alachua County?
10. How, if at all, does your organization establish and sustain positive and meaningful relationships with community organizations that provide students with supplemental educational opportunities related to literacy?

Part III: Perceptions of Literacy Needs and Possible Solutions

1. How can our community help children, youth, and adults achieve their full potential when it comes to reading and writing?
2. What additional resources or support are needed?
3. Who is responsible for providing those resources?

Early Learning Leaders/Teachers Focus Group Protocol

Part I: Background and Opening Move

1. Please introduce yourself and describe:
 - a. Program, school, or organization where you work
 - b. Current role
 - c. Age(s) supported
 - d. Years in current role
 - e. Total years teaching, if any

Part II: Literacy Implementation

1. Identify the (a) curricula, (b) programs, (c) strategies, and (d) assessments you use to support children's language and emergent literacy.
 - a. Of all the tools you've used, what has worked best to support children's language and emergent literacy?
 - b. How, if at all, do you receive support for how you use these tools with fidelity, or as intended?
 - c. Describe the professional learning you have received to use these tools.
 - i. How helpful, if at all, has your professional learning been?
 - ii. What would make your professional learning more effective?
2. What additional literacy-related professional learning opportunities do you wish you could access?
 - a. What type (e.g., coaching, competency-based credentials, conferences, courses, professional learning communities, webinars, workshops)?
 - b. On what topics?
3. What is your greatest need in your role, which would yield the biggest improvement for your students?
4. How prepared do you feel in identifying students' underlying emergent reading, writing, or language difficulties and implementing strategies that target them?
5. How, if at all, does your organization build the capacity of *all* staff to implement evidence-based language and emergent literacy support for children?
6. How, if at all, does your organization promote staff in your role as leaders in the implementation of evidence-based language and emergent literacy support for young children?
7. How, if at all, does your organization ensure family and community engagement in language and emergent literacy-related activities?
8. How, if at all, does your organization establish and sustain positive and effective relationships with other education organizations such as the Early Learning Coalition and Alachua County Public Schools?
9. How, if at all, does your organization establish and sustain positive and meaningful relationships with community organizations that provide students with supplemental educational opportunities related to literacy?

Part III: Perceptions of Literacy Needs and Possible Solutions

1. How can our community help children, youth, and adults achieve their full potential when it comes to reading and writing?
2. What additional resources or support are needed?
3. Who is responsible for providing those resources?

Family Focus Group Protocol

Part I: Background and Opening Move

1. Please introduce yourself and describe:
 - a. Your interest in attending the focus group
 - b. For participants with children, your child or children's grade(s) or age(s) and school(s) they attend or attended

Part II: Child-Focused Questions

1. How do you support your child or children's literacy development at home?
2. What do you feel families need most to better support children's success with reading and writing?

Part II: Perceptions of Literacy Needs and Possible Solutions

1. How can our community help children, youth, and adults achieve their full potential when it comes to reading and writing?
2. What additional resources or support are needed?
3. Who is responsible for providing those resources?

Community Member Focus Group Protocol

This focus group protocol was used if NO focus group members said they had children. Otherwise, the Family Focus Group Protocol was used.

Part I: Background and Opening Move

1. Please introduce yourself and describe your interest in attending the focus group

Part II: Perceptions of Literacy Needs and Possible Solutions

1. How can our community help children, youth, and adults achieve their full potential when it comes to reading and writing?
2. What additional resources or support are needed?
3. Who is responsible for providing those resources?

Youth Focus Groups

Welcome Message & Purpose

Hi everyone! Thank you for taking time to talk with us today about reading and writing.

My name is [NAME] and I'm here with [INTRODUCE COLLEAGUE]. We will be asking you a few questions about what you think about learning to read and write. There are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions, and any other questions we might ask you are just to make sure we understand what you are saying. I expect we will talk for about 45 minutes.

We really care about what you think about learning to read and write, and what you tell us will be helpful for knowing what things would be good to keep doing in school and what things might need to change. Let me stop here. Are there any questions?

Now that you've had a chance to look over the media release form (with your parent/guardian), are there any questions about what you are agreeing to by participating?

Start Recording

We will now start recording, and I will begin with some basic questions about you and your background.

Ending the Focus Group

Final Opportunity to Share

Before we finish up today, is there anything else you would like to share with us?

Stop Recording & Thank Participants

Thank you so much for your time today.

Student Focus Group Protocol

Part I: Background and Opening Move

1. Please introduce yourself and describe:
 - a. What school you go to
 - b. How old you are
 - c. What do you want to be when you grow up / are an adult?

Part II: Student-Focused Questions

1. Why do you think it is important for you to learn to read and write?
2. What has it been like for you to learn how to read and write?
 - a. What has been easy for you?
 - i. What about for your friends or peers at school?

- b. What has been hard for you?
 - i. What about for your friends or peers at school?
- 3. What are the most important things your school can do to help you learn how to read and write?
- 4. What are the most important things your family can do to help you learn how to read and write?

INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Organization Interview Protocol

Welcome/Introduction Prior to Recording

Welcome Message & Purpose

Hi everyone and thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to talk with us today. My name is [NAME], and I'm here with [INTRODUCE COLLEAGUE], and we will be asking you some questions about your hopes, dreams, challenges, and desires for improving reading and writing in Alachua County.

As a reminder, we will record this session for transcription purposes. No one outside of our team will have access to the recording. We will be on a first name basis, and we will not use any names in our reports. Everything you say here will be kept confidential by our team.

