



RESEARCH REPORT

# Michigan's Literacy Coaching Landscape

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March 2023

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Education Policy  
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MARCH 2023

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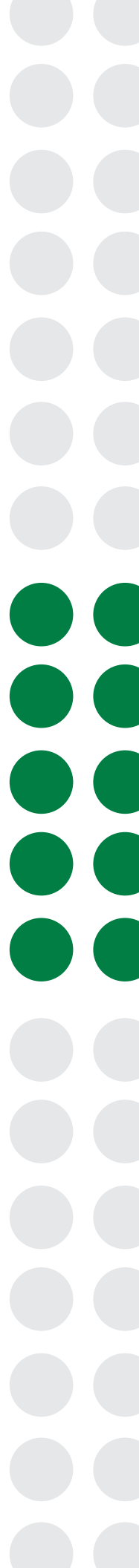
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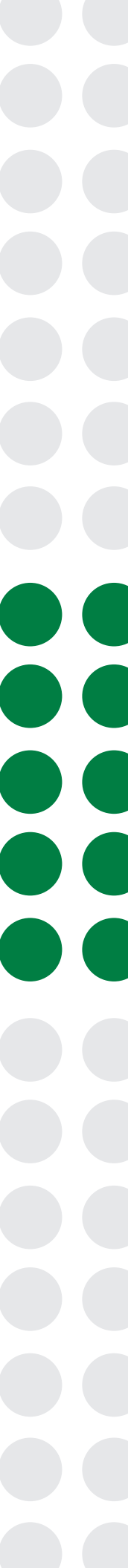


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**ES**



Michigan's Literacy  
Coaching Landscape

# **Executive Summary**





# Michigan's Literacy Coaching Landscape: Executive Summary

Literacy coaching is a key mechanism through which Michigan's Read by Grade Three Law aims to improve literacy instruction for K-3 students throughout the state. Under the Law, the state funds ISD Early Literacy Coaches to work with K-3 teachers and provide them with literacy coaching and other professional development. However, Michigan's literacy coaching landscape consists of providers beyond ISD Early Literacy Coaches, including those hired to work at the district and school levels.

In this report, we provide evidence about the characteristics of Michigan's literacy coaches, what they do, who they serve, and the challenges they face—both independent of and as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We also examine educators' perceptions of literacy coaches' effect on instruction and student achievement. Relying on statewide survey data and an observational study of coaches, we find that:

- Michigan literacy coaches are highly qualified;
- Supports for Michigan literacy coaches vary widely, which may be related to greater challenges for those receiving less assistance;
- Michigan literacy coaches may be spread too thin;
- Teachers who could most benefit from literacy coaching may not be receiving it;
- ISD Early Literacy Coaches allocate their time as designated by the Law and the Coaching Essentials; and
- Michigan educators have positive perceptions of literacy coaches.

Based on these findings, we offer two recommendations for policymakers and practitioners:

- Increase funding for literacy coaching; and
  - Integrate literacy coaches more purposefully into ISDs, districts, and schools.
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Michigan's Literacy  
Coaching Landscape

# Section One: Introduction

# Section One:

## Introduction

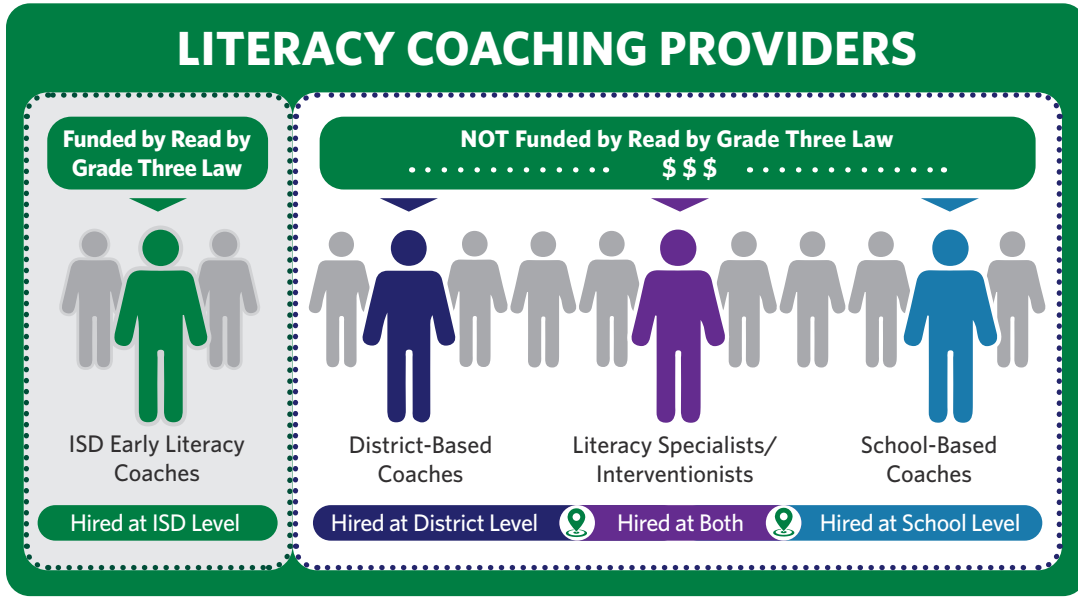
Michigan passed the Read by Grade Three Law in 2016 in response to growing concerns over students' performance on state and national reading assessments. The Law is grounded in the idea that targeted and high-quality instructional support and early intervention—along with the threat of retention for third graders who score more than a grade level behind on the state's standardized English Language Arts (ELA) assessment—will lead to more effective instruction and supports for students, and ultimately, improve student literacy achievement by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

One mechanism by which the Read by Grade Three Law aims to improve literacy instruction is through literacy coaching for K-3 teachers. Michigan is one of 23 states in which an early literacy policy includes a provision for literacy coaches (ExcelinEd, 2021). A robust literature supports the use of literacy coaching, showing that coaching can be an effective way to improve teachers' instruction and therefore student achievement (e.g., Blachowicz et al., 2005; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2011; Kraft et al., 2018; Lockwood et al., 2010; Matsumura et al., 2010; Vanderburg & Stephens, 2010).

## LITERACY COACHING IN MICHIGAN

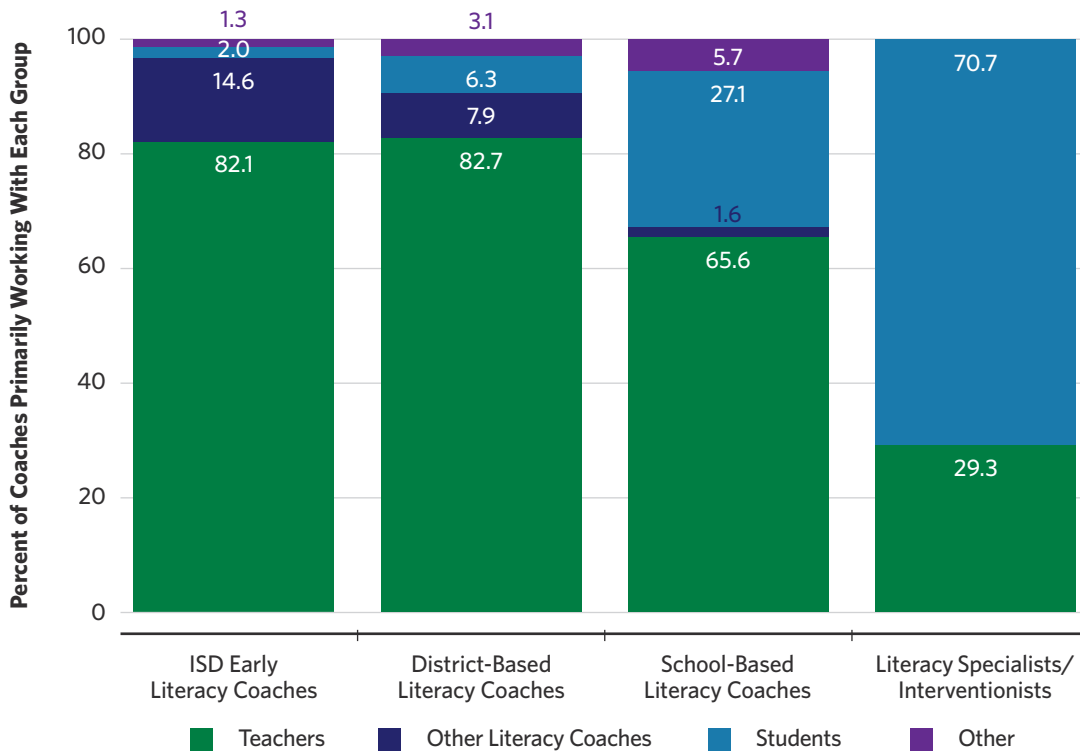
Michigan's literacy coaching landscape consists of several different types of coaching providers. Most recently, the state began funding literacy coaches at the ISD level as part of the Read by Grade Three Law.<sup>1</sup> Beginning in the 2016-17 school year, Michigan allocated \$3 million for ISD Early Literacy Coaches under section 35(a)4 of the State School Aid Act (MDE, 2020). The state has increased funding annually for these coaches. Since 2019-20, the state has allocated \$31.5 million per year for ISD Early Literacy Coaches, with each ISD eligible to receive up to \$112,500 per coach (MDE, 2022). According to the Read by Grade Three Law, ISD Early Literacy Coaches are to work with districts and educators within their ISD by providing one-on-one literacy coaching and other professional development to K-3 teachers.

Other literacy coaching providers have been part of Michigan's coaching landscape for much longer, as districts and schools have long hired literacy coaches with funds not allocated under the Read by Grade Three Law. We refer to district-based literacy coaches as those whom districts hire to support educators within that district (i.e., they may work in multiple schools across the district), and school-based literacy coaches as those hired to work with educators in a particular school. In addition, districts and schools may hire literacy specialists/interventionists to support literacy instruction.



Like ISD Early Literacy Coaches, district- and school-based literacy coaches work primarily with teachers (see Figure 1.1). However, literacy specialists/interventionists work primarily with students—likely because coaching is often not their primary responsibility. For this reason, we focus this report exclusively on ISD Early Literacy Coaches and district- and school-based literacy coaches.

**FIGURE 1.1. Populations Literacy Coaches Work With**



Note: Literacy coaches were asked, “In my role as [an ISD Early Literacy Coach, a district-based literacy coach, a school-based literacy coach, a literacy specialist/interventionist], I primarily work with \_\_\_\_\_. If you work with more than one of these groups, please select the group with which you spend the most time.” Source: 2021-22 EPIC Read by Grade Three Law survey of educators.

## PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

In the fall of 2019, the Education Policy Innovation Collaborative (EPIC) at Michigan State University, in collaboration with researchers from the University of Michigan, began a five-year evaluation of the implementation and efficacy of the Read by Grade Three Law (*Michigan Public Act 306, 2016*). To date, EPIC has produced two annual reports as part of this evaluation (see [Year One](#) and [Year Two](#) Reports; Strunk et al., 2021, 2022b) as well as shorter reports focused on key aspects of the Law's implementation and effects. One of these shorter reports focused on [ISD Early Literacy Coaches' initial implementation of the Law](#) during the 2019-20 school year (Cummings et al., 2021). That first coaching report found that ISD Early Literacy Coaches met required qualifications and fulfilled their responsibilities under the Law, but that access to these coaches was limited.

Because ISD Early Literacy Coaches are only one part of Michigan's literacy coaching landscape, we sought to understand how ISD Early Literacy Coaches compare to other literacy coaching providers, including district- and school-based literacy coaches. We also wanted to gain a more complete understanding of literacy coaching in Michigan, including who literacy coaches are, what they do, and the challenges they have faced—as well as their effect on Michigan educators and students.

This is important to understand because there is limited research on the implementation of K-3 literacy coaching in the context of statewide coaching initiatives like Michigan's Read by Grade Three Law. Further, the Michigan legislature may be making important changes to the Law as they consider how best to continue supporting improvements in early literacy across the state, especially in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Michigan Democrats recently gained control of the governorship and both chambers of the state legislature, and amending the Read by Grade Three Law is one of their top priorities (Mauriello, 2022). Indeed, Democratic State Senator Dayna Polehanki, who is the Chair of the Senate Committee on Education, introduced Senate Bill 12 in January 2023 (*Senate Bill 12, 2023*), with a similar bill, House Bill 4020, proposed in the House Committee on Education (*Michigan House Introduced Bill 4020, 2023*). On February 8, 2023, the full Senate passed Senate Bill 12. At the time of this writing, the bill is being considered in the full House of Representatives after passing out of the House Committee on Education. While the proposed legislation targets the Law's third-grade retention mandate, it is important to understand other facets of the Law—including literacy coaching—to provide evidence about their efficacy to inform future policy decisions.

This report aims to provide evidence about the characteristics of Michigan's literacy coaches, what they do, who they serve, and the challenges they face—both independent of and as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This information will inform policymakers in Michigan and nationally about literacy coaching as a form of professional development—both in the context of the Read by Grade Three Law and beyond.

## SECTION ONE NOTES

1. In Michigan, Intermediate School Districts (ISDs)/Regional Educational Service Agencies (RESAs) are educational entities that operate between the Michigan Department of Education and local education agencies, often serving the local education agencies within a given county. Local education agencies can receive a range of services through their ISD.



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Michigan's Literacy  
Coaching Landscape

# Section Two: Data and Methods

## Section Two:

# Data and Methods

This report examines four main questions about early literacy coaching in Michigan. Table 2.1 lists each research question and the report section we present our findings in. The remainder of this section outlines the data sources and methods we use to answer these research questions.

TABLE 2.1. Research Questions		
#	Question	Report Section
1	Who are Michigan's literacy coaches?	3
2	What do Michigan's literacy coaches do?	4
3	What challenges do Michigan's literacy coaches face, both independent from and as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?	5
4	How do Michigan educators perceive literacy coaches?	6

## DESCRIPTION OF DATA AND METHODS

This report is part of EPIC's larger study of the implementation and effects of Michigan's Read by Grade Three Law. Part of this larger study involves annually surveying Michigan teachers, principals, district superintendents, and literacy coaches about their implementation and perceptions of the Law. This report relies primarily on data collected from statewide literacy coach surveys administered in the spring of 2020, 2021, and 2022. We supplement these coach survey data with survey data from K-3 teachers, K-5 principals, and district superintendents collected in those same years to better understand educators' perceptions of literacy coaches. We also complement the survey data with data from coaching logs and interviews with ISD Early Literacy Coaches from the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years. These qualitative data provide further insight into ISD Early Literacy Coaches' implementation of the Law.

Table 2.2 provides an overview of each data source, and we describe each in more detail below.

TABLE 2.2. Overview of Data Sources			
Data	Outcomes/ Areas of Interest	Years	Subgroups
Statewide surveys of literacy coaches	Qualifications	2020, 2021	<b>Sub-analyses by:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coach type (i.e., ISD Early Literacy Coach, district-based literacy coach, school-based literacy coach)</li> </ul> <b>Sub-analyses by ISD characteristics (for ISD Early Literacy Coaches) or district characteristics (for other literacy coaches):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sector (i.e., traditional public or charter school)</li> <li>Size</li> <li>2019 ELA performance</li> <li>Proportion of economically disadvantaged students</li> <li>Proportion of non-White students</li> <li>Locale (i.e., suburban, urban, rural)</li> </ul>
	Supports received	2020, 2021, 2022	
	Number of teachers and other coaches to whom literacy coaching was provided	2020, 2021, 2022	
	Number of schools and districts in which literacy coaching was provided	2020, 2021, 2022	
	Length of literacy coaching cycle	2020, 2022	
	Frequency which literacy coaches meet with teachers	2020, 2022	
	Formats of literacy coaching	2020, 2022	
	Content emphasized in literacy coaching	2020, 2021, 2022	
	Hindrances to working as a literacy coach	2020, 2021, 2022	
How COVID-19 affected literacy coaching	2021		
Statewide surveys of teachers, principals, and superintendents	Perceptions of the effect of literacy coaching on teacher practice	2020, 2021, 2022	<b>Sub-analyses by district characteristics:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sector</li> <li>Size</li> <li>2019 ELA performance</li> <li>Proportion of economically disadvantaged students</li> <li>Proportion of non-White students</li> <li>Locale</li> </ul>
	Belief that ISD Early Literacy Coaches will increase student achievement	2020, 2022	
Background surveys from ISD Early Literacy Coaches	Training received	2020-2021	N/A
	Percent of time working with various populations	2021-2022	
	How teachers are selected for coaching	2020-2021, 2021-2022	
Weekly coaching surveys from ISD Early Literacy Coaches	Time spent on various coaching activities	2020-2021, 2021-2022	N/A
Interviews with ISD Early Literacy Coaches	Effect of COVID-19 pandemic on literacy coaching	2020-2021	N/A

## Statewide Surveys

### Survey Development and Refinement

EPIC first surveyed Michigan educators about the Read by Grade Three Law in spring 2020. We administered surveys to K-3 teachers, K-5 principals, district superintendents, and ISD Early Literacy Coaches.<sup>1</sup> To develop the survey instruments for each of these populations, we designed original survey items based on the Law and adapted questions from other surveys about literacy



coaching. We also worked with literacy experts and sought feedback from external stakeholders and policymakers, including from the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA) General Education Leadership Network (GELN) Early Literacy Task Force (ELTF). Between two and four educators from each target population also piloted the survey and participated in a cognitive interview to help us further refine the instruments.

