

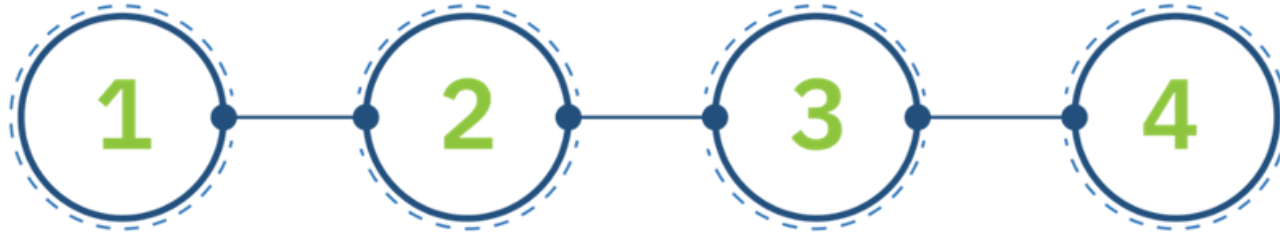
# UF Lastinger Center and Children's Trust of Alachua County Comprehensive Literacy Needs Assessment



April & May 2025

**UF** | Lastinger Center for Learning  
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

# Project Goals (p. 3)



Solicit ideas for what the community *has done, is doing, or can do* to help children, youth, and adults in Alachua County achieve their full potential to read, write, and communicate.

Describe Alachua County's *existing needs* and possible improvements to meet those needs.

Create *specific recommendations* that, if acted upon, can promote literacy proficiency from birth through adulthood in Alachua County.

Provide a *comprehensive list* of organizations providing literacy-related programs, services, and resources in Alachua County.

# Overview of Literacy Needs Assessment Activities (p. 4)

**Table 1.** *Literacy Needs Assessment Outreach and Activities*

| Activity                                       | Number       |
|--|--------------|
| <b>Interviews</b>                              | <b>74</b>    |
| ACPS Educators, Principals, and District Staff | 14           |
| Elected Officials                              | 9            |
| Committee and Community Organizations          | 51           |
| <b>Focus Group Participants</b>                | <b>157</b>   |
| ACPS Educators and District Staff              | 41           |
| Family Members                                 | 74           |
| Community Members                              | 42           |
| <b>Survey Completers</b>                       | <b>1,122</b> |
| ACPS Educators and District Staff              | 157          |
| ACPS Students                                  | 37           |
| Family Members                                 | 740          |
| Community Members                              | 188          |
| <b>Community Events</b>                        | <b>11</b>    |
| <b>Classroom Visits</b>                        | <b>3</b>     |

**April 8, 2024**

Beginning of literacy needs assessment activities



**April 15, 2024**

First of monthly meetings with UF Lastinger Center, Children's Trust, and Committee members



**April 29-May 3, 2024**

Committee member interviews



**May 6-July 12, 2024**

Preparation of survey, interview, and focus group materials and processes



**June 7-December 20, 2024**

Community organization interviews



**June 7-December 20, 2024**

Community surveys



**September 15-December 6, 2024**

Community focus groups

**August 31, 2024**

Original Requested End  
Date

**December 31, 2024**

First Extension

**July 25-December 16, 2024**

ACPS project request process (from submission to University of Florida through ACPS approval)