There are several interviews with organizations and focus groups with community members taking place. The notes from these sessions will be compiled and studied to identify what's working and what can be strengthened. Your feedback on the survey and in this interview will be used to create a list of recommendations and an action plan to improve literacy in Alachua County.

Does anyone have any questions?

Media Release

We would like you to sign a media release form, which will allow us to use your quotes directly, though without your name attached. [Share link/screen/form.] Now that you've had a chance to look over the form, do you have any questions?

If people have not already had a chance to read the media release form (digitally or in paper format), have them do that now. Make sure everyone who stays in the room/on Zoom has signed the media release before continuing.

Start Recording

We will now start recording, and I will begin with some basic questions about you and your background.

Part I: Background and Opening Move

1. Please introduce your organization and yourself and describe:
 - a. Role
 - b. Years in current role

Part II: Literacy Programming

1. Of the literacy-related tools (such as curricula, programs, strategies, or resources) that you have used at your organization, what has worked best to support learners' reading and writing development?
2. How, if at all, does your organization help staff/volunteers in using literacy-related tools with fidelity, or as intended?
3. What quality standards/best practices do you have in place?
 - a. Can you provide some examples?
4. On what topics do you wish staff/volunteers could access additional professional learning?
5. What would make professional learning opportunities more effective for staff/volunteers?
6. What barriers does your program and the students served by your program face in accessing resources that help them learn to read and write? How can those barriers be resolved?
7. What is your greatest need in your role, which would yield the biggest improvement for children, youth, and/or adults in Alachua County?
8. How, if at all, does your organization build the capacity of *all* staff (and/or volunteers) to implement evidence-based literacy instruction?
9. How, if at all, does your organization ensure family and community engagement in literacy-related activities?
10. How, if at all, does your organization establish and sustain positive and effective relationships with early education providers and/or Alachua County Public Schools?
11. How, if at all, does your organization establish and sustain positive and meaningful relationships with other community organizations that provide students with supplemental educational opportunities related to literacy?

Part III: Perceptions of Literacy Needs and Possible Solutions

1. How can our community help children, youth, and adults achieve their full potential when it comes to reading and writing?
2. What additional resources or support are needed?
3. Who is responsible for providing those resources?

Ending the Interview

Final Opportunity to Share

Before we finish up today, is there anything else you would like to share with us?

Stop Recording & Thank Participants

Thank you so much for your time today.

Request Participants to Assist with Needs Assessment

We would appreciate your organization's continued support of the Alachua County literacy needs assessment. I'm going to put the link to this project's website in the chat. The website includes links for people to complete our survey or sign up for a focus group.

- Ask #1: Would you be willing to share information about this project with the staff at your organization and the people your organization serves?
 - We can share our social media toolkit and email script, which makes sharing information really easy. Who should we email with that information?
 - We understand. Please feel free to fill out a survey yourself!
- Ask #2: We would like to conduct several focus groups across the county. Would your organization be willing to host a focus group? Hosting a focus group could include introducing us via email to people you think might be interested and we set it up from there. Or you could invite people and we could attend. Focus groups can be virtual or in person.
 - Great! How would you prefer to serve as host? What support do you need from us? Who would be our contact person for the focus group?
 - Ok, no problem!
- Ask #3: We are also attending in-person events across the county where we can ask people to fill out surveys. Do you know of any events that might be good for us to attend?
 - Awesome! What details do you have about the event? Is there someone we should contact about attending?
 - That's ok!
- Ask #4: Finally, do you know of other organizations that we should survey and interview?
 - What is their name and contact information?
 - Ok, thanks!

We really appreciate your time today. It was really wonderful talking with you!

Elected Officials Interview Protocol

Welcome/Introduction Prior to Recording

Welcome Message & Purpose

Hi everyone and thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to talk with us today. My name is [NAME], and I'm here with [INTRODUCE COLLEAGUE], and we will be asking you some questions about your hopes, dreams, challenges, and desires for improving reading and writing in Alachua County.

As a reminder, we will record this session for transcription purposes. No one outside of our team will have access to the recording. We will be on a first name basis, and we will not use any names in our reports. Everything you say here will be kept confidential by our team.

There are several interviews with organizations and focus groups with community members taking place. The notes from these sessions will be compiled and studied to identify what's working and what can be strengthened. Your feedback on the survey and in this interview will be used to create a list of recommendations and an action plan to improve literacy in Alachua County.

Do you have any questions?

Media Release

We would like you to sign a media release form, which will allow us to use your quotes directly, though without your name attached. [Share link/screen/form.] Now that you've had a chance to look over the form, do you have any questions?

Start Recording

We will now start recording, and I will begin with some basic questions about you and your background.

Part I: Background and Opening Move

1. Please introduce your organization and yourself and describe:
 - a. Role
 - b. Years in current position

Part II: Perceptions of Literacy Needs and Possible Solutions

2. What do you perceive as the "most pressing" literacy needs for students within the county?
3. Are there specific community demographics you believe require targeted literacy support, and how might these needs be addressed?

4. How can our community help children, youth, and adults achieve their full potential when it comes to reading and writing?
5. Who is responsible for providing those resources?
6. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Ending the Interview

Stop Recording & Thank Participants

Thank you so much for your time today. <Add additional comments as appropriate.>

Request Participants to Assist with Needs Assessment

We really appreciate your time today. It was really wonderful talking with you!