In the 2021 and 2022 administrations, we modified the target population of the coaching survey to include other (non-ISD) literacy coaching providers—namely district- and school-based literacy coaches.<sup>2</sup> We included these additional providers because our spring 2020 survey analyses indicated that schools and districts rely on both ISD Early Literacy Coaches and other providers to support their teachers' literacy instruction. Further, these other coaching providers have supported literacy instruction throughout the state for longer than ISD Early Literacy Coaches—before the state passed the Read by Grade Three Law in 2016. Thus, understanding more about the full spectrum of literacy coaches will help paint a more complete picture of Michigan's literacy coaching landscape. For more detail on the development and refinement of the survey instruments, see EPIC's [Year One](#) and [Year Two](#) Reports of Michigan's Read by Grade Three Law (Strunk et al., 2021, 2022b).

Table 2.3 provides an overview of the questions we asked literacy coaches in each year of the survey. We asked most questions across all three years because we wanted to understand whether there were changes over time as well as across providers. Other questions we asked in only two of the three years because we wanted to be able to compare ISD Early Literacy Coaches to other literacy coaching providers (because we surveyed only ISD Early Literacy Coaches in spring 2020, we asked these questions again to obtain data from the other coaches) but did not anticipate changes over time. Last, we asked how the COVID-19 pandemic affected literacy coaching only in spring 2021.

<b>TABLE 2.3. Survey Questions Asked of Literacy Coaches Each Year</b>			
	<b>Spring 2020 (ISD Early Literacy Coaches Only)</b>	<b>Spring 2021 (All Literacy Coaching Providers)</b>	<b>Spring 2022 (All Literacy Coaching Providers)</b>
Training and supports received	X	X	X
Number of teachers and other literacy coaches to whom literacy coaches provided coaching	X	X	X
Number of schools and districts in which literacy coaches provided coaching	X	X	X
Content of literacy coaching (e.g., areas of literacy instruction, instructional practices)	X	X	X
Hindrances to working as a literacy coach	X	X	X
Qualifications (i.e., level and field of educational attainment, literacy-focused endorsements, prior experience)	X	X	
Length of typical coaching cycle	X		X
Frequency with which literacy coaches meet with teachers	X		X
Formats of literacy coaching	X		X
How the COVID-19 pandemic affected literacy coaching		X	

We supplement the literacy coach survey data with survey data from K-3 teachers, K-5 principals, and district superintendents to better understand educators' perceptions of the effect of literacy coaches. We do not have statewide data linking literacy coaches to the teachers they worked with, nor do we have historical data linking teachers to their students' literacy achievement scores. Even if we did, Michigan students do not begin taking the state standardized literacy assessment until 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, meaning we would be unable to examine K-2 assessment data. For these reasons, we are unable to directly measure the overall effect of literacy coaching on teachers' instruction and student achievement. However, each year, we surveyed K-3 teachers who reported receiving literacy coaching about the effect of that coaching on their literacy instruction. In spring 2020 and 2022, we also asked teachers, principals, and superintendents the extent to which they believe the ISD Early Literacy Coaches funded under the Read by Grade Three Law will be effective in improving student achievement.

### Survey Administration

After finalizing the survey instruments each year, we programmed them and conducted internal testing with EPIC staff members before launching the survey statewide. EPIC administered the annual surveys online during the following time periods:

- **2019-20 EPIC survey:** February 20 through June 30, 2020
- **2020-21 EPIC survey:** March 29 through June 18, 2021
- **2021-22 EPIC survey:** April 4 through June 17, 2022

We used multiple channels to invite eligible educators to participate, including direct emails to literacy coaches,<sup>3</sup> teachers,<sup>4</sup> principals, and district superintendents. We also promoted the survey through the EPIC website, Twitter, and via partnerships with several Michigan education associations, including the ELTF. More details about survey administration can be found in EPIC's [Year One](#) and [Year Two](#) reports of Michigan's Read by Grade Three Law (Strunk et al., 2021, 2022b).

### Estimated Target Population and Response Rates

Table 2.4 shows sample sizes and response rates for each group of educators. We base the estimated population of ISD Early Literacy Coaches on a contact list from the ELTF and the estimated population of other literacy coaching providers on personnel assignments in Michigan's administrative records.<sup>5</sup> The estimated population of K-3 teachers also comes from state administrative records pertaining to the employment status, assignment, and credentials of school personnel. We include all educators in a given school year who were actively employed in a teaching role in a traditional public school (TPS) or charter school, assigned to any of grades K-3, and held a valid teaching license or long-term substitute teaching permit. The estimated populations of K-5 principals and district superintendents are based on contact lists from the Educational Entity Master (EEM), a state database containing directory information about schools, school districts, and other educational entities in Michigan. For some charter schools and small districts, the same person is listed as both a school principal and a district superintendent; these individuals took the principal survey, and we count them in the principal population only. For schools without a contact with the title "principal," we include the "lead administrator" instead.<sup>6</sup>

<b>TABLE 2.4. Sample Sizes and Response Rates</b>									
	<b>Year 1 (Spring 2020)</b>			<b>Year 2 (Spring 2021)</b>			<b>Year 3 (Spring 2022)</b>		
	<b>Survey Sample</b>	<b>Target Population</b>	<b>Response Rate</b>	<b>Survey Sample</b>	<b>Target Population</b>	<b>Response Rate</b>	<b>Survey Sample</b>	<b>Target Population</b>	<b>Response Rate</b>
<b>Literacy coaches</b>	Only ISD Early Literacy Coaches were surveyed in Spring 2020.			582	1,152	51%	631	1,168	54%
<b>ISD Early Literacy Coaches</b>	133	151	88%	163	386	42%	164	428	38%
<b>Other literacy coaches</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	419	766	55%	467	740	63%
<b>K-3 teachers</b>	7,110	16,401	43%	5,811	19,633	30%	5,392	20,070	27%
<b>K-5 principals</b>	745	1,659	45%	417	1,959	21%	395	1,985	20%
<b>District superintendents</b>	192	546	35%	162	545	30%	89	545	16%

In spring 2020, when we administered the literacy coach survey only to ISD Early Literacy Coaches, 88% responded. In spring 2021 and 2022, this response rate declined markedly to 42% and then 38%. However, the number of eligible ISD Early Literacy Coaches (i.e., “Target Population”) increased from 151 in 2020 to 428 by 2022.<sup>7</sup> In other words, the response rate decreased primarily because the denominator increased—not because the number of ISD Early Literacy Coaches completing the survey decreased.<sup>8</sup> The demographic characteristics of the target populations of eligible ISD Early Literacy Coaches across the three years were largely similar, except that those who were in the population in spring 2020 were more likely to be hired within the past five years and work in ISDs with lower proportions of economically disadvantaged students relative to coaches in the response sample in spring 2021 and 2022.

Response rates also declined among teachers, principals, and superintendents between spring 2020 and spring 2022. We attribute these lower response rates to the challenges and time constraints educators faced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Generalizability of the Survey Data**

We compare the characteristics of the survey samples to their target populations to evaluate the generalizability of the survey responses to the overall population of Michigan literacy coaches, teachers, principals, and superintendents. Appendix A compares the characteristics of the educators who took the survey to those in the population in each year, while Appendix B compares the characteristics of the districts and ISDs which sample educators work in to districts across the state. The respondents look quite similar to the larger populations of Michigan educators. Across years, the educators who took the survey are slightly more likely than the target population to be female, hired within the past five years, and have an ELA/literacy/reading endorsement. They also more often come from small, charter, lower-performing districts and districts serving higher proportions of economically disadvantaged students.

Because the survey respondents look similar to the target population of Michigan educators, we report unweighted survey data throughout the report. However, we first compared the unweighted survey results to weighted survey results to ensure that the results were similar. We generated

these weights based on educators' age, gender, race/ethnicity, employment duration within their current districts (i.e., whether they were hired within the past five years), certifications and endorsements (i.e., whether they hold an ELA/literacy/reading endorsement), and the sector in which they work (i.e., TPS or charter school district).

### **Analytic Strategy**

We assess overall patterns in survey responses as well as differences in responses across subgroups. To examine overall patterns across responses by survey respondent type (i.e., teachers, principals, superintendents, and different literacy coaching providers), we calculate relative frequencies for each possible response to each survey item. We also link survey response data to district-level measures of the above-mentioned characteristics to examine how responses vary across districts and ISDs with different resources and student needs. The district and ISD subgroups are generated based on student assessment results from the spring of 2019 and student enrollment data from the 2019-20 school year.

For Likert-scaled survey items, we combine relative frequencies for the highest two categories (e.g., we combine "agree" with "strongly agree," "concerned" with "extremely concerned," etc.), and compare these combined proportions across district and ISD subgroups and across survey years where data are available over time. We use independent sample t-tests to determine the statistical significance of differences in relative frequencies of the top two Likert scale values for each item across populations or time periods and adjust p-values for multiple statistical tests using the Bonferroni correction. Differences we report in the text are statistically significant at a 0.05 significance level unless otherwise noted. If a result is statistically significant, this suggests that there is reason to doubt that the magnitude of the true relationship is zero.

We find few differences between district- and school-based literacy coaches in terms of their qualifications, the literacy coaching they provide, and the challenges they face. We therefore combine their results throughout the report, except when there are significant differences between them. When that is the case, we report findings about district- and school-based literacy coaches separately.

## **Observational Study of Literacy Coaching**

We augment these survey data with rich qualitative data from a subset of 12 ISD Early Literacy Coaches: five in 2020-21 and seven in 2021-22. In both years, EPIC first recruited coaches to participate in the study and the coaches then each selected four to six K-3 teachers in matched pairs by grade level, school district, and years of teaching experience. We randomly assigned half the teachers from each ISD to receive coaching and the other half to a comparison group. Comparison group teachers were eligible to participate in literacy professional development but could not receive one-on-one literacy coaching until the following school year.

Coach participants ranged in years of coaching experience from four years ( $n=3$ ) to 28 years ( $n=1$ ), with an average of 8.1 years. All coaches held a master's degree and additional subject matter specializations in early childhood ( $n=6$ ), reading ( $n=2$ ), or language arts ( $n=2$ ).

In both years, we collected background surveys from coaches at the beginning of the school year, surveyed them weekly about their work with teachers throughout the school year, and then interviewed them at the end of the school year.

### **ISD Early Literacy Coaches Background Survey**

We collected electronic background surveys in September 2020 and September 2021 from all participating ISD Early Literacy Coaches. The background surveys included demographic information, questions about coaches' education level and teaching certifications/endorsements, years of coaching experience, prior teaching or instructional coaching roles, and professional development experiences. The survey also asked ISD Early Literacy Coaches to report information about their typical coaching work, including how they select teachers to receive coaching, the percentage of time spent working with certain populations (e.g., students, teachers), and the percentage of time spent on specific coaching tasks (e.g., administrative duties, direct teacher coaching).

### **ISD Early Literacy Coaches Weekly Survey**

From early October to late May in both years, participating ISD Early Literacy Coaches received weekly surveys asking about their work with teachers. The weekly surveys included questions about the total time per week spent coaching, which modality (e.g. in-person, hybrid) coaches worked with teachers in, and which types of coaching practices (e.g., relationship/rapport building, one-on-one meetings) they engaged in. We distributed the weekly coaching surveys through Qualtrics every Monday for coaches to report activities from the previous week. Over the course of the 2020-21 school year, we collected a total of 290 weekly surveys from participating coaches, and 490 in 2021-22.

### **Interviews With ISD Early Literacy Coaches**

In May 2020 and May 2021, we conducted one-on-one interviews with participating ISD Early Literacy Coaches. During these interviews, we asked coaches how the COVID-19 pandemic affected their work with teachers (e.g., time spent coaching, selection of teachers). We conducted all interviews over Zoom and audio files were transcribed by a third party and vetted by team members for accuracy.

## **Integrated Qualitative and Quantitative Data**

The analyses presented in this report benefit from various data sources, including surveys from multiple groups of educators and coaching logs and interviews with a small number of ISD Early Literacy Coaches. The use of multiple data sources allows us to triangulate our findings and provide comprehensive insights into our research questions. This kind of mixed-methods framework is appropriate for longitudinal studies like ours that evaluate a policy's implementation and near- and longer-term outcomes (Nastasi et al., 2007).

## **SECTION TWO NOTES**

1. The full target population for the spring 2020 survey included K-8 teachers and principals, district superintendents, and ISD Early Literacy Coaches. However, because K-3 teachers and elementary (i.e., K-5 principals) are most directly affected by the Read by Grade Three Law, we limit our analyses in this report to those populations—as well as district superintendents and ISD Early Literacy Coaches.

## SECTION TWO NOTES (CONTINUED)

2. Two-hundred and two educators who took the literacy coach survey in spring 2021 previously completed the teacher survey in spring 2020. This may be because they transitioned into a literacy coaching role between spring 2020 and spring 2021, or because they split their time between teaching and coaching in both years and the literacy coaching survey, once available, was more relevant to them. Including district- and school-based literacy coaches in the literacy coach survey likely therefore both expanded the population and diverted some educators from the teacher survey to the literacy coach survey.
3. We worked with the ELTF to obtain contact information for all coaches funded at least in part through the 35a(4) ISD Early Literacy Coach Grant. This group was difficult to identify because there is no centralized database or reporting of individuals working in this role. Further, staffing transitions from hiring or resignations made it challenging to capture the group as a whole and contact them. As such, we relied on ISD leadership to report which staff members we should survey, to provide their contact information, and to remove those who were no longer in the role from our contact list.
4. Although there is no database of district-provided e-mail addresses for all teachers in the state, MDE provided teachers' personal e-mail addresses associated with their accounts in the Michigan Online Educator Certification System (MOECS). About 94 percent of educators who were actively employed in fall 2019 had an e-mail address listed in their MOECS account. The remaining six percent are educators whose teaching licenses do not require renewal through the MOECS system (i.e., these licenses are no longer issued but are still valid for educators who hold them). Although MOECS contains email addresses for the vast majority of educators, the usefulness of these email addresses is unclear as they may be out-of-date or personal emails that educators do not check on a regular basis.
5. For school- and district-based literacy coaches, we included school or district employees who were coded as "literacy coach" in their work assignment based on Michigan's staff administrative records. However, our previous analysis on ISD Early Literacy Coaches suggests that coaches were not necessarily labeled as "literacy coach" in the administrative data. Thus, we also included school or district employees who were coded as "curriculum specialists" or administrators in "curriculum and instruction" with an ELA-related teaching endorsement and who were funded to serve roles in "improvement of instruction" into the contact list of district- or school-level literacy coaches.
6. Each entity is required to designate a "lead administrator" whose title and contact information appears in the EEM; the lead administrator of a district is typically the superintendent and the lead administrator of a school is typically the principal. Entities have the option to include contact information for other key personnel in addition to the lead administrator but are not required to do so.
7. The ISD Early Literacy Coaches in the population in spring 2020 were largely similar to those in the populations in spring 2021 and 2022 with two exceptions. ISD Early Literacy Coaches in spring 2020 were more often hired within the past five years and more often from ISDs with lower proportions of economically disadvantaged students compared to those in the populations in spring 2021 and 2022.
8. While funding for ISD Early Literacy Coaches remained consistent over this period, the number of individuals serving as coaches may have increased because ISDs spread the funding across more people. In other words, they may have had more part-time coaches instead of full-time coaches.



