



**A REPORT FOR MICHIGAN'S
EARLY LITERACY TASK FORCE**

How ISD Early Literacy Coaches Are Implementing the Read by Grade Three Law

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March 2021

EPIC

**Education Policy
Innovation Collaborative**
RESEARCH WITH CONSEQUENCE



A Report for Michigan's Early Literacy Task Force: How ISD Early Literacy Coaches Are Implementing the Read by Grade Three Law

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ISD Early Literacy Coaching is one of the key mechanisms by which the Read by Grade Three Law aims to improve literacy instruction for all K-3 students. This report provides an overview of how this component of the Law is being implemented to date, relying on surveys of ISD Early Literacy Coaches and Michigan teachers, principals, and district superintendents; as well as interviews with state-level stakeholders including policymakers, Michigan Department of Education (MDE) officials, and external stakeholders. We find that:

- ISD Early Literacy Coaches met required qualifications under the Law;
 - ISD Early Literacy Coaches fulfilled their responsibilities outlined in the Read by Grade Three Law, including providing one-on-one literacy coaching and other professional development to teachers, but that teachers wanted additional support in and beyond areas emphasized in the Law;
 - Teachers reported having less access to ISD Early Literacy Coaches than to other providers (e.g., school- and district-based literacy coaches, literacy specialists/interventionists), and access to literacy coaches was least likely to increase in high-need districts since the passage of the Read by Grade Three Law;
 - Educators and state-level stakeholders expressed concerns about shortages of ISD Early Literacy Coaches and insufficient funding for and prior training among ISD Early Literacy Coaches;
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- ISD Early Literacy Coaches valued opportunities to collaborate with other coaches, but wanted additional support fulfilling their responsibilities under the Law (e.g., working with teachers, establishing literacy leadership teams);
- Educators had positive perceptions of ISD Early Literacy Coaches; and
- ISD Early Literacy Coaches were satisfied with their job, but faced challenges supporting teachers.

Based on these findings, we recommend that the Early Literacy Task Force (ELTF) continue to:

- Build and train a larger network of ISD Early Literacy Coaches;
- Work with administrators and coaches to help target literacy coaching to the schools and teachers who need it most;
- Train ISD Early Literacy Coaches to provide professional development to teachers on additional areas beyond those required by the Law (e.g., supporting the literacy development of students with disabilities and English learners [ELs]);
- Provide additional opportunities for coach collaboration; and
- Provide additional professional development to support coaches' fulfillment of their responsibilities under the Law.

INTRODUCTION

One of the key mechanisms by which the Read by Grade Three Law aims to improve literacy instruction for Michigan K-3 students is literacy coaching. Under the Law, the state provides resources to hire and train ISD Early Literacy Coaches. Currently, Section 35a(4) of the State School Aid Act allocates \$31.5 million annually for these coaches, and each ISD is eligible to receive \$112,500 per coach.¹ These coaches are to support and provide initial and ongoing professional development to teachers—including one-on-one literacy coaching—and lead and support school reading leadership teams.

This report uses results from surveys of ISD Early Literacy Coaches as well as Michigan teachers, principals, and district superintendents to examine how the literacy coaching component of the Law has been implemented to date and how educators perceived the ISD Early Literacy Coaches with whom they worked. We also incorporate interviews with state-level stakeholders including policymakers, MDE officials, and external stakeholders representing various education and literacy organizations across the state.

DATA AND METHODS

In spring 2020, the Education Policy Innovation Collaborative (EPIC) conducted surveys of Michigan teachers, principals, district superintendents, and ISD Early Literacy Coaches in traditional public and charter schools² about their perceptions and implementation of the Read by Grade Three Law, including its ISD Early Literacy Coaching component. We administered these surveys online from February 19, 2020 through June 30, 2020.³ Table 1 shows the sample size and response rates for each group.

TABLE 1. Sample Size and Response Rates

	Survey Sample	Target Population	Response Rate
Classroom teachers, K-3	7,110	16,662	43%
• 3 rd -grade classroom teachers	1,771	3,647	49%
Classroom teachers, 4-5	2,755	7,260	38%
Classroom teachers, 6-8	4,075	17,762	23%
Principals, K-5 only	584	1,247	47%
Principals, K-5 and 6-8	161	763	21%
Principals, 6-8 only	183	655	28%
District Superintendents	192	546	35%
ISD Early Literacy Coaches ⁴	133	151	88%

Note: The target population for classroom teachers in kindergarten through third grade include teachers who were assigned to a single grade in K-3 in 2019 fall administrative records. The target population for classroom teachers in sixth through eighth grade is estimated by teachers who were assigned to any grade in 6-8 and were not assigned to other grades in 2019 fall administrative records. The target populations of principals by grade span are based on the actual grades in which schools provide instructions as reported in the Educational Entity Master.

The survey sample is largely representative of the target population of educators, with the following groups slightly overrepresented: administrators from charter schools/districts; educators who are female, elementary-certified, endorsed in English language arts (ELA), and/or have five or fewer years of experience in their current district; and Black or African American administrators. There are no large differences between the survey sample of ISD Early Literacy Coaches and the target population. We use weighted descriptive analyses of the survey data to examine educators' reported perceptions and implementation of the Read by Grade Three Law.

In order to better understand the implementation of the Law, we also conducted semi-structured interviews with three key groups of stakeholders in fall 2019 (N=24), including state-level policymakers (n=11), MDE personnel (n=5), and external stakeholders (n=8) whose organizations were involved in the formation of the Law.

KEY FINDINGS

ISD Early Literacy Coaches Met Required Qualifications Under the Law

According to the Read by Grade Three Law, ISD Early Literacy Coaches should have experience as a successful classroom teacher, sufficient knowledge of scientifically based reading research and instruction, data management skills, and an ability to work with adults. They should also have at least a bachelor's degree and advanced coursework in reading or have completed professional development in evidence-based literacy instructional strategies. Table 2 shows that ISD Early Literacy Coaches generally reported meeting these qualifications.

TABLE 2. Reported Characteristics of ISD Early Literacy Coaches	
Characteristics	Reported Frequency
Employment Status	
Full time	74%
Part time	26%
Experience as an ISD Early Literacy Coach	
Less than 1 year	21%
1 year	6%
2 years	19%
3 years	12%
4 years	41%
Experience in Instructional Positions	
K-3 classroom teacher	8.29 years
4 th -5 th grade classroom teacher	3.41 years
Literacy specialist/interventionist	4.05 years
Instructional coach	2.73 years
Literacy coach	2.39 years
Instructional leadership roles (e.g., department chair, ELA consultant/coordinator, master teacher)	4.48 years
Other administrative roles	1.02 years
Educational Experience	
Undergraduate university-based teacher preparation program	70%
University-based graduate program	77%
Other post-graduate or alternative programs (e.g., Teach for America, iTeach, TNTP Teaching Fellows)	9%
Graduate/Post-BA Coursework	
Language and literacy	41%
Other graduate degree/post-BA coursework	39%
Curriculum and teaching/instruction	24%
Early childhood education	12%
Educational technology	6%
Educational psychology	2%
No graduate degree or post-BA coursework	2%
Reported Endorsements	
ELA	27%
Early Childhood	24%
Reading Specialist	23%
Other	20%
Reading	8%
English as a Second Language	3%
Bilingual	1%
No endorsement	20%

Note: The “Reported Endorsements” are ISD Early Literacy Coaches’ self-reported endorsements. These differed slightly than the endorsements that are recorded in state administrative data. Source: EPIC survey of educators about the Read by Grade Three Law

ISD Early Literacy Coaches Fulfilled Their Responsibilities Outlined in the Law

ISD Early Literacy Coaches Most Often Reported That Their Time Was Allocated Toward the Responsibilities Outlined for Them in the Read by Grade Three Law

On average, ISD Early Literacy Coaches reported providing **one-on-one literacy coaching** to 13 teachers and 4 other coaches in 3 schools and 2 districts and **other literacy professional development** (e.g., large-group professional development, professional learning communities, online courses, conferences) to 55 teachers (in 6 schools and 4 districts) and 11 other coaches (in 5 schools and 3 districts).