**December 16, 2024-January 13, 2025**

ACPS surveys



**December 18, 2024-January 16, 2025**

ACPS interviews



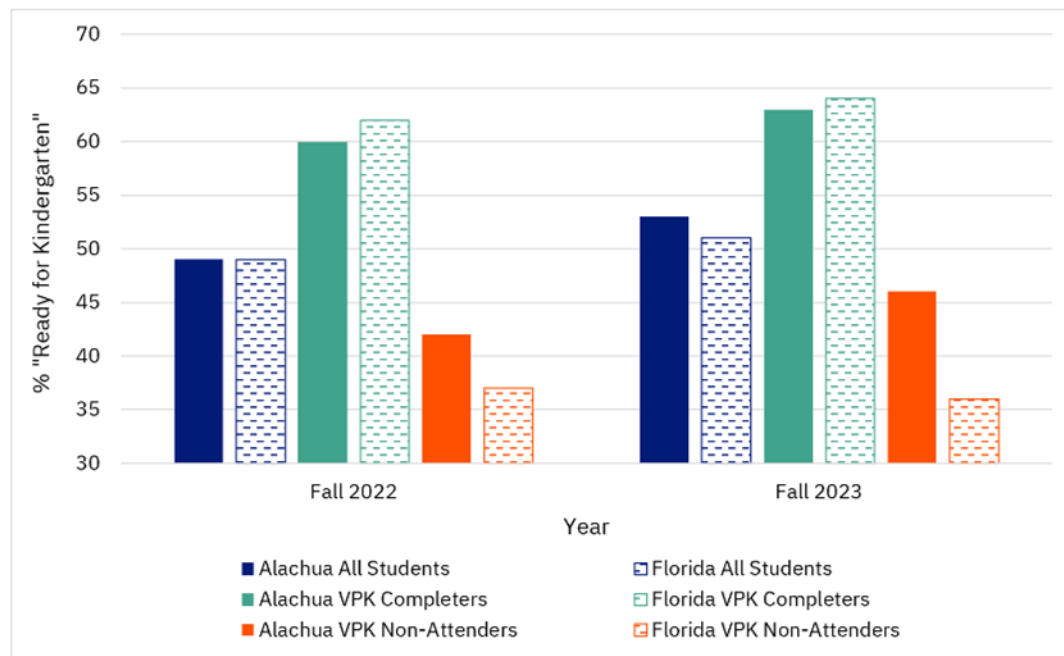
**January 12-17, 2025**

ACPS focus groups

**March 31, 2025**  
Second Extension

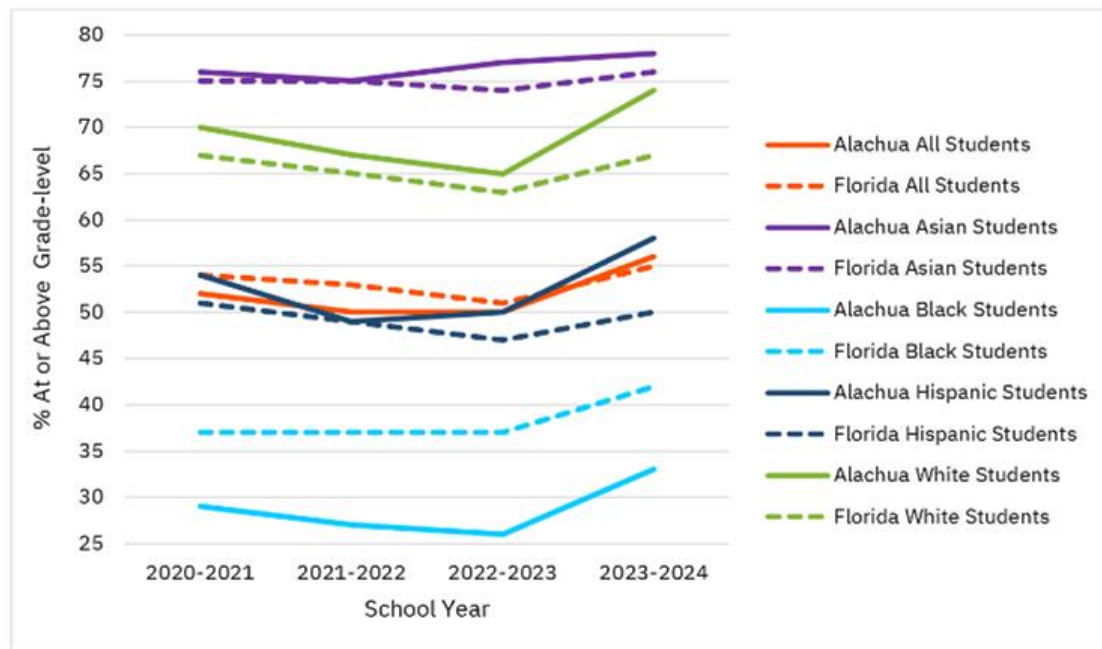
# Kindergarten Readiness (p. 30)