Michigan's Literacy  
Coaching Landscape

# Section Three: Who Are Michigan's Literacy Coaches?

## Section Three:

# Who Are Michigan's Literacy Coaches?

Because they are funded under the Read by Grade Three Law, ISD Early Literacy Coaches must meet certain qualifications. Many of these qualifications are aligned with recommendations made in the “Essential Coaching Practices for Elementary Literacy” (ELTF, 2016a). Michigan's ELTF published these Coaching Essentials in 2016—the same year the state began funding ISD Early Literacy Coaches—after reviewing the existing research about the qualifications, education, and prior experience effective literacy coaches possess. Other literacy coaching providers (i.e., district- and school-based literacy coaches), who are funded by their local school district, are not subject to the Law's qualifications requirements, although the district or school in which they work may have its own requirements.

Table 3.1 compares the Read by Grade Three Law's requirements to the research-based recommendations made in the Coaching Essentials. The recommendations in the Coaching Essentials slightly exceed the requirements written into the Law in each category. First, the Law requires ISD Early Literacy Coaches to have a bachelor's degree and advanced coursework in literacy or professional development in evidence-based literacy instruction. Meanwhile, the Coaching Essentials recommend that coaches have a degree beyond an initial teacher preparation program (which is typically part of a bachelor's degree) and that coaches' advanced coursework result in a literacy-related endorsement (e.g., reading teacher, reading/literacy specialist). In terms of prior experience, both the Law and the Coaching Essentials state that literacy coaches should have successful classroom teaching experience, but the Coaching Essentials define successful



experience as “evidenced by positive student learning” (ELTF, 2016a) while the Law does not provide a definition. Last, the Coaching Essentials provide more specific details than the Law about the knowledge and skills literacy coaches ought to possess and use terminology that indicates a higher standard (e.g., “in-depth” knowledge in the Essentials vs. “sufficient” in the Law).

<b>TABLE 3.1. Literacy Coach Qualifications</b>		
	<b>Read by Grade Three Law Requirements<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Essential Coaching Practices for Elementary Literacy<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Education</b>	Bachelor’s degree	Beyond initial teacher preparation program
	Advanced coursework in literacy or professional development in evidence-based literacy instruction	Advanced coursework in literacy that results in an endorsement (e.g., reading teacher, reading/literacy specialist)
<b>Prior experience</b>	Successful classroom teaching experience	Successful classroom teaching experience as evidenced by positive student learning
<b>Knowledge and skills</b>	Sufficient knowledge of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence-based literacy research</li> <li>Content-area literacy instruction</li> <li>Data management</li> </ul>	In-depth knowledge of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading and writing processes and acquisition</li> <li>Research-informed instructional practices</li> <li>The purpose, selection, scoring, and use of assessments</li> </ul>
	Strong knowledge of working with adults	Specialized knowledge about adult learning principles
	Continually increase knowledge base in best practices in reading instruction and intervention	Continually update knowledge through professional reading; active participation in professional development workshops; and attendance at local, state, and national professional conferences

Sources: Michigan Public Act 306 (2016)<sup>1</sup>; ELTF (2016a).<sup>2</sup>

The fact that the Coaching Essentials’ recommendations exceed the Law’s requirements does not necessarily mean that the Law sets an insufficient standard for ISD Early Literacy Coaches. The ELTF developed the Coaching Essentials based on a thorough review of the research, and their goal was to identify all possible qualifications that high-quality literacy coaches possess. Meanwhile, policy is developed through a process of negotiation and compromise, and the Michigan lawmakers who wrote the Read by Grade Three Law sought to balance setting a high standard for literacy coaches with ensuring that the Law would not be so restrictive that too few educators were qualified for the position (see Cummings et al., [2023] for a more thorough account of the development of the Law).

In the remainder of this section, we compare the self-reported qualifications of Michigan literacy coaches to the Law’s requirements and the Coaching Essentials’ recommendations. Overall, we find that Michigan literacy coaches largely meet these qualifications and that there are few differences across different types of coaching providers. We do find one exception to this general pattern: ISD Early Literacy Coaches and coaches working in TPS districts are significantly more likely than district- and school-based literacy coaches and coaches working in charter school districts to receive many types of professional development and training. This suggests that there may be some inequities in the supports different kinds of literacy coaches receive with potential implications for teachers’ development and student outcomes.

# MICHIGAN LITERACY COACHES LARGELY MEET THE QUALIFICATIONS OUTLINED IN THE LAW AND RECOMMENDED BY RESEARCH

## Most Michigan Literacy Coaches Have Advanced Coursework and Teaching Endorsements, but Not Always in Literacy

Table 3.2 shows the percent of Michigan literacy coaches who have completed advanced degrees/coursework and who have endorsements added to their teaching license, as well as the field of their degree/coursework and endorsement.

Nearly all Michigan literacy coaches meet the Coaching Essentials' recommendation that their level of education exceed that of an initial teacher preparation program, as 95% of ISD Early Literacy Coaches and 99% of district- and school-based literacy coaches reported completing a graduate degree or post-BA university coursework. Most Michigan literacy coaches also meet the Coaching Essentials' recommendation that they have an endorsement added to their teaching license, with 80% of ISD Early Literacy Coaches and 83% of district- and school-based literacy coaches having one. However, these credentials are not always in literacy-related fields. Of the literacy coaches who reported completing an **advanced degree/coursework**, less than half said that this was in a literacy-related field. Literacy coaches were more likely to have **endorsements** in literacy-related fields, with 60% of ISD Early Literacy Coaches and 66% of district- and school-based literacy coaches indicating that this was the case.

TABLE 3.2. Literacy Coaches' Advanced Degrees/Coursework and Endorsements		
	ISD Early Literacy Coaches	District- or School-Based Literacy Coaches
<b>Advanced Degree/Coursework</b>		
Percent Who Completed an Advanced Degree/Coursework	94.9%	98.5%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Literacy or Related Field (e.g., Language and Literacy, Literacy/Reading Specialist)</li> </ul>	48.7%	40.1%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Non-Literacy Field (e.g., Curriculum and Teaching, Early Childhood)</li> </ul>	62.3%	73.3%
<b>Endorsements</b>		
Percent Who Have an Endorsement	80.3%	82.8%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Literacy or Related Field (e.g., English, Language Arts, Reading, Reading Specialist)</li> </ul>	59.7%	66.0%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Non-Literacy Field (e.g., Early Childhood, Teacher Leader, Administration)</li> </ul>	56.1%	50.3%

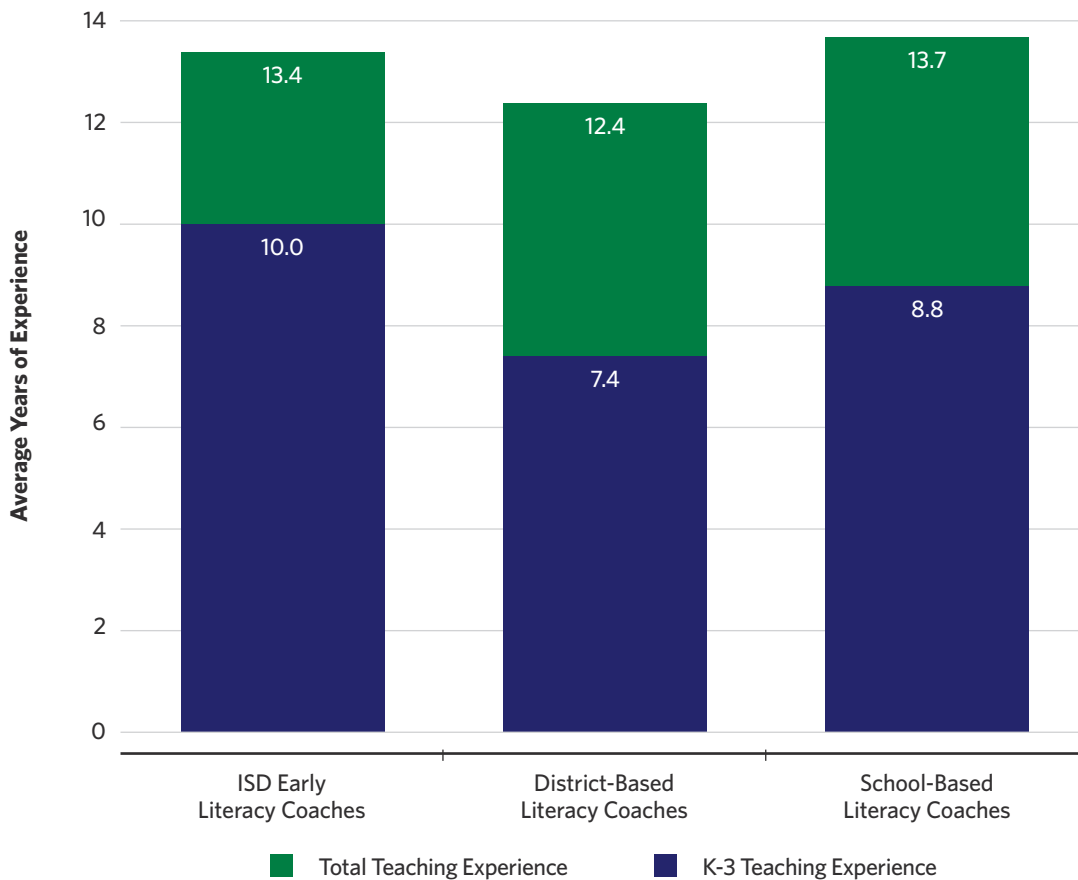
*Note: This table combines results from multiple survey questions. Literacy coaches were asked, "If you completed any coursework after your BA, which of the following best describes the focus of your graduate degree or post-BA university coursework?" and "Do you have any of the following endorsements added to your teaching license?" The "Percent Who Completed an Advanced Degree/Coursework" and "Percent Who Have an Endorsement" rows were calculated based on the percent of literacy coaches who selected any option in each question except "I did not complete a graduate degree or post-BA university coursework" or "I do not have an endorsement added to my teaching license," respectively. The "Literacy or Related Field" and "Non-Literacy Field" rows do not add to 100% because literacy coaches could select multiple options. Source: 2020-21 EPIC Read by Grade Three Law survey of educators.*

Overall, this suggests that Michigan literacy coaches of all types possess educational credentials that exceed the Read by Grade Three Law's requirements, but do not always meet the Coaching Essentials' recommendation that these credentials are in a literacy-related field.

## Michigan Literacy Coaches Have Substantial K-3 Teaching Experience

Michigan literacy coaches—regardless of type—average over a decade of classroom teaching experience. As shown in Figure 3.1, most of this experience is in grades K-3—the grade levels targeted by the Read by Grade Three Law. ISD Early Literacy Coaches report more years of experience teaching grades K-3 than district- and school-based literacy coaches, likely because the Law specifies that ISD Early Literacy Coaches are to work with K-3 teachers, while other types of literacy coaches may work with other grade levels (*Michigan Public Act 306, 2016*).

**FIGURE 3.1. Literacy Coaches' Teaching Experience**



*Note: Literacy coaches were asked, "We want to learn more about your experience prior to your current position. For how many years have you worked in each of the following settings?" Source: 2021-22 EPIC Read by Grade Three Law survey of educators.*

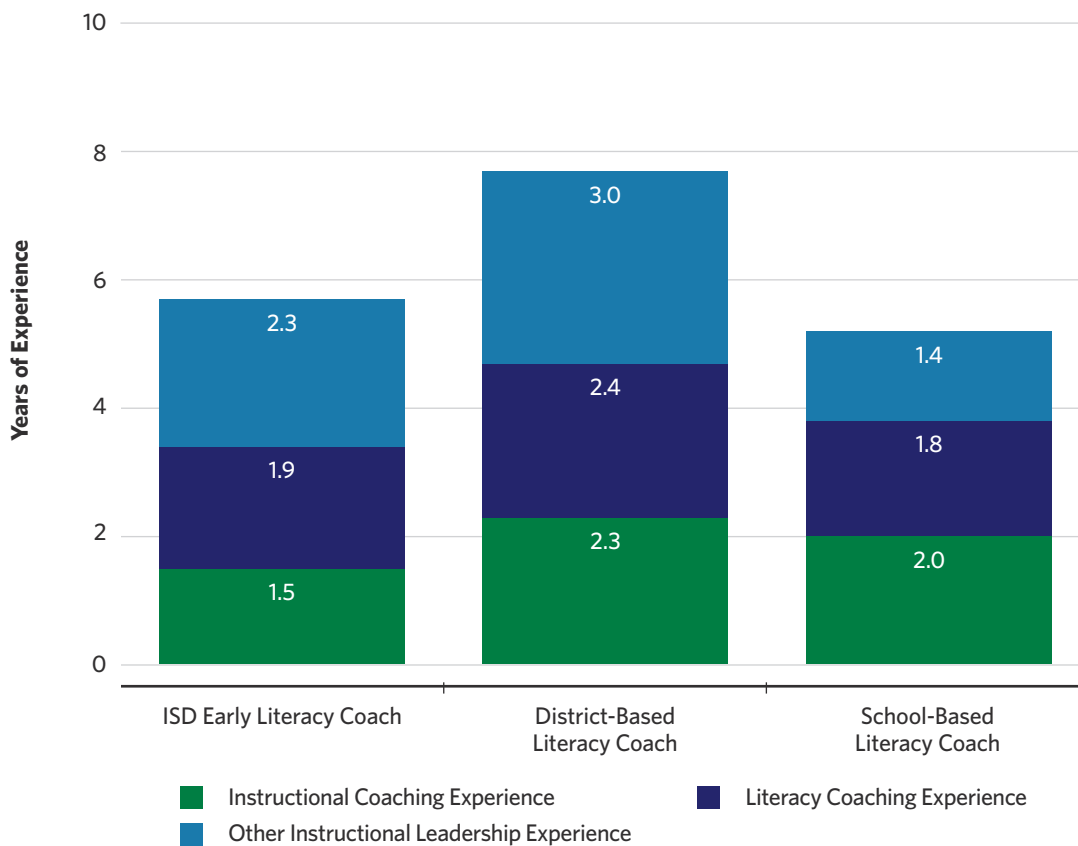
As mentioned above, the Coaching Essentials define successful teaching experience as "evidenced by positive student learning" (ELTF, 2016a). We do not have evidence of literacy coaches' "success" in promoting student learning given that the state's end-of-year standardized achievement tests, the M-STEP, do not test students in grades K-2, and the state does not collect historical assessment

data or other evidence of student learning linked to individual teachers. Nonetheless, these results suggest that Michigan’s literacy coaches have substantial experience teaching, and that the ISD Early Literacy Coaches funded under the Law to work with K-3 teachers have the most experience teaching these same grades.

## Michigan Literacy Coaches Average at Least Five Years of Instructional Coaching and Leadership Experience

The Read by Grade Three Law and Coaching Essentials also say that literacy coaches should have knowledge of working with adults. To understand the extent to which coaches met this requirement, we asked them about their prior experience working with adults in their coaching and other instructional leadership roles. Figure 3.2 shows that Michigan literacy coaches average more than five years of experience in these positions, including about two years as an instructional coach, two years as a literacy coach, and one to three years in other instructional leadership positions (e.g., department chair, ELA consultant/coordinator, master teacher).