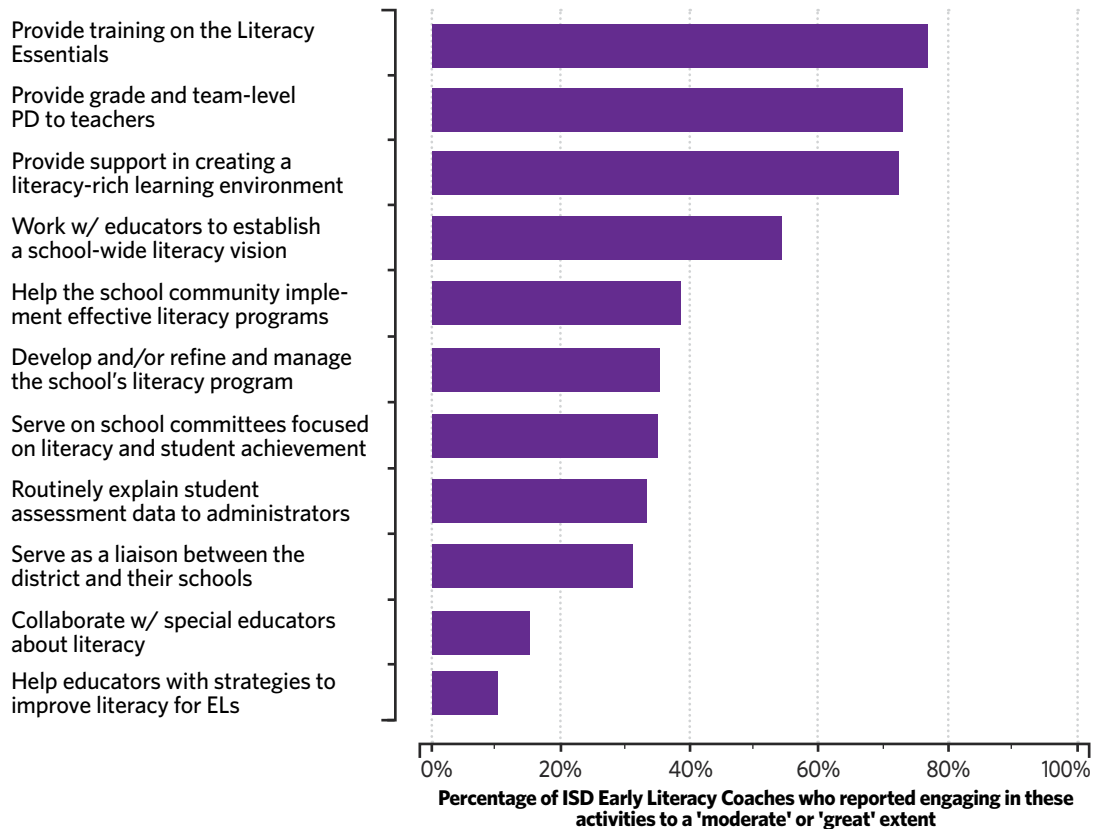
- Forty-eight percent of ISD Early Literacy Coaches reported spending a large or very large amount of time **leading/facilitating/organizing professional development** for groups of teachers in a typical week.
- Forty-four percent reported spending this amount of time **working one-on-one with individual teachers on their instruction**.
- Fewer than 10% reported spending this amount of time **performing noncoaching administrative duties, administering or coordinating instructional assessments, and working with students in whole and small group settings** (not in the context of coaching a teacher).

On average, ISD Early Literacy Coaches reported providing one-on-one literacy coaching to 13 teachers and four other coaches.

ISD Early Literacy Coaches also reported providing a range of literacy supports to the schools in which they worked. Figure 1 shows the proportion of ISD Early Literacy Coaches who said they spent a moderate or great amount of time on different activities.

- Seventy-seven percent reported **providing training on the Literacy Essentials** to a moderate or great extent.
- Over 70% reported **providing grade- and team-level professional development to teachers and providing support in creating a literacy-rich environment**.
- They least often reported **collaborating with special educators about literacy instruction for students who have special needs** and **helping educators with strategies to improve literacy for ELs**.

FIGURE 1. ISD Early Literacy Coaches' Literacy Support to Schools



Note: ISD Early Literacy Coaches were asked, "In thinking about the ways in which you support literacy instruction in schools, to what extent do you do each of the following?" Source: EPIC survey of educators about the Read by Grade Three Law