**Figure 8.** Percent of Students “Ready for Kindergarten” Based on FAST Scores at Kindergarten Entry, including by VPK, Alachua County, Fall 2022 and Fall 2023



# Reading on Grade Level by End of Third Grade (p. 34)

**Figure 10.** Third Grade Reading (At or Above Grade Level) by Student Race/Ethnicity, Alachua and Florida, 2020-2021 through 2023-2024



# Survey Results: Family and Community Members (p. 60)

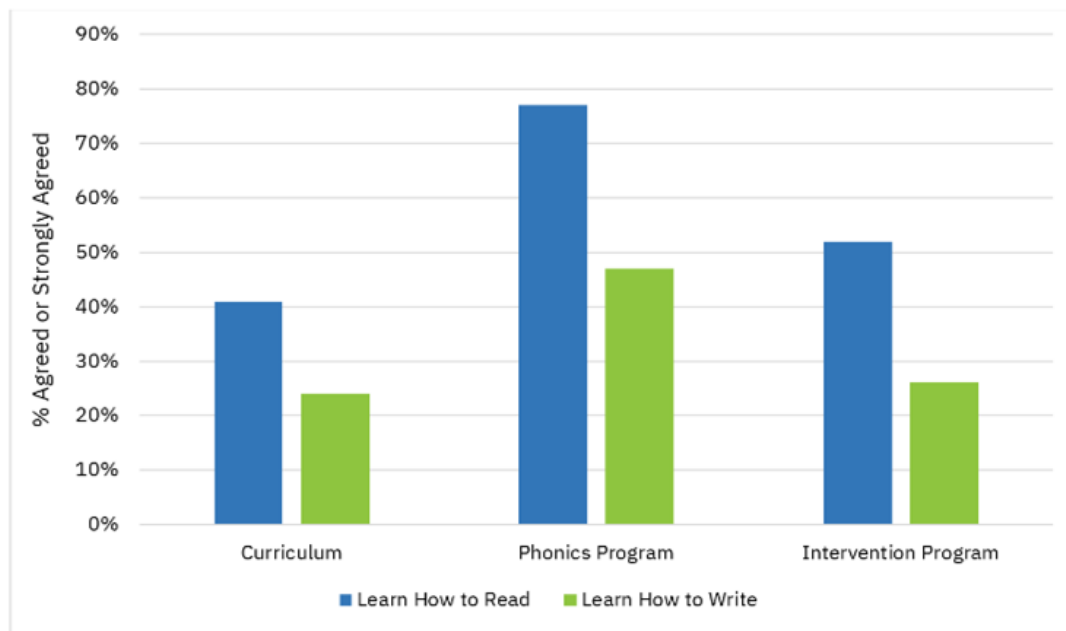
**Figure 26.** *Percent of Respondents, by Respondent Type, Who “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” About **Children and Youth** Having Necessary Literacy Skills To:*





# Survey Results: ACPS Educators and District Staff (p. 67)

**Figure 33.** *Percent of ACPS Elementary Educators Who “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” That Their School’s Literacy Programs Helps Students Learn How to Read or Write*



# Family Needs (p. 73)

**Parental Guidance on Home Instruction and Supplementary Materials.** Many family members also expressed frustration over inadequate knowledge or guidance on how to effectively support their children's literacy at home. They described feeling unprepared to help with reading and writing activities, resulting in missed opportunities for their children to reinforce important skills outside the classroom.

“I didn't grow up with strong literacy skills myself, so teaching reading feels overwhelming.”

– Focus Group Member

“Parents want to help, but they need accessible and practical guidance on supporting their children's reading development.”

– Focus Group Member

# Teacher Needs (p. 81)

## Key Concerns:

- Inadequate training on new curriculum tools and assessment platforms, especially for new teachers.
- Lack of professional development on effective teaching practices, curricula, and practical tools teachers are expected to implement.
- Need for mentorship and peer collaboration.

“Many teachers are left to figure out instructional strategies on their own, which isn’t sustainable.”