**FIGURE 3.2. Literacy Coaches’ Instructional Coaching and Leadership Experience**



*Note: Literacy coaches were asked, “We want to learn more about your experience prior to your current position. For how many years have you worked in each of the following settings?” Source: 2021-22 EPIC Read by Grade Three Law survey of educators.*

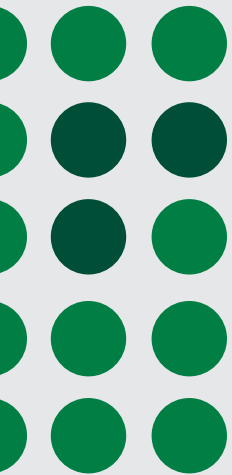
District-based literacy coaches have the most experience in these positions, though the only statistically significant difference between types of coaches is that district-based coaches have more experience than school-based coaches in “other instructional leadership positions.” We might expect district-based literacy coaches to have more experience than ISD Early Literacy Coaches because the funding for ISD Early Literacy Coaches is tied to grant funding under section 35a(4) of the State School Aid Act (Michigan Department of Education, 2022). Because this funding is not guaranteed to continue each year, some more experienced literacy coaches may decide to stay at the district level if they perceive their position there to be more secure.

## MICHIGAN LITERACY COACHES ARE DEMOGRAPHICALLY SIMILAR TO K-3 TEACHERS

Table 3.3 compares the demographic characteristics of Michigan literacy coaches to the population of K-3 teachers in the state. In general, literacy coaches are demographically similar to the K-3 teachers with whom they work. In comparison to the population of K-3 teachers in Michigan, ISD Early Literacy Coaches are slightly more likely to be female and slightly less likely to be non-White. However, they are more likely to be hired by their current district within the past five years, which we would expect because this position is new to the state since the passage of the Read by Grade Three Law in 2016. District- and school-based coaches, on the other hand, are less likely to be hired within the past five years. This also makes sense because district- and school-based literacy coaches likely moved from a teaching role into a literacy coaching role within their same district, meaning we would expect their overall tenure in the district to be longer.

<b>TABLE 3.3. Literacy Coaches' Demographic Characteristics Compared to K-3 Teachers</b>			
	<b>ISD Early Literacy Coaches</b>	<b>District- and School-Based Literacy Coaches</b>	<b>K-3 Teachers</b>
Female	99.2%	92.8%	94.5%
Hired Within Past 5 Years	46.0%	30.7%	38.0%
Black	4.2%	10.3%	6.9%
Hispanic	0.8%	1.2%	1.4%
Asian	0.0%	0.8%	0.8%
Other Non-White Ethnicity	1.1%	1.5%	1.4%

*Note: The “hired within past five years” group includes individuals whose hire dates within their current districts are on or after June 30, 2017. Source: Michigan administrative records.*



## Special Section A:

# What Supports Do Michigan Literacy Coaches Receive?

The Read by Grade Three Law and the Coaching Essentials highlight particular knowledge and skills that literacy coaches ought to possess (see Table 3.1). Ongoing professional development is a key mechanism by which literacy coaches acquire such knowledge and skills. Indeed, the Read by Grade Three Law and the Coaching Essentials both state that literacy coaches should continue to update their knowledge and skills through ongoing participation in professional development (ELTF, 2016a; Michigan Public Act 306, 2016). As such, this Special Section reviews the professional development supports that Michigan literacy coaches receive.

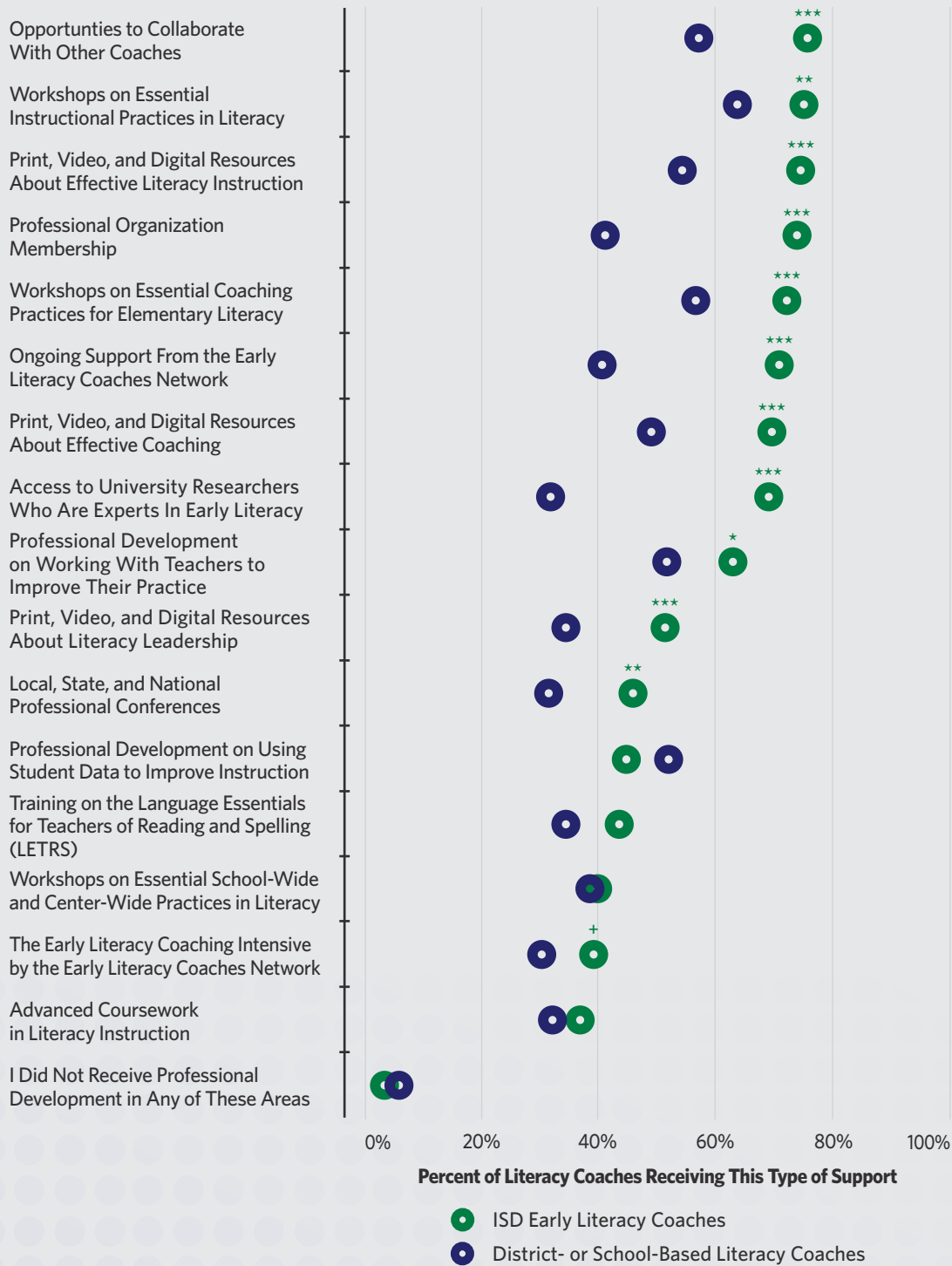
## SUPPORTS FOR LITERACY COACHES ARE UNEVENLY DISTRIBUTED

### **ISD Early Literacy Coaches Receive Significantly More Supports Than Other Literacy Coaching Providers**

The ISD Early Literacy Coaches funded under the Read by Grade Three Law report receiving significantly more supports than district- and school-based literacy coaches do (see Figure A.1). In particular, ISD Early Literacy Coaches reported receiving more support around the knowledge and skills specified by both the Law and Coaching Essentials. For instance, ISD Early Literacy Coaches are significantly more likely to receive support in evidence-based literacy research in the form of workshops on the Essential Instructional Practices in Literacy (ELTF, 2016b) and print, video, and digital resources about effective literacy instruction. They are also more likely to receive support in working with adults through workshops on the Coaching Essentials; print, video, and digital resources about effective coaching and literacy leadership; and professional development on working with teachers to improve their practice.

ISD Early Literacy Coaches are also more likely than district- and school-based literacy coaches to benefit from networks of support. ISD Early Literacy Coaches are significantly more likely than other types of coaches to attend the Early Literacy Coaching Intensive and to receive ongoing support from the Early Literacy Coaches Network, to be members of professional organizations and attend professional conferences, and to have access to university researchers who are experts in literacy.

FIGURE A.1. Supports Literacy Coaches Receive, by Coach Type



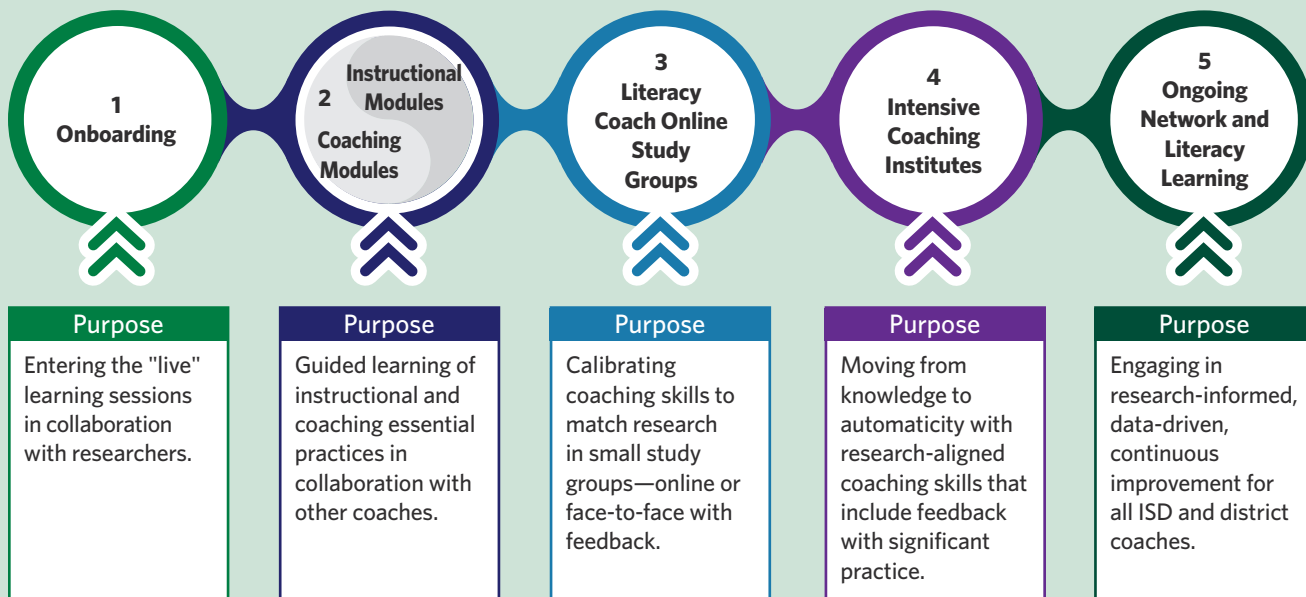
Note: Literacy coaches were asked, “Please indicate whether you have received each of the following types of support this school year, and whether you would like (more of) that type of support in the future.”  $p < 0.10$  +,  $p < 0.05$  \*,  $p < 0.01$  \*\*,  $p < 0.001$  \*\*\* indicates statistically significant differences between ISD and district- or school-based literacy coaches. Source: 2021-22 EPIC Read by Grade Three Law survey of educators.

## Callout A.1. Statewide Supports for ISD Early Literacy Coaches

While these disparities highlight potential inequities in the distribution of supports for literacy coaches, it is unsurprising that ISD Early Literacy Coaches receive more supports than district- and school-based literacy coaches because more supports are made available to them through state funding. This callout details the statewide supports in place for Michigan's ISD Early Literacy Coaches.

ISD Early Literacy Coaches have access to Michigan's statewide ISD Early Literacy Coaching Network. As of 2022, 428 coaches are members of this network. As members, they participate in a five-component learning trajectory (illustrated in Figure A2) that consists of onboarding, instructional and coaching modules, online study groups, intensive coaching institutes, and ongoing networking and literacy learning.

FIGURE A.2. PROFESSIONAL LEARNING TRAJECTORY FOR ISD EARLY LITERACY COACHING NETWORK



Source: ELTF (2022).



1. **Onboarding:** Onboarding for ISD Early Literacy Coaches includes a three-day kickoff in which coaches learn about the “Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy: Grades K-3” and the “Essential Coaching Practices for Elementary Literacy.” These kickoffs are provided once or twice every fall depending on the number of incoming ISD Early Literacy Coaches. Originally, the kickoffs were in-person, but have been virtual since 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. All ISD Early Literacy Coaches who volunteered to participate in our observational study reported participating in the three-day kickoff event.
2. **Instructional Modules & Coaching Modules:** ISD Early Literacy Coaches are also encouraged to complete online, self-paced modules that dive deeper into the “Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy: Grades K-3” and the “Essential Coaching Practices for Elementary Literacy.” These modules are also freely available to any literacy coach or teacher in Michigan, but the Network encourages ISD Early Literacy Coaches to complete these modules together with other coaches. All the ISD Early Literacy Coaches who volunteered to participate in our observational study reported completing the online modules.
3. **Literacy Coach Online Study Groups:** These optional study groups are for up to 20 ISD Early Literacy Coaches each year to engage in a year-long book study. Throughout the year, coaches focus on one text (decided based on the coaches’ needs) to deepen their understanding of how to incorporate the Literacy Essentials into literacy instructional practices so that they can better support the teachers they are coaching.
4. **Intensive Coaching Institutes:** The Intensive Coaching Institutes are another optional opportunity for ISD Early Literacy Coaches. This four-day training takes place in an elementary school and provides coaches the opportunity to receive individualized mentoring and support. Coaches are paired with a teacher within that school and observed as they coach the teacher, and then receive feedback about how to strengthen their coaching. The Intensives are designed for coaches with at least a year of coaching experience and are tailored to the local needs of the county in which the coach works. Ten out of 12 ISD Early Literacy Coaches who volunteered to participate in our observational study completed an Intensive Coaching Institute.
5. **Ongoing Network and Literacy Learning:** ISD Early Literacy Coaches also receive ongoing support from the Network, including quarterly all-day meetings and an advanced coaching institute in August of each year. These convenings provide further opportunities for professional development for coaches who are part of the Network. Eleven out of 12 ISD Early Literacy Coaches who volunteered to participate in our observational study reported participating in the quarterly all-day meetings, while 10 reported participating in the advanced coaching institute.

### Literacy Coaches in Charter Districts Receive Fewer Supports Than Those in TPS Districts

Literacy coaches working in charter school districts receive significantly less support than their counterparts working in TPS districts (see Figure A.3). Literacy coaches in charter districts are significantly less likely to attend workshops on the “Essential Instructional Practices in Literacy” and the “Essential Coaching Practices for Elementary Literacy.” They are also less likely to have opportunities to collaborate with other coaches, participate in the Early Literacy Coaching Intensive, receive ongoing support from the Early Literacy Coaches Network, be members of professional organizations, and attend professional conferences. This suggests that charter school coaches are either left out of or not engaging in many of the statewide supports for literacy coaches. Unfortunately given the limitations of available data, it is difficult to know whether charter school teachers are being excluded or are choosing not to participate in available supports.

FIGURE A.3. Supports Literacy Coaches Receive, by Sector



Note: Literacy coaches were asked, “Please indicate whether you have received each of the following types of support this school year, and whether you would like (more of) that type of support in the future.”  $p < 0.10$  +,  $p < 0.05$  \*,  $p < 0.01$  \*\*,  $p < 0.001$  \*\*\* indicates statistically significant differences between TPS and charter literacy coaches. Source: 2021-22 EPIC Read by Grade Three Law survey of educators.

## SUMMARY

Overall, the results in this section indicate that Michigan literacy coaches, including the ISD Early Literacy Coaches funded under the Read by Grade Three Law as well as other literacy coaching providers, are highly qualified. In fact, when it comes to their educational credentials and prior experience, Michigan literacy coaches often exceed the requirements outlined in the Law and possess qualifications more in line with the research-based Coaching Essentials.