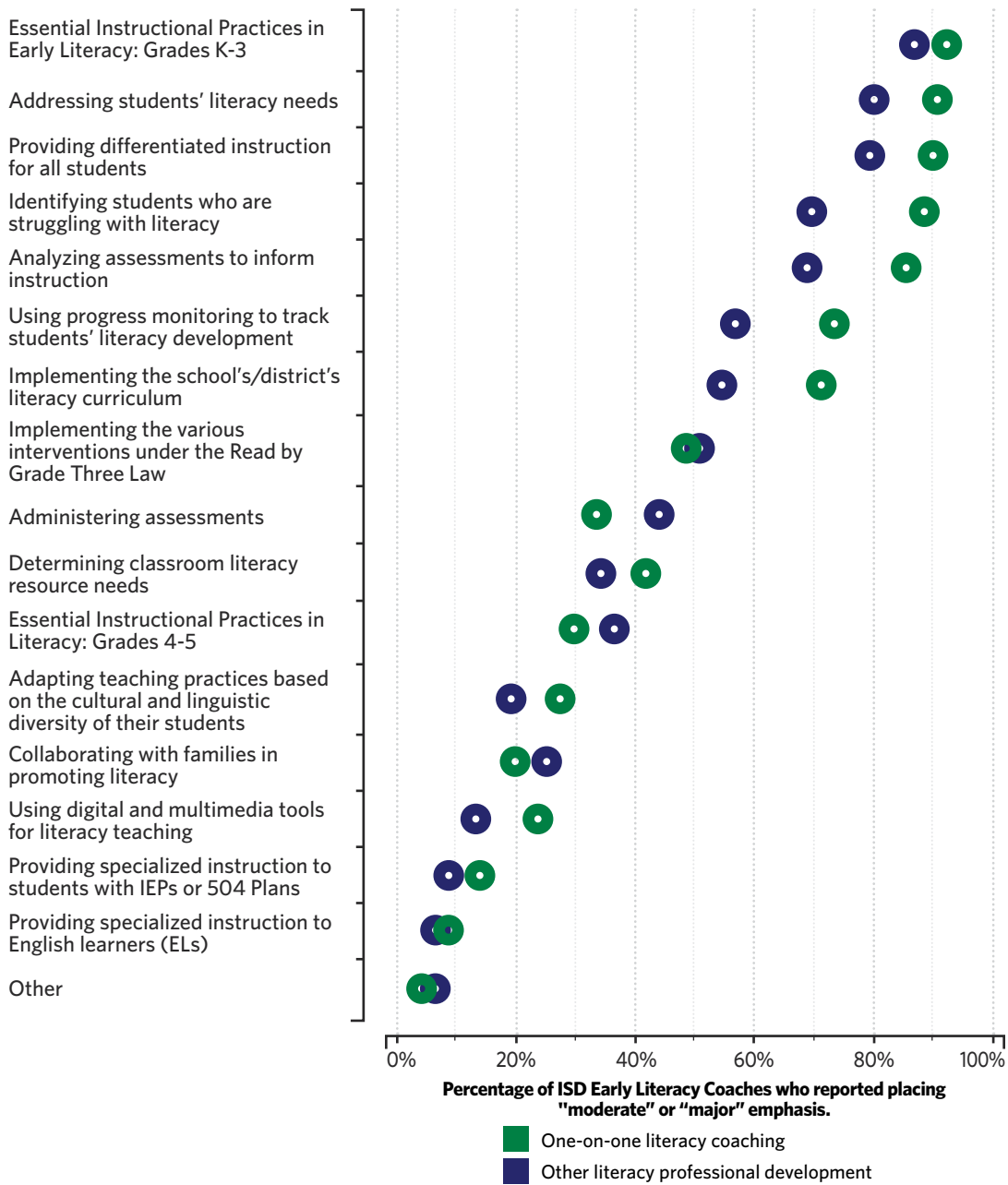
ISD Early Literacy Coaches Provided Professional Development Focused on Identifying and Addressing Students' Literacy Needs and the Literacy Essentials

As is shown in Figure 2, ISD Early Literacy Coaches most often reported providing literacy professional development on:

- **The Literacy Essentials;**
- **Addressing students' literacy needs;**
- **Providing differentiated instruction for all students;**
- **Identifying students who are struggling with literacy; and**
- **Analyzing assessments to inform instruction.**

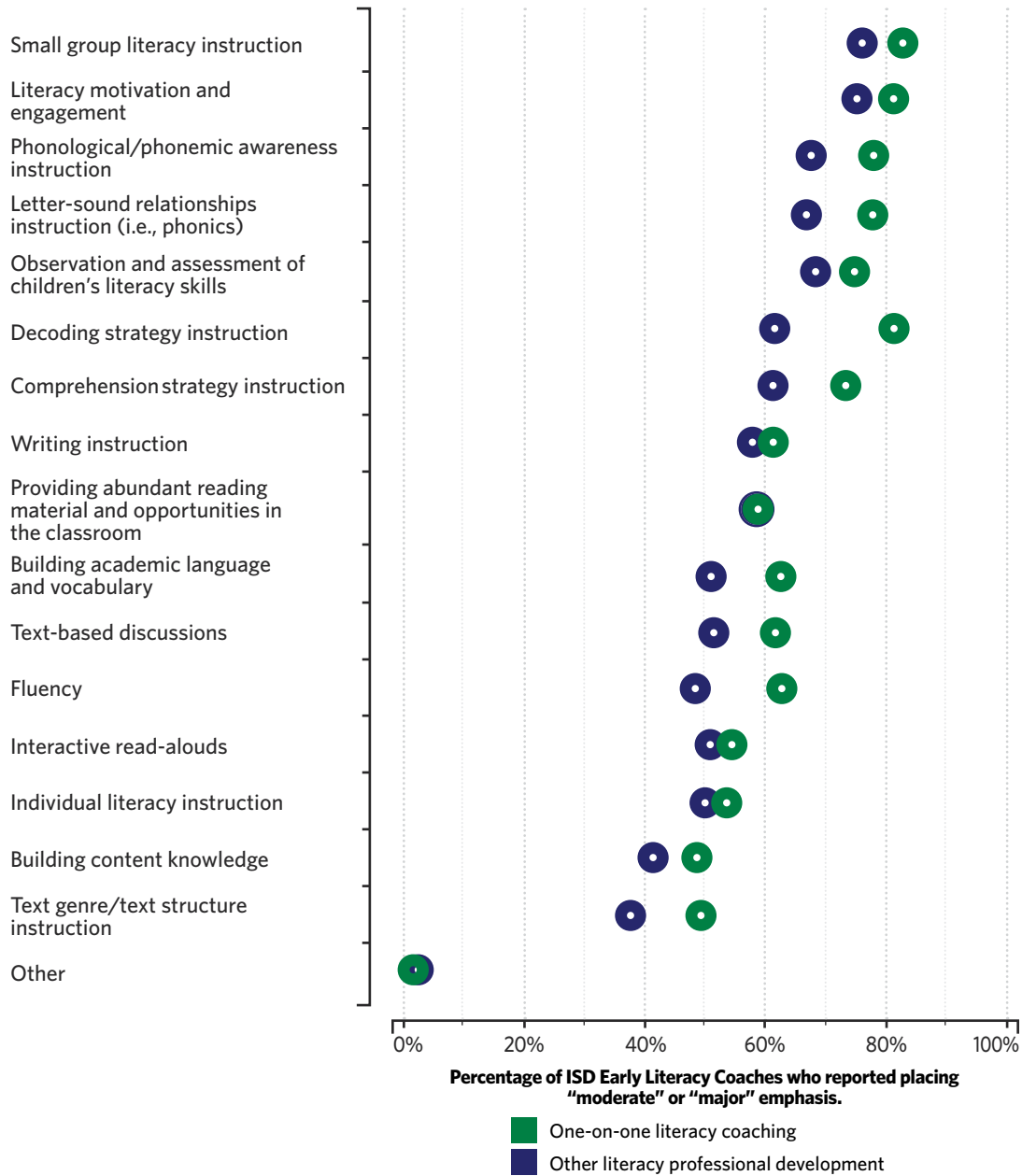
They least often reported providing professional development on **providing specialized instruction to students with IEPs or 504 Plans or ELs.**

FIGURE 2. Areas of Instruction Emphasized in ISD Early Literacy Coaches' Professional Development



Note: This figure combines results from multiple survey questions. ISD Early Literacy Coaches who indicated providing one-on-one literacy coaches to at least one teacher in the 2019-20 school year were asked, "Considering all the one-on-one literacy coaching sessions you have done with teachers this school year, please indicate how much emphasis you have placed on supporting the following areas of instruction." ISD Early Literacy Coaches who indicated providing other literacy professional development to at least one teacher in the 2019-20 school year were asked, "Considering all the literacy professional development (not including coaching) sessions you have done this school year, how much emphasis have you placed on supporting each of the following areas of instruction?" Source: EPIC survey of educators about the Read by Grade Three Law