– ACPS Educator

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## Organization Needs (p. 88)

“More funding would allow us to expand our literacy initiatives and offer high-quality resources to our students.”

– Staff at an Alachua Community Organization

“Better resource allocation can help us address the specific literacy needs of our students more effectively.”

– Staff at an Alachua Community Organization

# Recommendations (p. 103)

1 

**Enhanced  
Awareness and  
Communication**

2 

**Focused  
Support**

3 

**Expanded  
Professional  
Learning**

# 1. Enhanced Awareness and Communication (pp. 104-107)

- Coordinate existing resources by building awareness within *organizations* and within the *community*
  - Name a central organization to serve as the linking mechanism between organizations; use existing organizations to inform coordination of county-wide literacy efforts and develop long-term solutions
  - Allocate funding for staff member(s) to create and maintain a centralized website and print materials that serve as a resource hub alerting Alachua County residents about existing programs, opportunities, and events
- Use public dollars wisely
  - Require organizations to show targeted literacy impacts to receive public funding
  - Provide sufficient technical assistance so organizations can succeed

## 2. Focused Support (pp. 108-112)

- Start early! Increase public investments in key early learning and intervention organizations to pay long-term dividends
- Provide ongoing evidence-based training for healthcare, education, and community providers serving multilingual learners, Black students, students experiencing poverty, and students with disabilities. Training topics would include the following:
  - Knowledge about how children best learn how to read and write
  - How to implement rigorous and systematic reading instruction
  - Understanding of the assets brought by each group
  - High expectations for attendance and learning

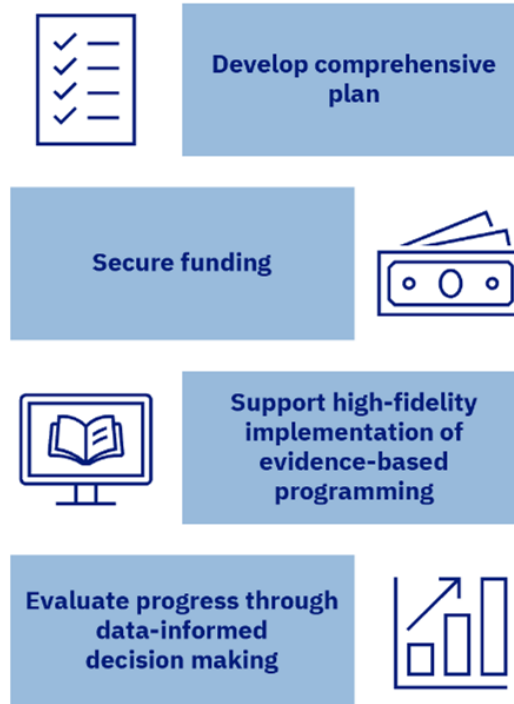
### 3. Expanded Professional Learning (pp. 113-118)

- Early learning providers, staff at community organizations, and ACPS educators all need targeted professional learning in key topics:
  - Providing evidence-based practices and strategies during reading instruction and support
  - Improving implementation of existing programs and technologies
  - Pacing and aligning instruction across grade levels to intensify learning
  - Developing a culture of data-driven decision making at all levels, including expanding access to data within and across organizations
- Other opportunities include the following:
  - Enhanced mentorship and collaboration at all levels
  - Increased opportunities for coaching
  - Better services for students with disabilities



# Next Steps (p. 120)

**Figure 37.** *Next Steps for Alachua County Literacy Improvements*





**CHILDREN'S TRUST**  

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**OF ALACHUA COUNTY**

## Comprehensive Literacy Needs Assessment

Children's Trust of Alachua County Next Steps and Recommendations

April 21, 2025



# Phase 2: Next Steps and Recommendation

## Phase 2

- Developing Plan

## Phase 3

- Secure Funding
- Implementation

## Phase 4

- Evaluation



# Phase 2: Next Steps

## Next Step

Workshop  
Facilitator

Host  
Workshop

Develop plan

## Time Frame

Estimate  
3-5 months

## Community Partners

Library

County/City Gov't

ELC & ECS4Kids

School District

Community

Housing