At the same time, even highly qualified professionals benefit from development opportunities to enhance their knowledge and practice. However, we find disparities in access to supports for literacy coaches. Along with funding for ISD Early Literacy Coaches, a statewide professional learning network was established to support them. While these supports are likely valuable to ISD Early Literacy Coaches, this has led to significant gaps between the supports they receive compared to district- and school-based literacy coaches. Coaches in charter school districts also have limited access to many supports, particularly the type of networked supports facilitated by the Early Literacy Coaches Network. This uneven access to supports has implications for the knowledge and skills literacy coaches possess, and ultimately the coaching teachers receive and their students' literacy learning.



**04**



Michigan's Literacy  
Coaching Landscape

# **Section Four: What Do Michigan's Literacy Coaches Do?**

## Section Four:

# What Do Michigan's Literacy Coaches Do?

Just as the Read by Grade Three Law places requirements on the qualifications ISD Early Literacy Coaches should possess, it also outlines their job responsibilities and requirements for particular coaching activities and content (*Michigan Public Act 306, 2016*). Again, district- and school-based literacy coaches are not subject to these requirements; instead, the district or school in which they work may have its own requirements. Table 4.1 delineates the Read by Grade Three Law's requirements for ISD Early Literacy Coaches and compares them to the research-supported practices outlined in the Coaching Essentials (ELTF, 2016a).

The Read by Grade Three Law's requirements are largely supported by research. Both the Law and the Coaching Essentials state that literacy coaches should provide literacy coaching and other professional development to teachers, spend most of their time working directly with teachers, and serve in literacy leadership roles in the schools and districts in which they work. They also both discourage literacy coaches from being assigned administrative or managerial tasks that could detract from their coaching work. Further, both the Law and the Coaching Essentials say that literacy coaches should use modeling and emphasize specific areas of instruction in the literacy coaching they provide to teachers (e.g., phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, small-group instruction).

However, the Law and the Coaching Essentials differ in three key respects. First, the Read by Grade Three Law requires ISD Early Literacy Coaches to coach and mentor other literacy coaches. This is sometimes referred to as a "train-the-trainer" model in which one group of literacy coaches (in this case, ISD Early Literacy Coaches) receives training on effective coaching practices and then trains another group of literacy coaches (e.g., district- or school-based literacy coaches) on these practices, who then work directly with teachers (Pancucci, 2007). While most ISD Early Literacy Coaches work primarily with teachers, one goal of the Read by Grade Three Law is to broaden the reach of literacy coaching by having ISD Early Literacy Coaches train other coaches on the coaching practices they learn through the Coaching Network.

<b>TABLE 4.1. Literacy Coaching Requirements</b>	
<b>Read by Grade Three Law Requirements for ISD Early Literacy Coaches<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Essential Coaching Practices for Elementary Literacy<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Responsibilities of Literacy Coaches</b>	
<p>Provide literacy coaching and other professional development to teachers.</p> <p>Coach and mentor other literacy coaches.</p> <p>Prioritize time spent on teachers and activities that will have the greatest effect on student achievement, including coaching and mentoring in classrooms.</p> <p>Facilitate study groups.</p> <p>Lead and facilitate reading leadership teams.</p> <p>Literacy coaches <i>shall not</i> be asked to perform administrative functions or be assigned a regular classroom teaching assignment.</p>	<p>Provide literacy coaching and other professional development to teachers.</p> <p>Spend most of their time working directly with teachers.</p> <p>Create literate learning environments (e.g., physical arrangement, materials, group work, routines, motivational factors).</p> <p>Serve on school committees that focus on literacy-related and student achievement issues.</p> <p>Work with administrators and teachers to establish a school-wide literacy vision and literacy program.</p> <p>Attend grade-/team-level meetings.</p> <p>Serve as liaisons between the district and their schools by attending meetings/workshops and sharing information with stakeholders.</p> <p>Collaborate with special educators about literacy instruction for students who have special needs.</p> <p>Find specific resources/materials for teachers.</p> <p>Spend minimal time on managerial tasks and attending meetings not directly related to coaching work.</p>
<b>Coaching Activities</b>	
Model effective instructional practices.	<p>Employ a core set of coaching activities that include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ conferencing,</li> <li>▪ modeling,</li> <li>▪ observing, and</li> <li>▪ co-planning.</li> </ul>
<b>Content of Literacy Coaching</b>	
<p>Provide coaching to teachers in all the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the “five major reading components” (i.e., phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension),</li> <li>▪ administering and analyzing instructional assessments,</li> <li>▪ providing differentiated instruction and intervention,</li> <li>▪ using progress monitoring,</li> <li>▪ identifying and addressing “reading deficiencies,”</li> <li>▪ applying evidence-based reading strategies in other content areas, and</li> <li>▪ whole and small group literacy instruction.</li> </ul>	<p>Focus literacy coaching on instructional practices that foster literacy development (e.g., the “Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy: Grades K-3”)<sup>3</sup>. These essentials include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ literacy motivation and engagement,</li> <li>▪ read-alouds (to develop print concepts, word recognition, text structure, comprehension, vocabulary),</li> <li>▪ small group and one-on-one instruction (e.g., including practices to develop fluency, explicit instruction in word recognition, text structure, comprehension, writing),</li> <li>▪ phonological awareness,</li> <li>▪ letter-sound relationships (i.e., phonics),</li> <li>▪ writing instruction,</li> <li>▪ vocabulary and content knowledge,</li> <li>▪ abundant reading materials and opportunities,</li> <li>▪ ongoing progress monitoring, and</li> <li>▪ collaboration with families.</li> </ul> <p>Assist teachers in selecting, administering, and analyzing instructional assessments.</p> <p>Enhance teachers’ classroom literacy environments, use of research-informed instructional strategies, implementation of new literacy programs and strategies, and use of practices that align with state standards or curricular initiatives.</p>

Sources: Michigan Public Act 306 (2016)<sup>1</sup>; ELTF (2016a)<sup>2</sup>; ELTF (2016b).<sup>3</sup>

Second, the Coaching Essentials elaborate further on effective literacy coaching activities. While the Law only briefly states that ISD Early Literacy Coaches must “model” effective instructional practices, the Coaching Essentials say that effective literacy coaches model not only effective instructional practices, but also appropriate pacing, scaffolding, and materials; how to monitor students’ literacy progress; and how to administer and analyze assessments (ELTF, 2016a). The Coaching Essentials outline three additional effective literacy coaching activities: conferencing, observing, and co-planning. Coaches should hold conferences with teachers to discuss the purpose of coaching, analyze lessons modeled by the coach and taught by the teacher, examine texts and materials, evaluate the classroom literacy environment, and discuss assessment results (ELTF, 2016a). They should also observe teachers’ instructional practices and students’ literacy behaviors and engage in co-planning with teachers to build collaborative relationships and ensure effective instructional planning (ELTF, 2016a). While it is possible that the Read by Grade Three Law intends for “modeling effective instructional practices” to cover all of these activities, the Coaching Essentials provide much more detail on the activities effective literacy coaches engage in.

Finally, the Coaching Essentials recognize more than the “five major reading components” the Law identifies. In addition to creating the Coaching Essentials, the ELTF also reviewed the research surrounding K-3 literacy instruction and developed ten “Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy: Grades K-3” (ELTF, 2016b). These Essentials, listed in Table 4.1, acknowledge the importance of the “five major reading areas” discussed in the Law (i.e., phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension), and also emphasize that literacy coaches should encourage the use of particular instructional practices that support students’ development of these skills and knowledge, like read-alouds, writing instruction, and collaboration with families.

In the remainder of this section, we compare Michigan literacy coaches’ activities and the coaching they provide to what is required under the Read by Grade Three Law and recommended in the Coaching Essentials. Overall, Michigan literacy coaches, especially the ISD Early Literacy Coaches funded by the Read by Grade Three Law, spend their time in alignment with the Law’s requirements and the Coaching Essentials’ recommendations.

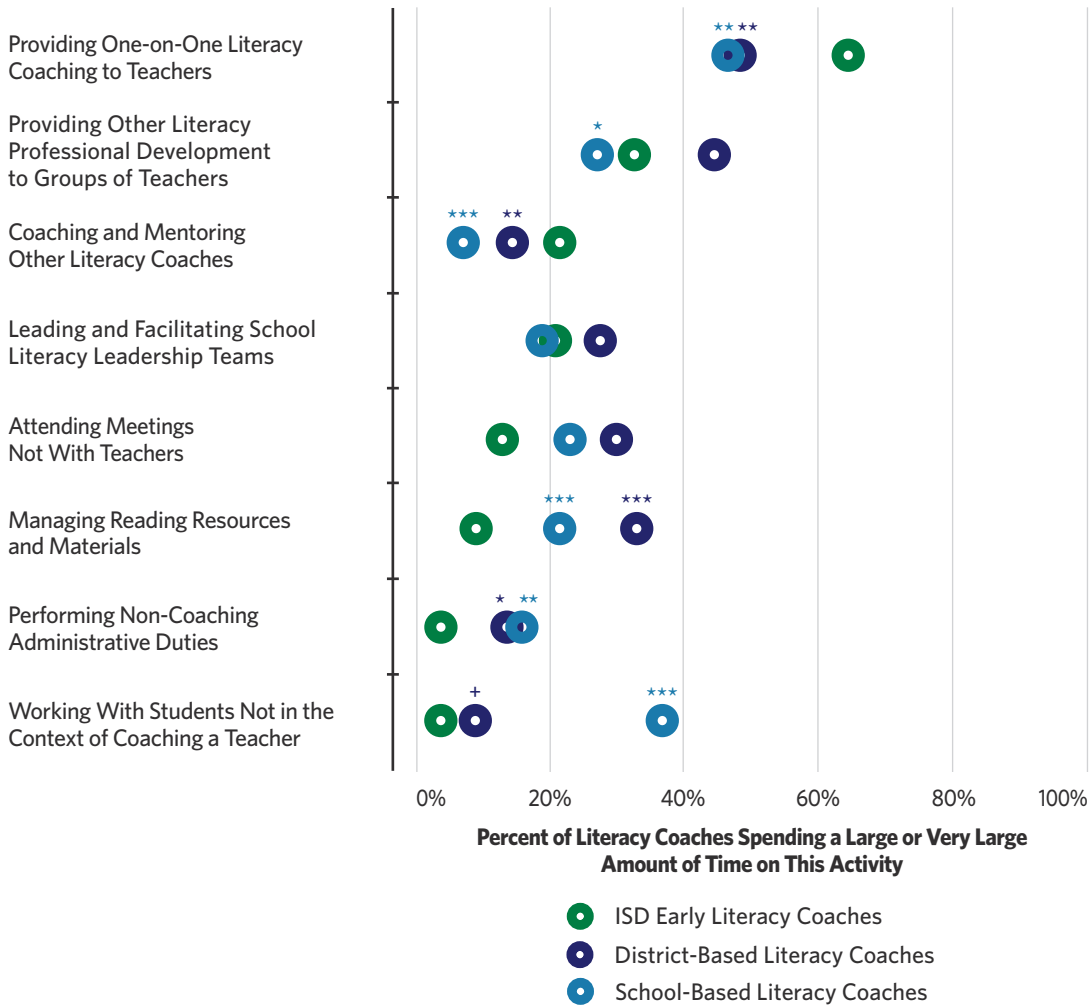
## MICHIGAN LITERACY COACHES SPEND MOST OF THEIR TIME WORKING DIRECTLY WITH TEACHERS

### ISD Early Literacy Coaches Are More Likely Than Other Literacy Coaches to Spend Their Time on Activities Specified in the Law and Coaching Essentials

Figure 4.1 illustrates the activities different types of literacy coaches spent the most time on in a typical week during the 2021-22 school year. The two activities literacy coaches of all types spend the most time on are providing one-on-one literacy coaching and other literacy professional development to teachers. This is in alignment with the Read by Grade Three Law and the Coaching Essentials, which both state that literacy coaches should prioritize time spent

working directly with teachers because this has been associated with higher student achievement (Bean et al., 2010; Elish-Piper & L’Allier, 2011). Meanwhile, Michigan literacy coaches spend less time performing non-coaching administrative duties (e.g., paperwork, ordering materials) and working with students not in the context of coaching a teacher. This is again in alignment with the Law and Coaching Essentials, with research showing that more time spent on these types of tasks lowers teachers’ perceptions of literacy coaches’ effectiveness (Bean et al., 2010; Matsumura et al., 2009).

**FIGURE 4.1. Literacy Coaches’ Activities in a Typical Week, by Coach Type**



Note: Literacy coaches were asked, “How much time do you spend on the following activities during a typical week.”  $p < 0.10$  +,  $p < 0.05$  \*,  $p < 0.01$  \*\*,  $p < 0.001$  \*\*\* indicates statistically significant differences between ISD and district- or school-based literacy coaches. Source: 2021-22 EPIC Read by Grade Three Law survey of educators.

Relative to other kinds of coaches, ISD Early Literacy Coaches are significantly more likely to spend large or very large amounts of time providing one-on-one literacy coaching and significantly less likely to spend large amounts of time attending meetings not with teachers, managing reading resources and materials, performing non-coaching administrative duties, and



working with students not in the context of coaching a teacher. While the Coaching Essentials do recommend that literacy coaches engage in some of these activities (e.g., finding specific resources/materials for teachers), the Law and the Coaching Essentials both state that literacy coaches should spend the most time working directly with teachers.

Data from our observational study of ISD Early Literacy Coaches provide further insight into how they spend their time. In 2021-22, we asked ISD Early Literacy Coaches to report the average percentage of time they spend working with certain populations in a typical week (see Table 4.2). Coaches reported spending about 60% of their time working with teachers, a quarter of their time working with other literacy coaches, and less time with other populations such as curriculum directors or leadership teams. This is largely in alignment with the survey data in Figure 4.1 and further indicates that ISD Early Literacy Coaches are spending their time in alignment with what the Law requires and the Coaching Essentials recommend.

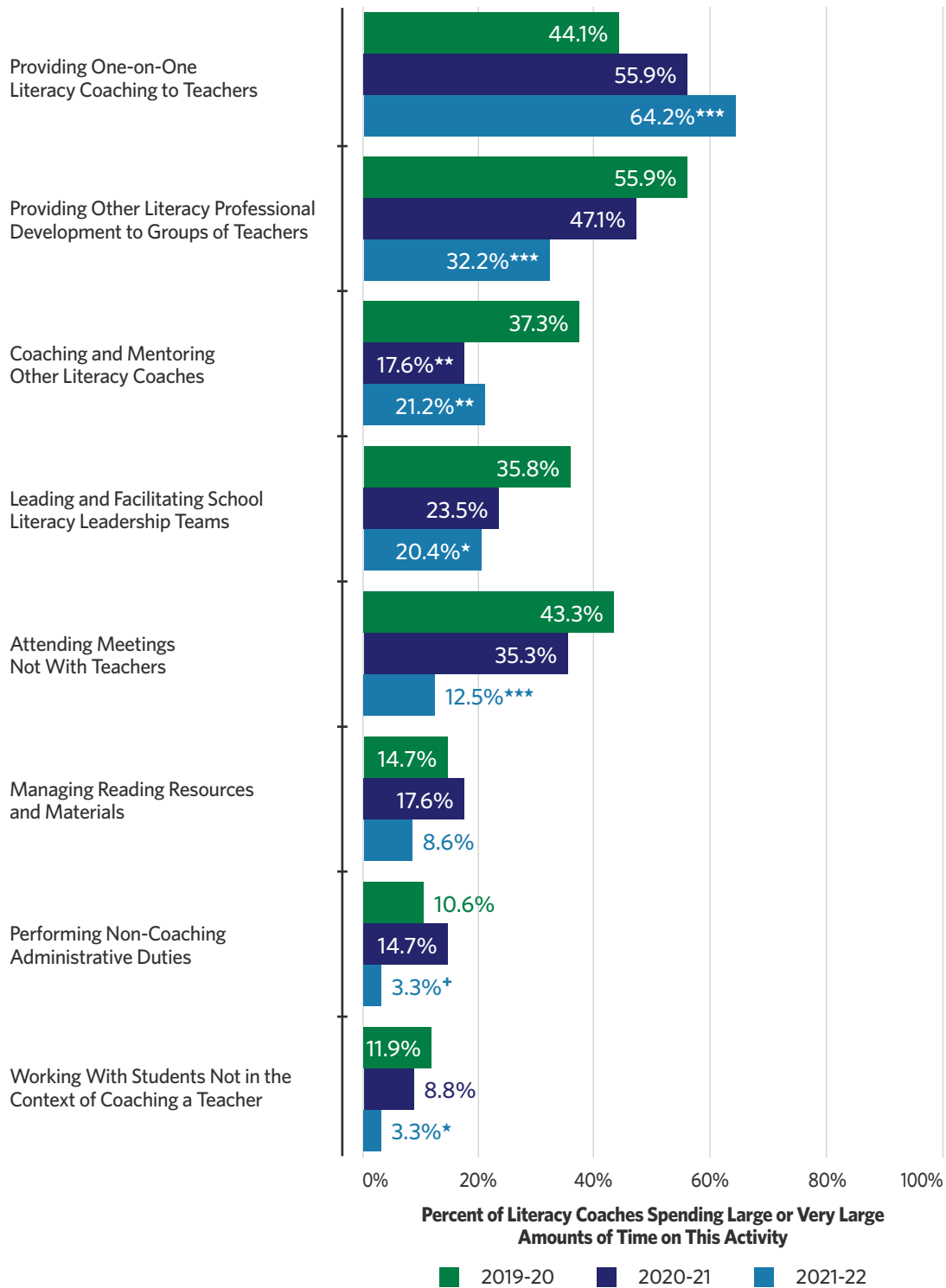
<b>TABLE 4.2. Percentage of Time ISD Early Literacy Coaches Spend Working With Different Populations</b>	
<b>Population</b>	<b>Percentage of Time</b>
Teachers	59.3%
Other literacy coaches	25.7%
Other populations (e.g., curriculum directors, leadership teams)	12.9%
Students	2.1%

Source: 2021-22 ISD Early Literacy Coaches Background Survey.