FIGURE 3. Types of Instruction Emphasized in ISD Early Literacy Coaches' Professional Development



Note: This figure combines results from multiple survey questions. ISD Early Literacy Coaches who indicated providing one-on-one literacy coaches to at least one teacher in the 2019-20 school year were asked, "Considering all the literacy coaching sessions you have conducted with teachers this school year, how much emphasis have you placed on supporting each of the following types of instruction?" ISD Early Literacy Coaches who indicated providing other literacy professional development to at least one teacher in the 2019-20 school year were asked, "Considering all the literacy professional development (not including coaching) sessions you have planned, or planned and delivered, this school year, how much emphasis have you placed on supporting each of the following types of instruction?" Source: EPIC survey of educators about the Read by Grade Three Law

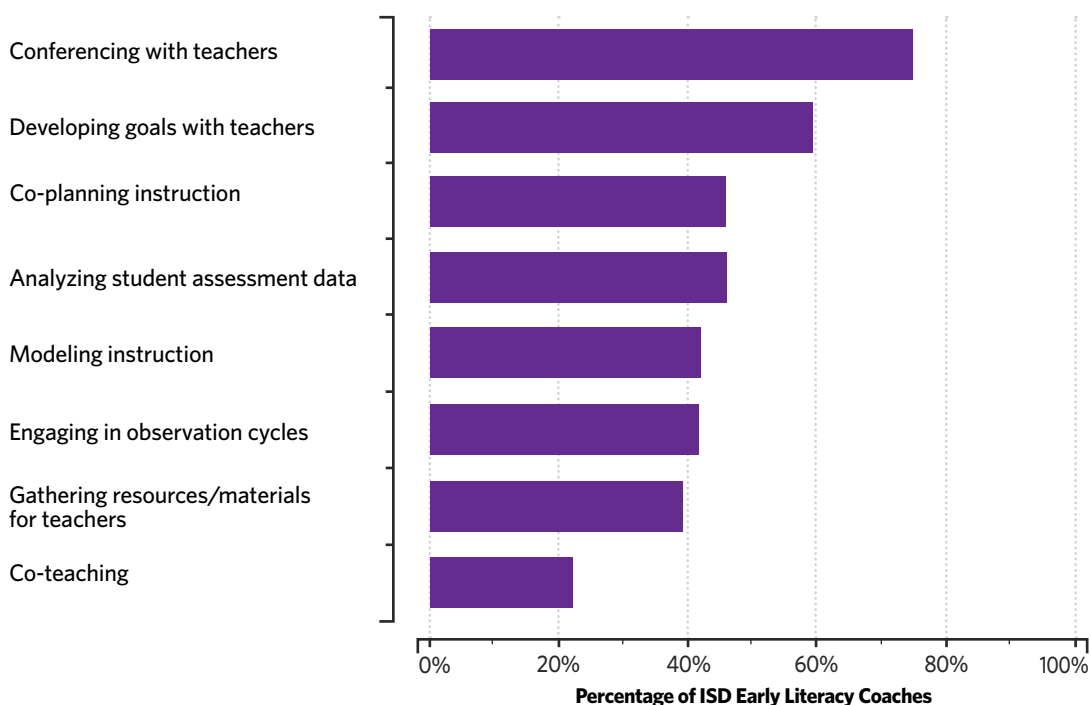
ISD Early Literacy Coaches' Professional Development Aligned with the Literacy Essentials

ISD Early Literacy Coaches reported emphasizing the types of instruction included in the Literacy Essentials in the professional development they provided to teachers, including **small group literacy instruction, literacy motivation and engagement, decoding strategy instruction, phonological/phonemic awareness instruction, and letter-sound relationships** (i.e., phonics; see Figure 3).

ISD Early Literacy Coaches Provided One-on-One Coaching Using a Variety of Approaches

In their one-on-one literacy coaching, ISD Early Literacy Coaches most often reported **conferencing with teachers** and **developing goals with teachers** (see Figure 4). They also somewhat often reported **analyzing student assessment data, co-planning instruction, modeling instruction, and engaging in observation cycles** with teachers.

FIGURE 4. Approaches to One-on-One Literacy Coaching Provided by ISD Early Literacy Coaches

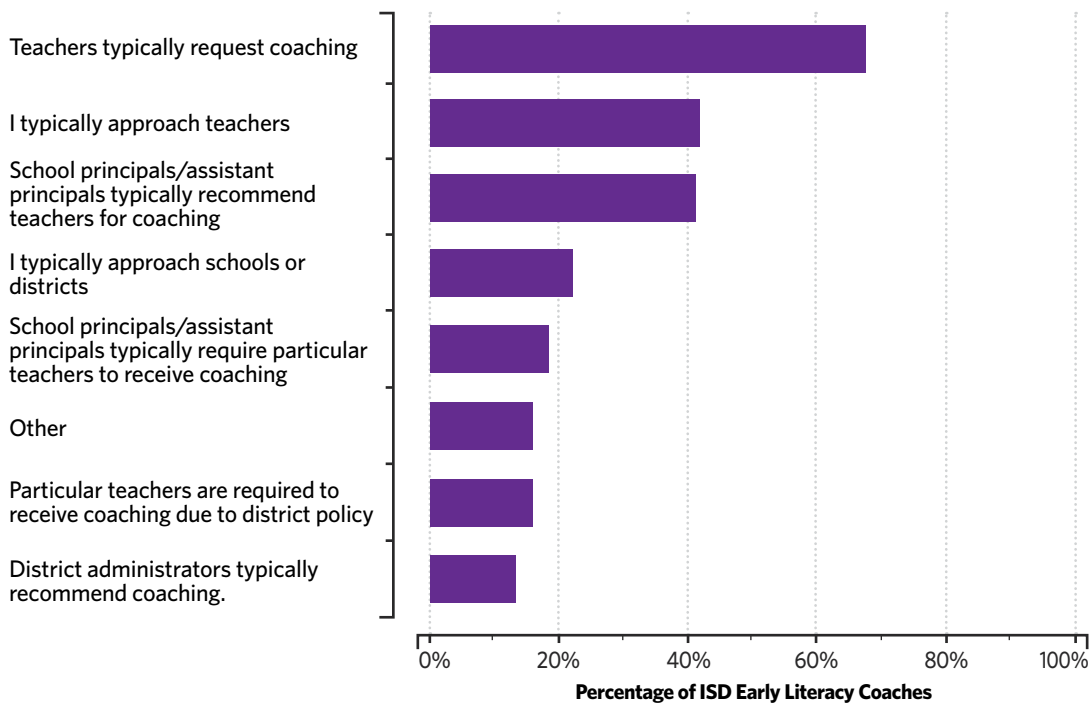


Note: Between 1-3% did not respond to each question item. ISD Early Literacy Coaches were asked, "Considering all the literacy coaching sessions you have had with teachers this year, how frequently have you provided literacy coaching to teachers using the following formats?" Source: EPIC survey of educators about the Read by Grade Three Law.