## ISD Early Literacy Coaches Increased the Amount of Time They Spent Coaching Teachers Over Time

ISD Early Literacy Coaches have not always spent their time in such tight accordance with the Law and Coaching Essentials. Figure 4.2 illustrates the proportion of ISD Early Literacy Coaches who spent large or very large amounts of time on various activities each year from 2019-20 through 2021-22. Compared to 2019-20, ISD Early Literacy Coaches were significantly more likely by 2021-22 to spend large amounts of time providing one-on-one literacy coaching to teachers and significantly less likely to spend time attending meetings not with teachers, performing non-coaching administrative duties, and working with students not in the context of coaching a teacher. In other words, they were increasingly likely to spend time on the activities the Law and the Essentials emphasize and less likely to spend time on other activities. This may be because there were more ISD Early Literacy Coaches with each subsequent year, allowing them to focus more on the activities the Law and the Essentials outline because they weren't spread as thin. Or it may be because systems and processes were put into place over time that allowed ISD Early Literacy Coaches to focus more on coaching and less on administrative tasks.

**FIGURE 4.2. ISD Early Literacy Coaches' Activities in a Typical Week, by Year**



Note: Literacy coaches were asked, "How much time do you spend on the following activities during a typical week in your role as an ISD Early Literacy Coach?"  $p < 0.10$  +,  $p < 0.05$  \*,  $p < 0.01$  \*\*,  $p < 0.001$  \*\*\* indicates statistically significant differences between years, with 2019-20 serving as the reference group. Sources: 2019-20, 2020-21, and 2021-22 EPIC Read by Grade Three Law surveys of educators.

## MICHIGAN LITERACY COACHES— ESPECIALLY ISD EARLY LITERACY COACHES— ARE SPREAD ACROSS MANY EDUCATORS AND BUILDINGS

While the Read by Grade Three Law and Coaching Essentials state that literacy coaches should spend most of their time working directly with teachers, neither specifies an ideal number of teachers with whom individual coaches should work in a specified period of time. Nor does the Law state how many other literacy coaches ISD Early Literacy Coaches should coach or mentor, or the number of schools or districts they should work in. This may be because there is relatively little research that suggests an ideal number of educators literacy coaches can work effectively with, and there are no studies to date that we know of that have randomly assigned literacy coaches to different coach-teacher ratios to determine the answer. However, one study by Elish-Piper and L'Allier (2011) finds stronger effects of literacy coaching on student achievement growth when coaches worked with 14 teachers, suggesting that 14 teachers or fewer may be an ideal number. In what follows, we examine Michigan literacy coaches' coaching load, using 14 as an approximate benchmark for an "ideal" load. However, given that this is the only study providing such an estimate, we also discuss implications of working with a large number of educators and across multiple buildings more generally.

Table 4.3 shows the mean and standard deviation of the number of teachers, coaches, schools, and districts different types of Michigan literacy coaches provide literacy coaching to. ISD Early Literacy Coaches and district-based literacy coaches, on average, provide literacy coaching to significantly more teachers (15) than school-based literacy coaches (eight). ISD Early Literacy Coaches also provide literacy coaching to the most literacy coaches (three relative to two for district-based literacy coaches and just one for school-based coaches) and in the most districts, which is in alignment with the Read by Grade Three Law's requirements that they work with other coaches and in multiple districts within their ISD. However, the standard deviations for these estimates are large, meaning there is wide variation in the number of educators and buildings Michigan literacy coaches work in.

However, the fact that ISD Early Literacy Coaches work with more educators does not necessarily mean that they are more effective. Adding together the number of teachers and other literacy coaches, ISD Early Literacy Coaches and district-based coaches are on average providing literacy coaching to about 18 educators—exceeding the 14 that the Elish-Piper and L'Allier (2011) study recommends. Further, these educators are spread across multiple schools, and, in the case of ISD Early Literacy Coaches, multiple districts. This suggests that Michigan literacy coaches may be spread too thin.

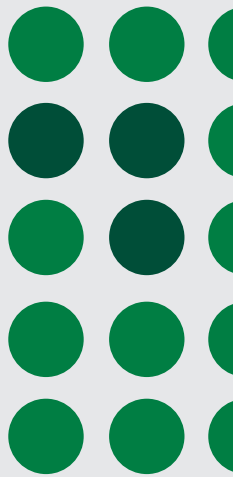
At the same time, survey data from K-3 teachers indicates that many teachers are not receiving literacy coaching, with just a third saying they received coaching in the 2021-22 school year from an ISD Early Literacy Coach or a district- or school-based literacy coach. Thus, while Michigan's literacy coaches work with a large number of educators, they are still unable to reach most of the K-3 teachers in the state.

**TABLE 4.3. Number of Teachers, Coaches, Schools, and Districts to Which Literacy Coaches Provide Coaching**

	Type of Literacy Coach		
	ISD Early Literacy Coaches	District-Based Literacy Coaches	School-Based Literacy Coaches
Teachers	15.4 (13.0)	15.5 (13.5)	8.0*** (5.8)
Other literacy coaches	3.1 (8.5)	2.2 (6.1)	0.9** (5.8)
Schools	3.7 (3.0)	4.4 (4.0)	1.1*** (0.5)
Districts	2.4 (1.8)	1.0*** (0.7)	0.9*** (0.8)

*Note: This table combines results from multiple survey questions. Literacy coaches were asked, “Since the beginning of the school year, to how many teachers and other literacy coaches have you provided each of the following services,” and “Since the beginning of the school year, in how many schools and districts have you provided one-on-one literacy coaching for teachers?” This table shows coaches’ mean responses with standard deviations in parentheses.  $p < 0.10$  +,  $p < 0.05$  \*,  $p < 0.01$  \*\*,  $p < 0.001$  \*\*\* indicates statistically significant differences between ISD and district- or school-based literacy coaches. Source: 2021-22 EPIC Read by Grade Three Law survey of educators.*

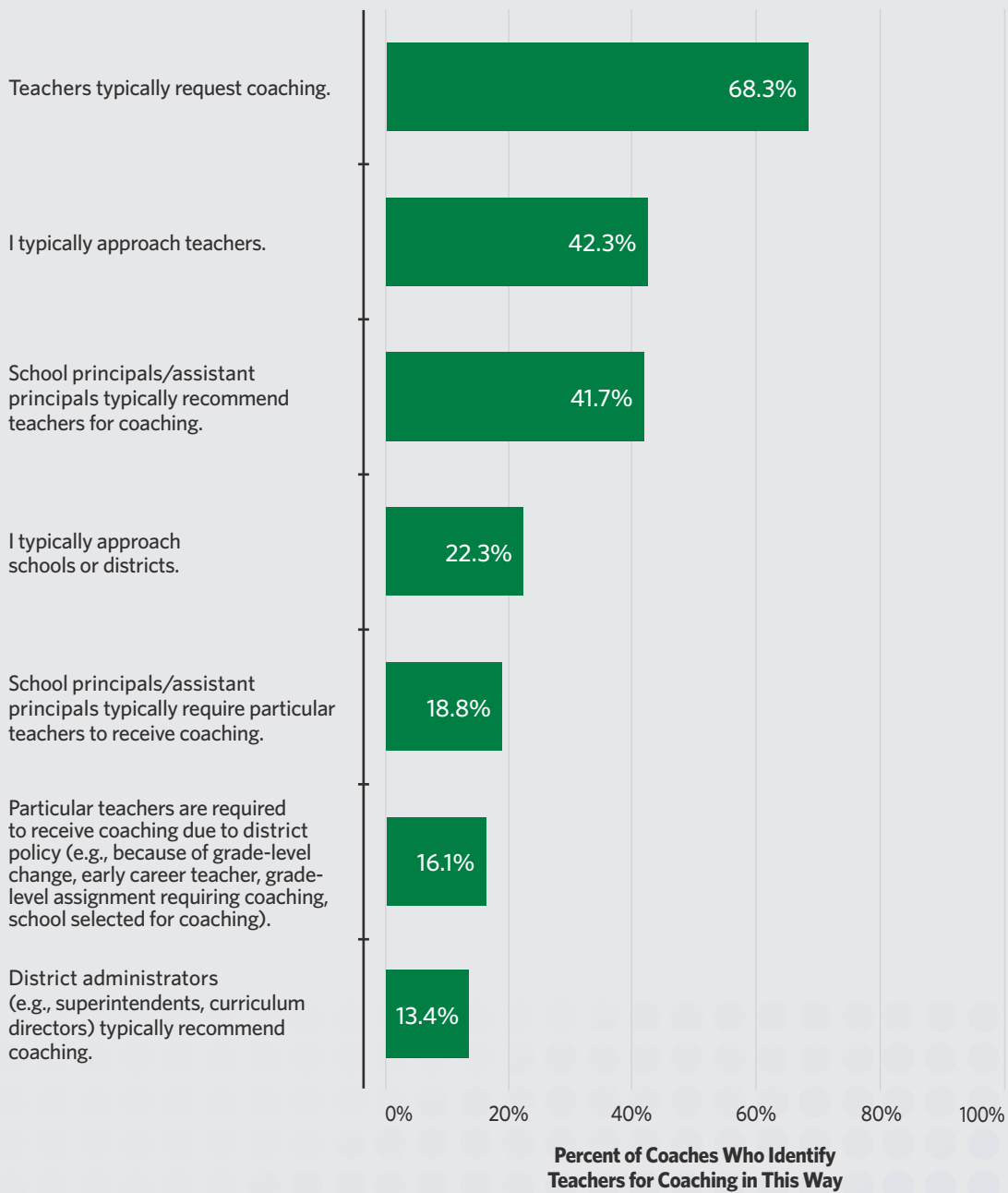
## Special Section B: How Do ISD Early Literacy Coaches Select Teachers for Coaching?



Neither the Read by Grade Three Law nor the Coaching Essentials provide much detail regarding how teachers should be selected for literacy coaching. The Law only says that ISD Early Literacy Coaches should prioritize “those teachers, activities, and roles that will have the greatest impact on pupil achievement.” However, it does not specify whether this refers to new teachers, low-performing teachers, teachers who work with low-performing students, or some other group of teachers.

In our spring 2020 survey, we asked ISD Early Literacy Coaches how they typically identify teachers for literacy coaching. Figure B.1 shows that most often, teachers request literacy coaching. However, this may not be the most effective way to select teachers for coaching if the teachers who are most likely to request literacy coaching are not the same as those who could most benefit from it. At the same time, the teachers who request coaching are likely more open to working with literacy coaches and receiving feedback on their literacy instruction. This receptiveness may facilitate a more positive working relationship between the teacher and the coach and make it more likely that the teacher implements the strategies the coach recommends.

**FIGURE B.1. How ISD Early Literacy Coaches Select Teachers for Coaching, Statewide Survey Data**



*Note: ISD Early Literacy Coaches were asked, "How are teachers typically identified for one-on-one literacy coaching?" Source: 2019-20 EPIC Read by Grade Three Law survey of educators.*

Data from our observational study provides further insight into how ISD Early Literacy Coaches identify teachers for literacy coaching. In our background surveys that we administer at the beginning of each school year, we ask coaches to report all the methods they typically use to select teachers to receive coaching. Coaches could select more than one option in Table B.1, reflecting the myriad ways they might identify teachers for coaching throughout the school year.

In both 2020-21 and 2021-22, the ISD Early Literacy Coaches in our observational study most often reported that teachers request coaching, in alignment with our statewide survey data reported above. However, the coaches in our observational study were less likely than coaches overall in the state to report that they approach teachers for coaching and were more likely to say that school principals or assistant principals recommend teachers for coaching. In both data sources, rarely are specific teachers *required* to receive literacy coaching or is the district involved in identifying teachers for coaching.

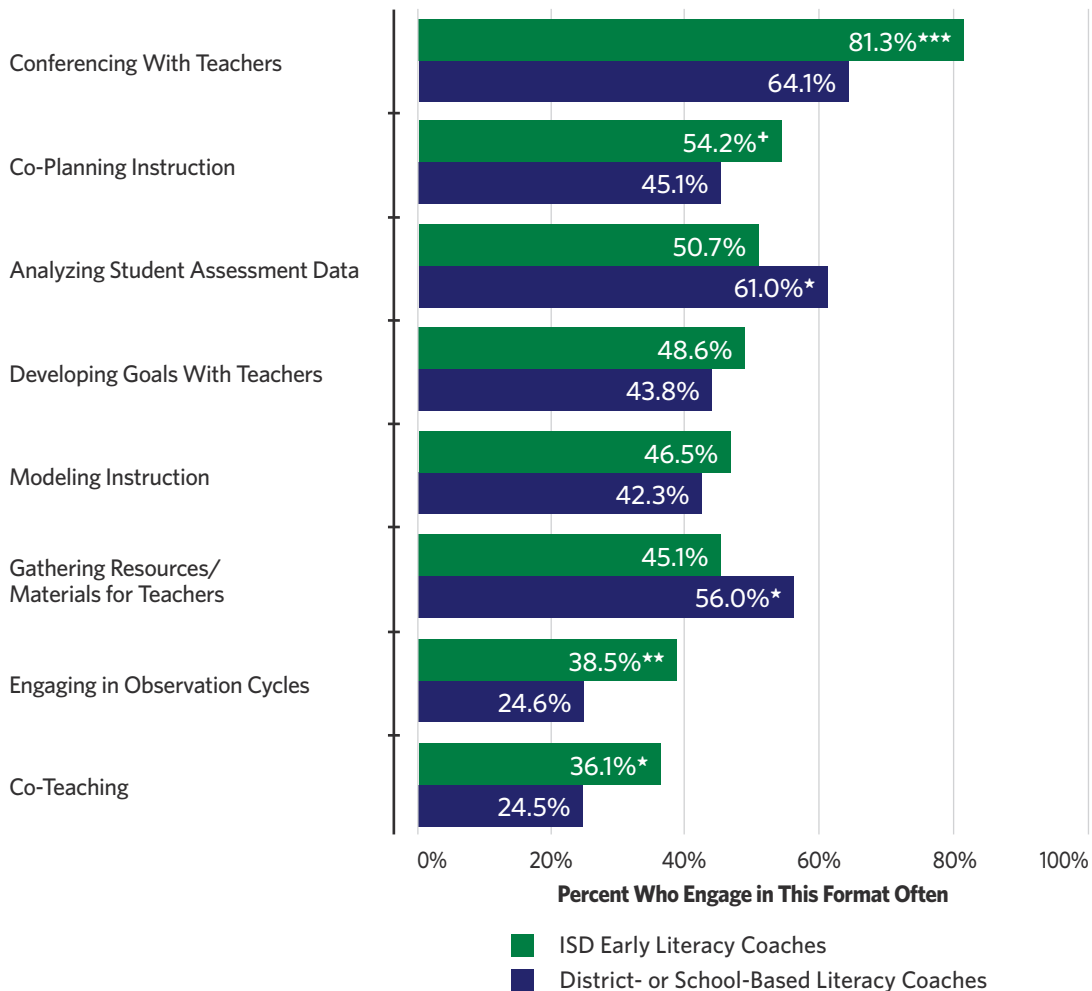
<b>TABLE B.1. How ISD Early Literacy Coaches Select Teachers for Coaching, Observational Study Data</b>		
	<b>Number of Coaches, 2020-21 (N=5)</b>	<b>Number of Coaches, 2021-22 (N=7)</b>
Teachers request coaching	3	6
School principals/assistant principals <i>recommend</i> teachers for coaching	3	4
School principals/assistant principals <i>require</i> certain teachers to receive coaching	0	1
District administrators recommend teachers for coaching	1	1
I approach teachers	1	0

Source: 2020-21 and 2021-22 ISD Early Literacy Coaches Background Survey.

## ISD EARLY LITERACY COACHES ARE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE LIKELY THAN OTHER TYPES OF LITERACY COACHES TO ENGAGE IN EVIDENCE-BASED LITERACY COACHING ACTIVITIES

Figure 4.3 shows the percentage of literacy coaches who reported that they often engaged in various literacy coaching activities. ISD Early Literacy Coaches are more likely than district- and school-based literacy coaches to incorporate all the activities recommended in the Coaching Essentials, including being significantly more likely to conference with teachers, co-plan instruction, and engage in observation cycles. However, less than half of ISD Early Literacy Coaches report that they often engage in modeling or observation cycles with teachers, even though modeling is the Read by Grade Three Law’s only requirement for ISD Early Literacy Coaches. Nonetheless, the fact that ISD Early Literacy Coaches engage in each of these activities more often than their district- and school-based counterparts suggests that they are incorporating the Coaching Essentials into their work with teachers.

**FIGURE 4.3. Literacy Coaching Activities**





*Note: Literacy coaches were asked, "Considering all the one-on-one literacy coaching sessions you have had with teachers this year, how frequently have you provided literacy coaching to teachers using the following formats?"  $p < 0.10$  +,  $p < 0.05$  \*,  $p < 0.01$  \*\*,  $p < 0.001$  \*\*\* indicates statistically significant differences between ISD and district- or school-based literacy coaches. Source: 2021-22 EPIC Read by Grade Three Law survey of educators.*

Data from our observational study provides insight into the amount of time ISD Early Literacy Coaches engage in these activities in a typical week with each teacher they coach. In our weekly coaching surveys, we asked ISD Early Literacy Coaches to report the number of minutes per week they spent engaging in certain activities with the teachers they coached. In 2020-21, coaches reported spending an average of 25.2 minutes per week with each teacher observing, modeling, or co-teaching, and 21.1 minutes per week meeting one-on-one with each teacher. In 2021-22, coaches reported spending an average of 21.7 minutes per week with each teacher observing, modeling, or co-teaching and 11.7 minutes per week meeting one-on-one with each teacher. Because we do not have data from our observational study on the number of teachers each coach worked with at the time, we cannot determine how many total hours per week they spent on each of these activities.

## MICHIGAN LITERACY COACHES EMPHASIZE EVIDENCE-BASED AREAS OF LITERACY INSTRUCTION IN THE COACHING THEY PROVIDE TO TEACHERS

Figure 4.4 shows the percentage of literacy coaches who emphasize various areas of literacy instruction to a moderate or great extent in the coaching they provide to teachers. Overall, most Michigan literacy coaches (more than 50% of all types of coaches) incorporate the areas of literacy instruction emphasized in the Law and the Coaching Essentials. However, there were some exceptions to this trend. First, the Read by Grade Three Law and the Coaching Essentials both say that literacy coaches should emphasize vocabulary, building content knowledge, and administering assessments, yet less than 50% of ISD Early Literacy Coaches emphasize each of these areas in the literacy coaching they provide to teachers. The Coaching Essentials also recommend that literacy coaches provide guidance implementing the school's or district's literacy curriculum, text genre/text structure instruction, and collaborating with families around literacy—also areas smaller percentages of literacy coaches reportedly emphasized.

There are inevitably tradeoffs in what coaches choose to emphasize given that they cannot stress every area of literacy instruction. The fact that coaches emphasize some areas of instruction mentioned in the Law and the Coaching Essentials less often than others is therefore not on its own a cause for concern, but rather may reflect time constraints or decisions about priorities based on teachers' needs. Indeed, teachers' survey responses made clear that the areas in which they most often wanted support were aligned with the areas literacy coaches most often reported emphasizing. These included assistance with providing differentiated instruction, addressing students' literacy needs, and the "Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy: Grades K-3."

**FIGURE 4.4. Content of Literacy Coaching**



*Note: This figure combines results from two survey questions. Literacy coaches 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," and, "Considering all the one-on-one 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?"  $p < 0.10$  +,  $p < 0.05$  \*,  $p < 0.01$  \*\*,  $p < 0.001$  \*\*\* indicates statistically significant differences between ISD and district- or school-based literacy coaches. Source: 2021-22 EPIC Read by Grade Three Law survey of educators.*

## SUMMARY

Michigan literacy coaches—especially the ISD Early Literacy Coaches funded by the Read by Grade Three Law—spend their time largely in alignment with the Law and with the Coaching Essentials. While all types of literacy coaches emphasize most of the areas of instruction identified in the Law and the Coaching Essentials, ISD Early Literacy Coaches are especially likely to spend their time engaging in one-on-one literacy coaching with teachers. They also provide coaching to more educators and in more schools and districts compared to other types of literacy coaches and are more likely to engage in the literacy coaching activities outlined in the Law and in the Coaching Essentials. At the same time, literacy coaches are asked to take on a lot and only have so much time in a given week, meaning they must make trade-offs when it comes to the activities they engage in and the areas of literacy instruction they emphasize.



**05**



Michigan's Literacy  
Coaching Landscape

**Section Five:  
What Challenges  
Do Michigan's  
Literacy Coaches  
Face?**

## Section Five:

# What Challenges Do Michigan's Literacy Coaches Face?

In addition to understanding who Michigan's literacy coaches are and what they do, it is also important to understand any challenges they face and whether there are differences in these challenges across different literacy coaching providers. The Read by Grade Three Law assumes that coaches have sufficient time, resources, and support to fulfill the requirements listed in previous sections of this report. This section examines the challenges — unique and otherwise — that different types of Michigan literacy coaches face.

## TIME IS A MAJOR CHALLENGE FOR LITERACY COACHES

Michigan literacy coaches report facing multiple time-related challenges in their work, as evidenced in Figure 5.1. Indeed, the greatest challenge among all types of literacy coaches was insufficient time for teachers to work with them during the school day.

We expect Michigan literacy coaches to face substantial time constraints. As detailed in Section Four, literacy coaches take on several responsibilities and spread their time across many educators (about 18 for ISD- and district-based literacy coaches) and multiple buildings.

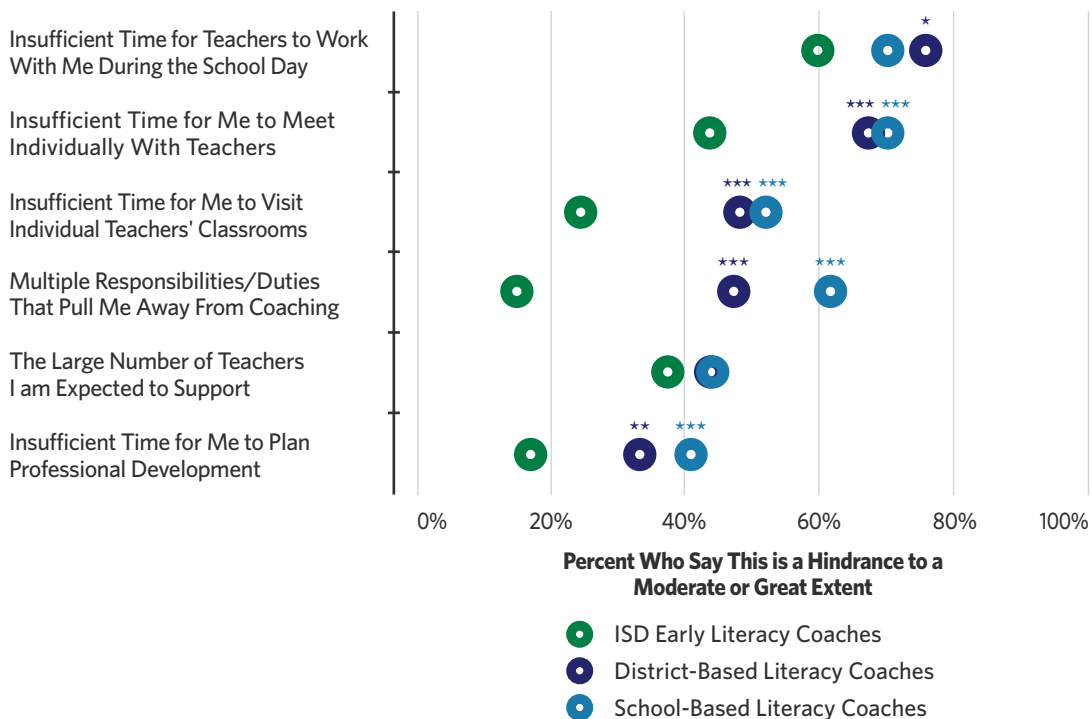
Time constraints have been widely documented in the extant literature on instructional coaching (e.g., Marsh et al., 2008, 2012; McKenna & Walpole, 2008; Toll, 2018). For instance, Marsh and colleagues examine Florida's statewide literacy coaching program (on which Michigan's model is based) and find that time is the biggest challenge facing literacy coaches, particularly as it pertains to getting into classrooms to plan, meet with, and observe teachers (Marsh et al., 2008, 2012).

However, these time constraints were not experienced uniformly across different literacy coaching providers. Interestingly, district- and school-based literacy coaches reported facing significantly more time-related challenges than ISD Early Literacy Coaches. This likely results from the discrepancy in the supports provided to coaches (highlighted in Special Section A). In particular, a majority of district- and school-based coaches reported challenges with insufficient time to work and meet with teachers and visit their classrooms, and with other responsibilities that pulled

them away from coaching, whereas significantly fewer ISD Early Literacy Coaches perceived these as hindrances to their work. Notably, however, time was still a challenge for ISD Early Literacy Coaches; 60% reported hindrances due to insufficient time for teachers to work with them during the school day, and 43% reported hindrances related to insufficient time for them to meet individually with teachers.

It may be that ISD Early Literacy Coaches face fewer challenges related to time because they have more well-defined roles. Extant research finds that coaches attribute being assigned duties that detract from literacy coaching to a lack of clarity for their role (e.g., Marsh et al., 2005, 2008; Toll, 2018). ISD Early Literacy Coaches' roles are spelled out in detail in the Read by Grade Three Law, while district- and school-based literacy coaches are not subject to the Law's requirements. Instead, the district or school in which they work may have its own requirements, which may be less clear or specific than the Read by Grade Three Law's, leading to a lack of clarity for their position and assignment to other non-coaching responsibilities.

**FIGURE 5.1. Time-Related Challenges to Working as a Literacy Coach, by Coach Type**



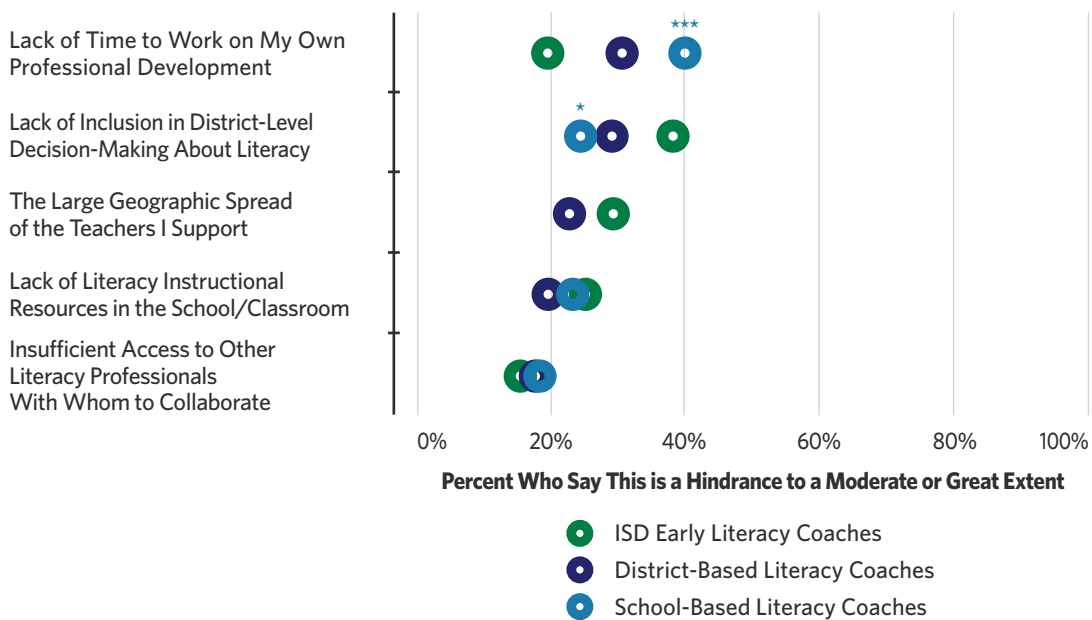
Note: Literacy coaches were asked, "To what extent is each of the following a hindrance to your work?" (Not at all, To a small extent, To a moderate extent, To a great extent).  $p < 0.10$  +,  $p < 0.05$  \*,  $p < 0.01$  \*\*,  $p < 0.001$  \*\*\* indicates statistically significant differences between ISD and district- or school-based literacy coaches. Source: 2021-22 EPIC Read by Grade Three Law survey of educators.

Notably, less than half of all types of literacy coaches indicated that the large number of teachers they are expected to support was a challenge, even though they work with more educators than may be ideal (Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2011). This suggests that the time constraints Michigan literacy coaches face are not entirely due to the number of educators they support. Indeed, most literacy coaches (except ISD Early Literacy Coaches) are more likely to say that multiple responsibilities/duties that pull them away from coaching is a challenge.

## MOST LITERACY COACHES FEEL THEY HAVE SUFFICIENT ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND NETWORKS

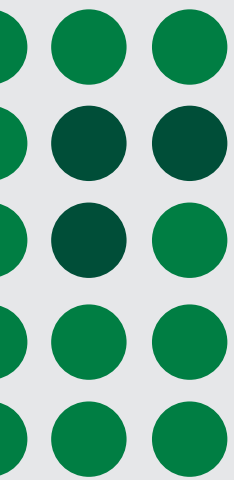
While time was a major hindrance, especially for district- and school-based literacy coaches, Michigan literacy coaches faced fewer challenges accessing supports and resources. Contrary to prior research in which literacy coaches have expressed that receiving insufficient training to support their work can be a challenge (Marsh et al., 2012; Toll, 2018), less than half of Michigan literacy coaches found it difficult to work on their own professional development. Moreover, less than half of coaches felt a lack of inclusion in district-level decision-making about literacy, while less than a third experienced challenges related to the geographic spread of the teachers they support or an inability to access instructional resources. Very few reported having insufficient access to other literacy professionals with whom they might collaborate.