Teachers Were Most Often Identified for One-on-One Literacy Coaching by Requesting It

ISD Early Literacy Coaches most often reported that teachers were identified for one-on-one literacy coaching by **requesting it** (see Figure 5). This suggests that teachers who could most benefit from coaching may be not receiving it if they are not requesting it.

FIGURE 5. How Teachers Were Identified for ISD Early Literacy Coaching



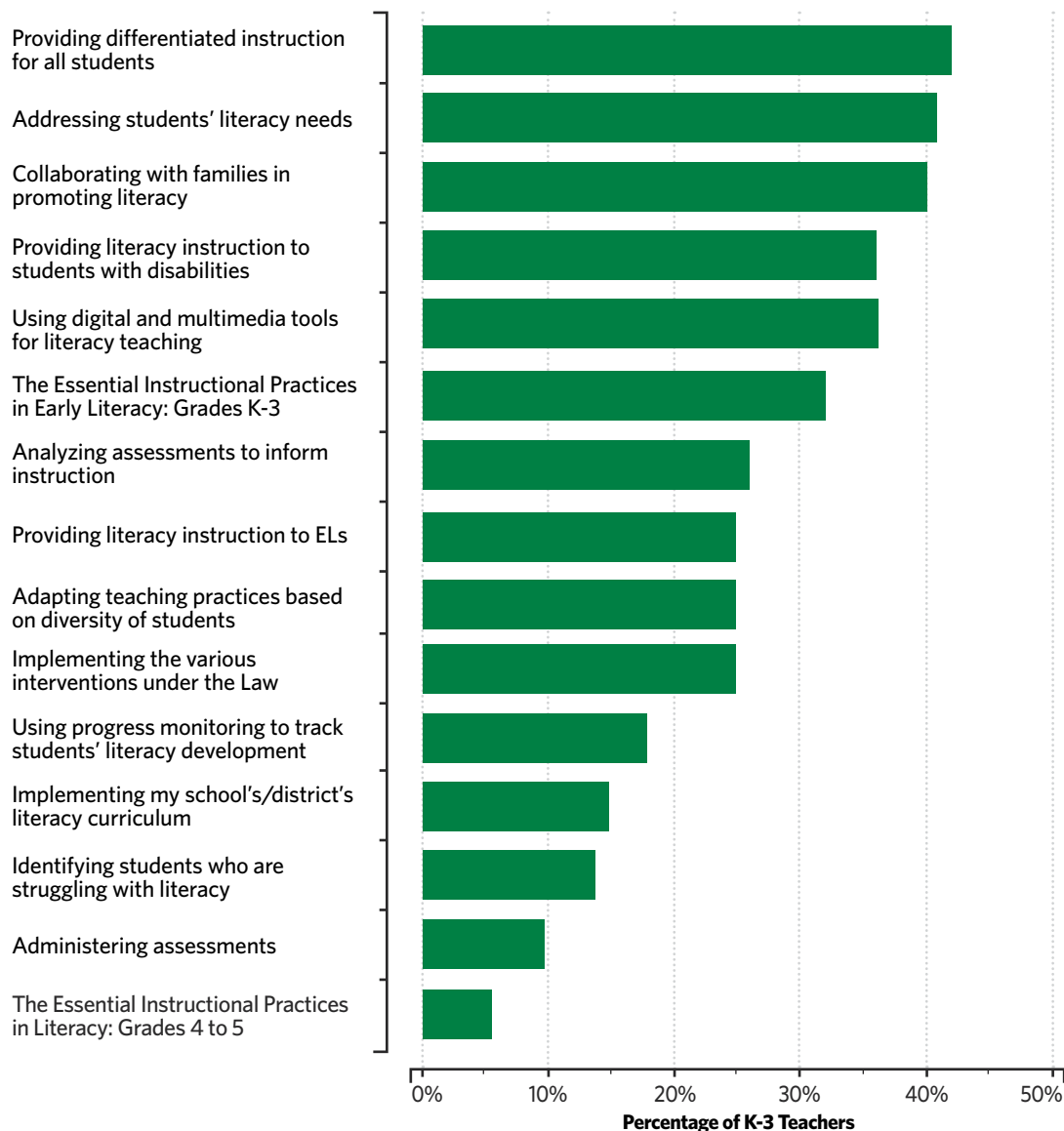
Note: ISD Early Literacy Coaches were asked, “How are teachers typically identified for literacy coaching? Please mark all that apply.” Source: EPIC survey of educators about the Read by Grade Three Law

Teachers Wanted Additional Support in and Beyond Areas Emphasized by the Law

Kindergarten through third-grade teachers reported wanting additional literacy professional development. In particular, Figure 6 shows that they most frequently wanted more support in:

- **Providing differentiated instruction for all students;**
- **Addressing students’ literacy needs;**
- **Collaborating with families in promoting literacy;**
- **Providing literacy instruction to students with disabilities;** and
- **Using digital and multimedia tools for literacy teaching.**

FIGURE 6. Reported Areas of Desired Additional Literacy Professional Development



Note: Teachers were asked, "In which of the following areas would you like to receive additional literacy support (through either one-on-one literacy coaching or other professional development)? Please mark all that apply."
 Source: EPIC survey of educators about the Read by Grade Three Law

Teachers Reported Having Less Access to ISD Early Literacy Coaches Than to Other Coaching Providers

There Was an Overall Lack of Access to Literacy Coaches, Particularly in Larger ISDs

Survey responses indicated that there was limited access to literacy coaches, including the ISD Early Literacy Coaches provided for under the Read by Grade Three Law.

- As of spring 2020, **19 ISDs had one ISD Early Literacy Coach, 17 had two, and 18 had more than two** to support the entire ISD.⁵
- One-third of elementary school principals and 1/5 of district superintendents reported that they **did not have access to any ISD Early Literacy Coaches** (see Table 3). They were also likely to report **not having access to school- or district-based coaches**, but **more often had access to literacy specialists/interventionists** than to other types of coaches.
- Eight percent of principals and 4% of superintendents did not have access to any literacy coaches.

TABLE 3. Reported Number of Literacy Coaches Working in Schools and Districts		
	K-5 Principals	District Superintendents
Number of ISD Early Literacy Coaches		
0	32.50%	21.30%
1-2	44.50%	49.20%
>=3	4.00%	5.60%
Did not respond	19.00%	23.90%
Number of District-Based Literacy Coaches		
0	38.40%	31.00%
1-2	36.20%	35.10%
>=3	6.90%	8.30%
Did not respond	18.50%	25.60%
Number of School-Based Literacy Coaches		
0	37.20%	30.70%
1-2	43.20%	33.00%
>=3	2.40%	9.70%
Did not respond	17.20%	26.70%
Number of Literacy Specialists/Interventionists		
0	16.30%	19.30%
1-2	53.60%	27.70%
>=3	14.00%	27.90%
Did not respond	16.00%	25.10%
Number of Any Literacy Coaches (Not Including Literacy Specialists/Interventionists)		
0	7.60%	4.30%
1-2	49.20%	33.40%
>=3	29.90%	41.40%
Did not respond	13.30%	20.80%

Note: Between 15-22% did not respond to each question item. This table is based on survey questions in which elementary school principals and district superintendents were asked, “How many of the following personnel (i.e., ISD Early Literacy Coaches, district-based literacy coaches, school-based literacy coaches, and literacy specialists/interventionists) work in your school [district]? Please count as a person working in your school [district] if there is anyone of this staffing type working in your school [district] at all during the school year. If you do not know the exact number, please provide your best estimate.” The number of any literacy coaches is the sum of each type of literacy coaches.

The shortage of ISD Early Literacy Coaches was more acute in larger ISDs than it was in smaller ISDs. As shown in Table 4, the ratio of ISD Early Literacy Coaches to K-3 teachers for a large ISD was 1:487, while the ratio in a small ISD was 1:69. Similarly, ISD Early Literacy Coaches in large ISDs were expected to serve a much higher number of schools or districts than those in small ISDs. On average, each ISD Early Literacy Coach served 106 schools and 15 districts in a large ISD, relative to 25 schools and 6 districts in a small ISD.

Table 4. ISD Early Literacy Coach - Teacher Ratio, by ISD Size			
	ISD Size		
	Small	Medium	Large
ISD Early Literacy Coach-to-K-3 teacher ratio	1:69	1:122	1:487
ISD Early Literacy Coach-to-school ratio	1:25	1:35	1:106
ISD Early Literacy Coaches-to-district ratio	1:6	1:6	1:15

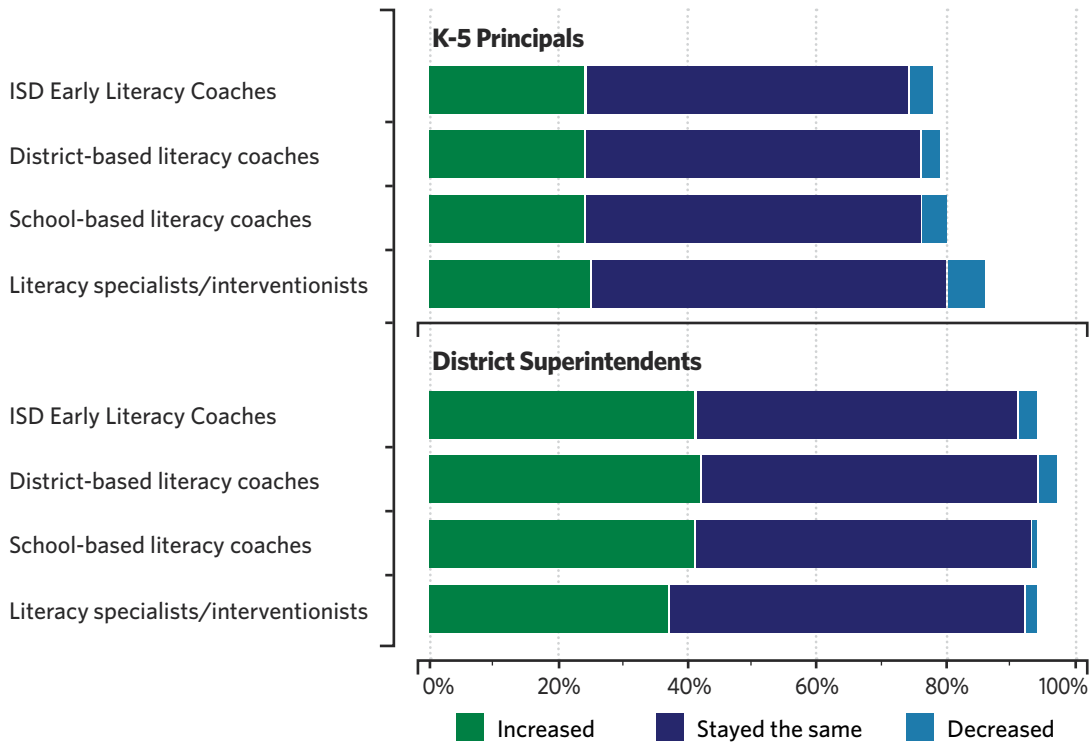
Note: The K-3 teachers are defined as classroom teachers who were assigned to any grade kindergarten through third grade in state administrative data. ISD size was measured by the number of students in grades K-8. ISDs were classified into "small," "medium," and "large" categories depend on whether they fall in the bottom quartile, middle two quartiles, or top quartile of the ISD size. Source: The Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA) General Education Leadership Network's (GELN) Early Literacy Task Force (ELTF), student and teacher administrative records.

Access to Literacy Coaches Was Least Likely to Increase in High-Need Districts

Administrators reported that their access to all types of literacy coaches either increased or stayed the same since the passage of the Read by Grade Three Law in 2016. However, these increases did not occur equitably across all districts.

- Fifty percent of elementary school principals and 41% of district superintendents reported that the number of ISD Early Literacy Coaches working in their school or district, respectively, has **stayed the same** since the implementation of the Read by Grade Three Law (see Figure 7).
- Twenty-four percent of elementary principals and 29% of district superintendents said that the number of ISD Early Literacy Coaches has **increased** since the implementation of the Law.
- Principals and superintendents in districts with high predicted retention rates were least likely to report an increase in access to ISD Early Literacy Coaches.

FIGURE 7. Reported Change in the Number of Literacy Coaches Since the Implementation of the Read by Grade Three Law



Note: Principals and district superintendents were asked, "In this question, we are asking about the quantity of literacy coaches and specialists/interventionists working in your school/district, and how this has changed since the implementation of the Read by Grade Three Law in 2016. Please tell us: How has your school's/district's access to these personnel changed since the implementation of the Read by Grade Three Law? Please count as a person working in your school/district if there is anyone of this staffing type working in your school/district at all during the school year. If you do not know the exact numbers, please provide your best estimate." Source: EPIC survey of educators about the Read by Grade Three Law

ISD Early Literacy Coaches Were Among the Least-Reported Providers of One-on-One Literacy Coaching and Other Literacy Professional Development

Many K-3 teachers reported receiving one-on-one literacy coaching and other literacy professional development in the 2019-20 school year. However, they more often reported that this support was provided by school- and district-based coaches or literacy specialists/interventionists than ISD Early Literacy Coaches. This is likely due to the fact that there are so few ISD Early Literacy Coaches relative to the number of K-3 teachers in Michigan.

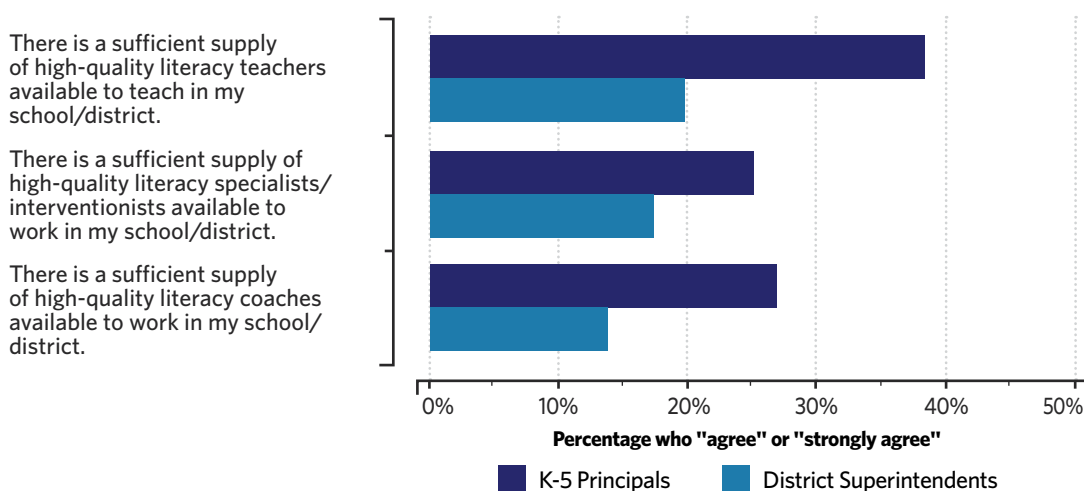
- Forty-three percent of K-3 teachers reported receiving **one-on-one literacy coaching**, but just 13% received one-on-one literacy coaching from an ISD Early Literacy Coach.
- Seventy-two percent of K-3 teachers reported receiving **other literacy professional development** (e.g., large-group professional development, professional learning communities, online courses, conferences), but just 34% received other literacy professional development from an ISD Early Literacy Coach.

Educators and State-Level Stakeholders Expressed Concerns about Shortages of ISD Early Literacy Coaches

Administrators Disagreed That There Was a Sufficient Supply of High-Quality Literacy Coaches

Figure 8 shows administrators' perceptions of human-capital resources in implementing the Read by Grade Three Law. Only 27% of elementary school principals and 14% of district superintendents agreed that **there was a sufficient supply of high-quality literacy coaches** of any type—including ISD Early Literacy Coaches—available to work in their school or district. A similar percentage reported the same with respect to **high-quality literacy specialists/interventionists**.

FIGURE 8. Administrators' Perceptions of Human-Capital Resources in Implementing the Law



Note: Ten percent of K-5 Principals and 22% of District Superintendents did not respond. Elementary school principals and district superintendents were asked, "To what extent do you agree with the following statements about you and your school's/district's ability to improve literacy instruction and/or implement the Read by Grade Three Law?" Source: EPIC survey of educators about the Read by Grade Three Law

State-Level Stakeholders Expressed Concerns about Insufficient Funding and Prior Training for ISD Early Literacy Coaches

The state-level stakeholders we interviewed agreed that the state is not spending enough money on literacy coaching. They often compared Michigan's Read by Grade Three Law to Florida's policy, but at the same time pointed out that Florida invested much more money in literacy coaching. As one external stakeholder said:

We're nowhere in the ballpark of what Florida did...the point that I was—I would use that to try to articulate for folks how much a drop in the bucket what the legislature was allocating was and how far off we are as a state just how massively far off we are as a state in terms of the number of coaches that we have. To answer your question quite directly, no, I do not think that the coaching resources allocated were or are adequate to our population.

Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer allocated funding through a series of line-item vetoes to triple the number of early literacy coaches in 2019-20, but many expressed that this was still not enough financial support for this element of the Law. According to another stakeholder, the current funds will pay for only 270 coaches statewide. As one former policymaker shared, *“When you get a reading coach or two reading coaches per Intermediate School District, then it’s not alike [to Florida’s reading law]. It’s almost ineffective because it would be too diluted to really provide significant value.”*

A quarter of the stakeholders with whom we spoke perceived that, even at current funding levels, there was not a great enough supply of qualified coaches to meet the need for them under the Law. For instance, one former policymaker with whom we spoke said, *“We have such a talent problem in Michigan...Even if we paid for the correct amount of literacy coaching support, so that that was not a financial barrier, we don’t have enough people to even fill the roles.”*

Interviewees were also concerned about a lack of prior training among ISD Early Literacy Coaches. Currently, once ISD Early Literacy Coaches assume their role, they receive required training. Nonetheless, fulfilling the coaching provision of the Law has been difficult: *“It’s a challenge trying to implement things like coaching when you don’t have [human] capacity... We have to grow it, and that patience of building people’s capacity over time, you just don’t turn it on. You have to grow it.”*

ISD Early Literacy Coaches Valued Opportunities to Collaborate with Other Coaches, but Wanted Additional Support Fulfilling Their Responsibilities Under the Law

ISD Early Literacy Coaches found opportunities to collaborate with other coaches to be the most useful form of support, followed by trainings on the Literacy Essentials. More than 80% of ISD Early Literacy Coaches reported that **collaborating with other coaches** (e.g., planning professional development, discussing common challenges); **print, video, and digital resources about effective literacy instruction** (e.g., Literacy Essentials modules); and **workshops on the Literacy Essentials** were useful or extremely useful.

ISD Early Literacy Coaches also wanted additional support in helping them fulfill their responsibilities outlined in the Read by Grade Three Law.

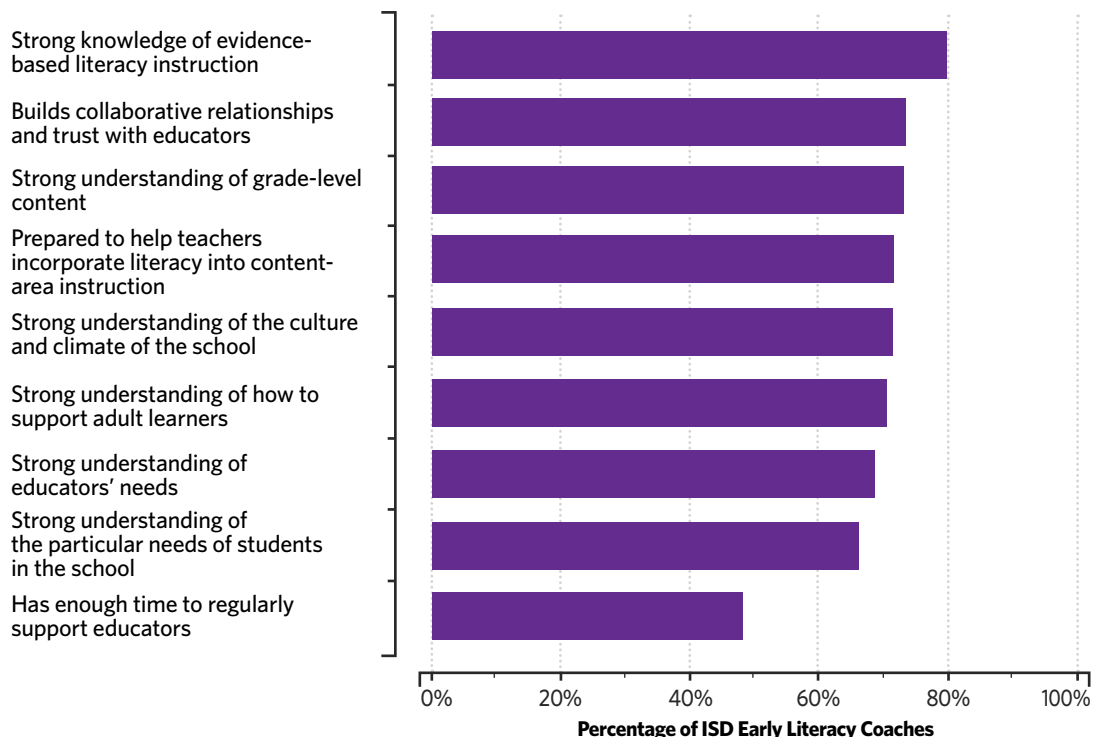
- Sixty-seven percent indicated that they would like additional support **incorporating literacy across the content areas** to a moderate or great extent.
- More than half would like additional support in **working with teachers to improve their practice** (e.g., modeling instruction, providing feedback, organizing professional development).
- Similarly, more than half of ISD Early Literacy Coaches wanted support **establishing a literacy leadership team** in the schools in which they are working.

Educators Had Positive Perceptions of ISD Early Literacy Coaches

Kindergarten through third-grade teachers generally had positive perceptions about the ISD Early Literacy Coaches with whom they worked. Figure 9 shows that teachers reported that ISD Early Literacy Coaches had a particularly strong knowledge of:

- **Evidence-based literacy instruction;**
- **Building collaborative relationships and trust with teachers;**
- **Grade-level content;**
- **Incorporating literacy into content-area instruction;** and
- **The culture and climate of the school** in which they worked.

FIGURE 9. K-3 Teachers' Perceptions of ISD Early Literacy Coaches



Note: Teachers were asked, "Considering all of the different types of literacy support you have received (including one-on-one coaching) from the ISD Early Literacy Coach/Consultant, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements. Please mark one option for each row." This question was only administered to kindergarten through third-grade teachers who indicated that they have worked with an ISD Early Literacy Coach in the 2019-20 school year. Source: EPIC survey of educators about the Read by Grade Three Law

Kindergarten through third-grade teachers also reported that their ISD Early Literacy Coach helped them improve their literacy instruction.

- Over 70% of K-3 teachers agreed or strongly agreed that their ISD Early Literacy Coach **deepened their understanding of literacy and literacy best practices** and provided **effective literacy professional development and one-on-one literacy coaching**.
- Over two-thirds said that their ISD Early Literacy Coach helped them **better implement the Literacy Essentials** in their classroom and **adapt their teaching practices based on analyses of student achievement data**.
- However, fewer than half said that their ISD Early Literacy Coach **has enough time to regularly support educators**.

ISD Early Literacy Coaches Were Satisfied with Their Job, but Faced Challenges Supporting Teachers

Insufficient time and the large number and spread of educators they are expected to support were among ISD Early Literacy Coaches' greatest reported challenges.

- Eighty-six percent of ISD Early Literacy Coaches agreed or strongly agreed that they were **satisfied with their job**.
- Sixty-one percent reported that **insufficient time for teachers to work with them during the school day** was a hindrance to their work to a moderate or great extent.
- Between 37% and 49% of ISD Early Literacy Coaches indicated that **insufficient time for them to meet individually with teachers** and visit their classrooms, the **large number of teachers and coaches** they are expected to support, **the large geographic spread** of teachers and coaches they support, and a **lack of inclusion in district-level decision-making** about literacy were also hindrances to their work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Build and Train a Larger Network of ISD Early Literacy Coaches

It was clear from teacher, principal, and superintendent survey responses as well as stakeholder interviews that educators had limited access to ISD Early Literacy Coaches, and coaches themselves reported that they did not have enough time to support teachers. The ELTF might continue to advocate to increase the overall number of coaches and to train teachers to prepare them to move into coaching roles. This continued work will take time and may require ongoing work with educator preparation institutions. ISDs might also “grow their own” coaches by identifying effective early career teachers and providing them with the professional development and training they need over time to eventually build a robust network of coaches who have experience working with educators in the ISD. Given the need to retain experienced teachers in classrooms, it may also be necessary to recruit educators or coaches from out-of-state.

Target Literacy Coaching to the Schools and Teachers Who Need It Most

ISD Early Literacy Coaches reported that teachers were most often identified for coaching by requesting it, which may mean that teachers who need it most may not be identified for coaching if they do not ask for it. Moreover, administrators in districts with high predicted retention rates were the least likely to report that their access to ISD Early Literacy Coaches increased since the passage of the Read by Grade Three Law. While training a larger network of ISD Early Literacy Coaches will take time, one short-term solution to inequitable access would be to target coaches to the schools and teachers who could most benefit from this type of support. The ELTF could continue to advocate for additional coaches and funding to be allocated to these districts with the most need, and work with school and district administrators to determine which teachers could benefit most from literacy coaching.

Train ISD Early Literacy Coaches to Provide Professional Development to Teachers on Additional Areas Beyond the Law

While K-3 teachers wanted additional professional development on areas included in the Law (and on the Literacy Essentials), such as providing differentiated instruction for all students and addressing students' literacy needs, they also wanted support in areas not directly included in the Law—such as providing literacy instruction to students with disabilities and ELs. The ELTF might consider supporting coaches to provide professional development to teachers in these areas.

Provide Additional Opportunities for Coach Collaboration

ISD Early Literacy Coaches most often reported that collaborating with other coaches was a useful form of support. This suggests that the existing coaching network is valued by and beneficial to coaches, indicating the importance of continuing in this work. The ELTF should continue to provide opportunities for coaches to collaborate and learn from each other.

Provide Additional Professional Development to Support Coaches' Responsibilities Under the Law

Coaches also wanted additional support in areas related to their responsibilities under the Read by Grade Three Law. This included support to help them incorporate literacy across content areas; work with teachers to improve their practice by modeling, providing feedback, and organizing professional development; and establish literacy leadership teams in the schools in which they are working. These could all serve as potential professional development topics for the ELTF as they continue to support and coordinate with ISD Early Literacy Coaches.

REFERENCES

- 1 Michigan Department of Education. (n.d.). *ISD Early Literacy Coach Grant*. Michigan Department of Education. https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-28753_74161-367706--,00.html
- 2 For charter schools, we surveyed the listed superintendent or director of a charter school district, educational services provider (ESP), charter management organization (CMO), or educational management organization (EMO).
- 3 The survey administration window was extended as a result of COVID-19 and the subsequent school-building closures.
- 4 The estimated population of ISD Early Literacy Coaches is based on a contact list provided by the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA) General Education Leadership Network (GELN) Early Literacy Task Force (ELTF). This list contained 135 coaches. After removing duplicates and an invalid email address, 129 coaches remained. Further, 22 individuals responded to the ISD Early Literacy Coach survey who were not on the ELTF list. To be conservative in calculating our response rate, we added the 129 coaches with valid email addresses to the 22 who self-identified as ISD Early Literacy Coaches in the survey, leaving a target population of 151 coaches.
- 5 This is according to a list of ISD Early Literacy Coaches provided to us by the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA) General Education Leadership Network's (GELN) Early Literacy Task Force (ELTF). Three ISDs did not have a coach on this list, though one of these ISDs shares coaches with another ISD. Thus, two ISDs do not have access to an ISD Early Literacy Coach.



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