**FIGURE 5.2. Support- and Resource-Related Challenges to Working as a Literacy Coach, by Coach Type**



*Note: Literacy coaches were asked, "To what extent is each of the following a hindrance to your work?" (Not at all, To a small extent, To a moderate extent, To a great extent). School-based literacy coaches were not asked about "The large geographic spread of the teachers I support."  $p < 0.10$  +,  $p < 0.05$  \*,  $p < 0.01$  \*\*,  $p < 0.001$  \*\*\* indicates statistically significant differences between ISD and district- or school-based literacy coaches. Source: 2021-22 EPIC Read by Grade Three Law survey of educators.*

Although not highlighted in the figure, literacy coaches working in charter school districts were significantly more likely than those in TPS districts to report insufficient access to other literacy professionals with whom to collaborate ( $p = 0.08$ ). This is notable because charter coaches are significantly less likely to have access to network-based supports than TPS coaches are, including opportunities to collaborate with other coaches, ongoing support from the Early Literacy Coaches Network, professional organization membership, and access to university researchers who are experts in literacy (see Special Section A).



## Special Section C:

# How Did the COVID-19 Pandemic Affect Literacy Coaching in Michigan?

As was the case across the country, the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically affected K-12 education in Michigan. In March of 2020, Michigan shuttered school buildings across the state in response to health concerns raised by the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2020-21 school year was arguably even more affected by the COVID-19 pandemic; in Michigan, as in other states, districts offered varying modalities of instruction over the course of the school year, often shifting between fully in-person, fully remote, and hybrid options (Hopkins et al., 2021). Moreover, staffing challenges related to educator health and childcare needs caused tumult in schools (Harbatkin et al., 2022; Strunk et al., 2022a).

These changing modalities forced educators to quickly adapt to different methods of delivering instruction, in turn requiring literacy coaches to support teachers working across the various modalities. Even when educators were in person, safety requirements changed the way they delivered instruction. In this Special Section, we examine the challenges Michigan literacy coaches faced during the COVID-19 pandemic over the course of the 2020-21 school year.

## COACHES REPORTED CHANGING THE WAY THEY PROVIDED COACHING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

[Our earlier reporting](#) discussed the ways in which the role of ISD Early Literacy Coaches changed during the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic in spring 2020, as they shifted from spending most of their time on literacy coaching to administrative duties while still working to support teachers by sending electronic resources, holding virtual professional development sessions, and sending out prepared videos or slideshows (Strunk et al., 2021).



In later years of our survey, we asked all Michigan literacy coaches the extent to which their role changed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Approximately 90% of Michigan literacy coaches said they needed to change the way they delivered literacy coaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic (see Figure C.1). Data from our observational study further illustrate what these changes looked like in practice. All four ISD Early Literacy Coaches participating in our observational study during the 2020-21 pandemic-affected school year spent most of their time working with teachers in virtual or hybrid modalities. They also spent more time with teachers, albeit virtually; on average, they reported spending 191 hours over the course of the school year working with teachers in virtual or hybrid modalities, compared to 129 hours working with teachers in person.

In addition to changes in coaching modality, all four ISD Early Literacy Coaches detailed in interviews in May 2021 how the COVID-19 pandemic changed their coaching activities and the content on which they focused during coaching. Two cited difficulty observing, modeling, and co-teaching with in-person teachers due to safety precautions, while another said remote coaching made it difficult to model literacy instructional practices. As one ISD Early Literacy Coach stated, *“Coaching conversations, reflecting, goal setting, and analyzing data can definitely be done virtually. Modeling, observing, and co-teaching, I think, have to be done in-person.”*

Furthermore, all four coaches said they spent much of the year focused on supporting teachers with virtual instruction or pandemic-related protocols (e.g., social distancing, learning to use virtual tools) and less time focused on literacy coaching. As one coach explained, *“In a typical year, I would’ve offered to go in and model a read aloud for them. But this year, it was more like a conversation, asking them, ‘How are you?’ and, ‘What do you want me to know?’”* Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic not only changed the modality in which literacy coaches provided coaching, but also the focus of that coaching.

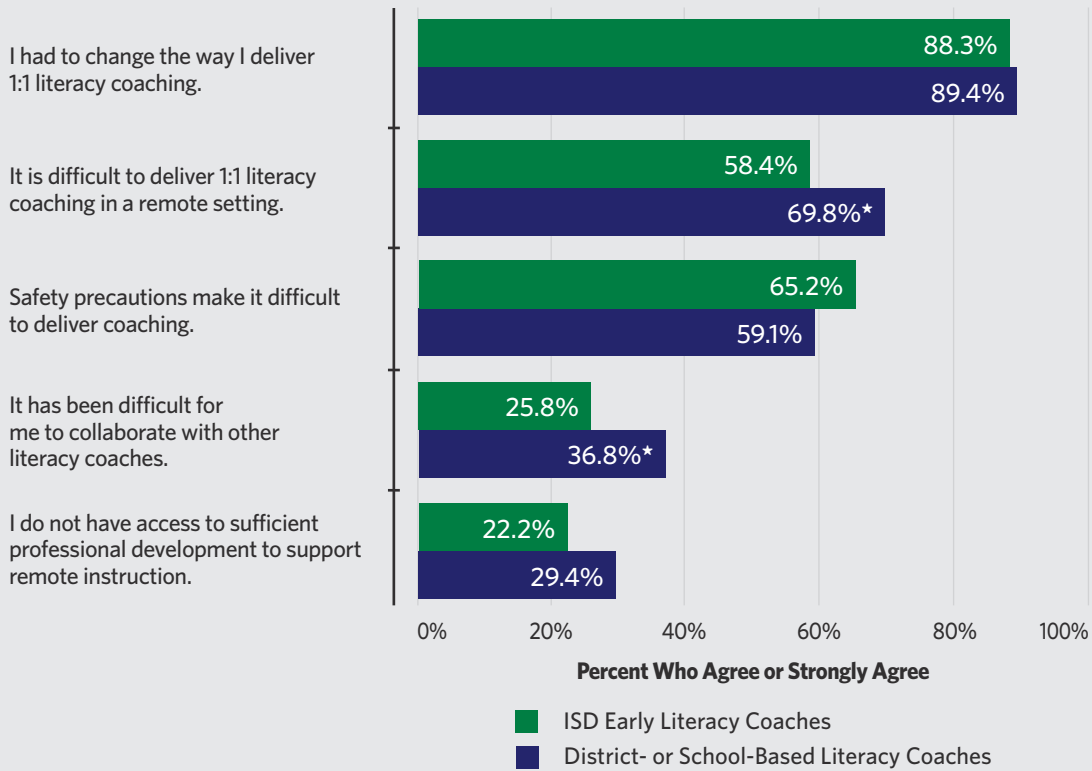
## ISD EARLY LITERACY COACHES REPORTED FACING FEWER CHALLENGES THAN OTHER COACHES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Also noted in [our previous reporting](#), ISD Early Literacy Coaches reported experiencing substantial challenges in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic (Strunk et al., 2021). These challenges included facilitating participation from educators, consistent internet access for the educators with whom they were working and finding coaching activities that worked well in a remote setting.

However, as the COVID-19 pandemic wore on, ISD Early Literacy Coaches were less likely than other types of literacy coaches to report certain constraints on their work. As is shown in Figure C.1, they were significantly less likely to agree that it was difficult to deliver coaching in a remote setting. This may be because ISD Early Literacy Coaches receive more supports than other types of literacy coaches. It may also be because ISD Early Literacy Coaches are expected to serve a larger geographic area and work in more districts than other types of literacy coaches (see Section Four), and remote coaching alleviated some of the burden of traveling between buildings. Indeed, several ISD Early Literacy Coaches from our observational study mentioned this latter point in interviews in 2020-21. All four coaches we interviewed stated that remote coaching allowed for more time or flexibility to check-in with teachers, set goals, co-plan, and engage in reflection. One coach stated:

*I typically met with teachers every week to check in on their goals. It was a little bit different than it would normally be with coaching cycles. I typically don't meet with teachers that much, but because we had the virtual option, it allowed me the opportunity to check in with them every week.*

**FIGURE C.1. Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Literacy Coaching**



*Note: Literacy coaches were asked, “We want to better understand how COVID-19 may have affected your ability to support effective literacy instruction and implement the Read by Grade Three Law. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?” (Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, N/A; This does not apply to me)  $p < 0.10$  +,  $p < 0.05$  \*,  $p < 0.01$  \*\*,  $p < 0.001$  \*\*\* indicates statistically significant differences between ISD and district- or school-based literacy coaches. Source: 2020-21 EPIC Read by Grade Three Law survey of educators.*

ISD Early Literacy Coaches were also significantly less likely than district- and school-based literacy coaches to report that it was difficult for them to collaborate with other literacy coaches during the 2020-21 pandemic-affected school year and were less likely to say they lacked access to sufficient professional development to support remote instruction. This is likely attributable to the ongoing supports ISD Early Literacy Coaches receive, including participating in the ISD Early Literacy Coaches Network.

Notably, although not shown, there were no major differences in the challenges literacy coaches faced during the COVID-19 pandemic by the characteristics of the ISDs or districts in which they worked, suggesting that the challenges Michigan literacy coaches faced during this time were somewhat universal. The exception to this is that literacy coaches working in rural districts were significantly more likely to agree that it was difficult to deliver literacy coaching in a remote setting, likely due to the fact that rural districts have less access to broadband internet than their suburban and urban counterparts (Arsen et al., 2022).

## SUMMARY

Time is the biggest challenge Michigan literacy coaches face, especially for district- and school-based literacy coaches. As reported in previous sections, Michigan literacy coaches are expected to—and do—take on a number of responsibilities to support teachers' literacy instruction. They also work with many educators across schools, and, in the case of ISD Early Literacy Coaches, across districts. However, literacy coaches do not necessarily attribute these time constraints solely to the number of educators with whom they work, and more often say that multiple responsibilities/duties that pull them away from their role as a coach is a bigger challenge.

It is likely that the uneven supports coaches receive contribute to the varying extent to which different types of literacy coaches experience challenges. ISD Early Literacy Coaches, who receive the most supports of all coaches, also face the fewest challenges—both overall and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, literacy coaches in charter schools, who receive significantly fewer network-based supports than TPS coaches, experience significantly more challenges related to insufficient access to literacy professionals. This suggests that making supports available to more literacy coaching providers may alleviate some of the disparities in the challenges Michigan literacy coaches are facing.



06



Michigan's Literacy  
Coaching Landscape

**Section Six:  
What Are Michigan  
Educators'  
Perceptions of  
Literacy Coaching?**

## Section Six:

# What Are Michigan Educators' Perceptions of Literacy Coaching?

In addition to understanding the implementation of literacy coaching from the coaches themselves, as we've explored in previous sections, it is also important to understand Michigan educators' perspectives on the efficacy of literacy coaching. This will be helpful in evaluating how literacy coaching has influenced teachers' practice and the potential of literacy coaching to improve achievement among Michigan's students—the primary goal of the Read by Grade Three Law. In this section, we use data from our statewide surveys of teachers, principals, and superintendents to explore educators' perspectives of Michigan's literacy coaches.

## TEACHERS BELIEVE LITERACY COACHING HAS A POSITIVE EFFECT ON THEIR INSTRUCTION

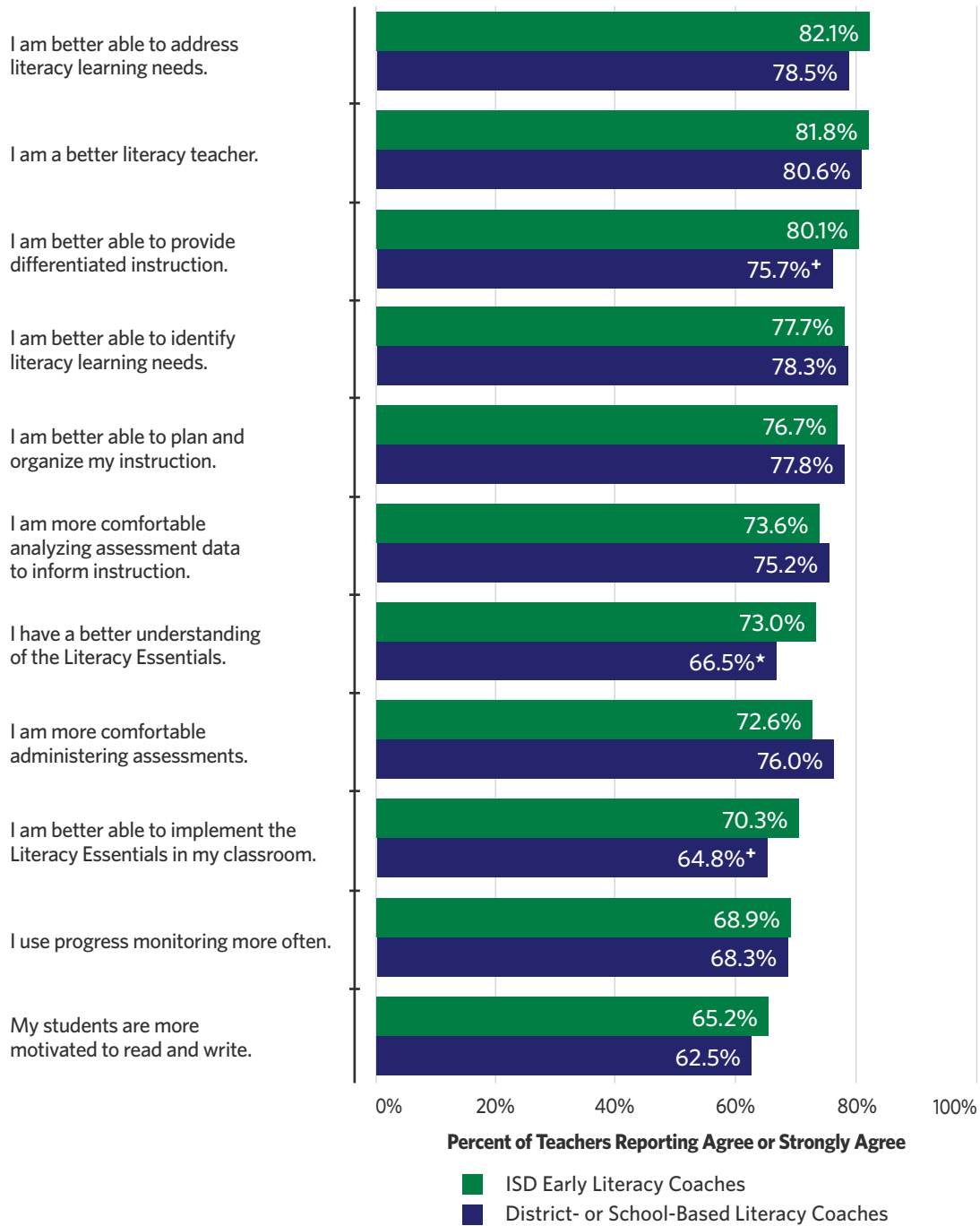
### Teachers Believe Literacy Coaching Improved Their Practice

Overall, K-3 teachers who reported receiving one-on-one literacy coaching perceived it to have positively affected their literacy instruction. As is shown in Figure 6.1, over two-thirds of teachers who reported receiving literacy coaching from a school-based, district-based, or ISD Early Literacy Coach believed that it improved each of the various elements of literacy instruction. Importantly, approximately 80% said that this literacy coaching made them better able to address students' literacy learning needs and made them better literacy teachers.

Teachers' positive perceptions generally do not depend on the type of literacy coach they work with, with three notable exceptions. More teachers who work with ISD Early Literacy Coaches report that they are better able to provide differentiated instruction, have a better understanding of the Literacy Essentials, and are better able to implement the Literacy Essentials in their classroom, relative to teachers who work with district- or school-based literacy coaches. These differences are likely because the Read by Grade Three Law requires ISD Early Literacy Coaches to emphasize differentiating instruction, and ISD Early Literacy Coaches receive training on how to incorporate the "Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy: Grades K-3" (i.e., the Literacy Essentials) in their coaching.

**FIGURE 6.1. K-3 Teachers’ Perceptions of Literacy Coaching, by Coach Type**

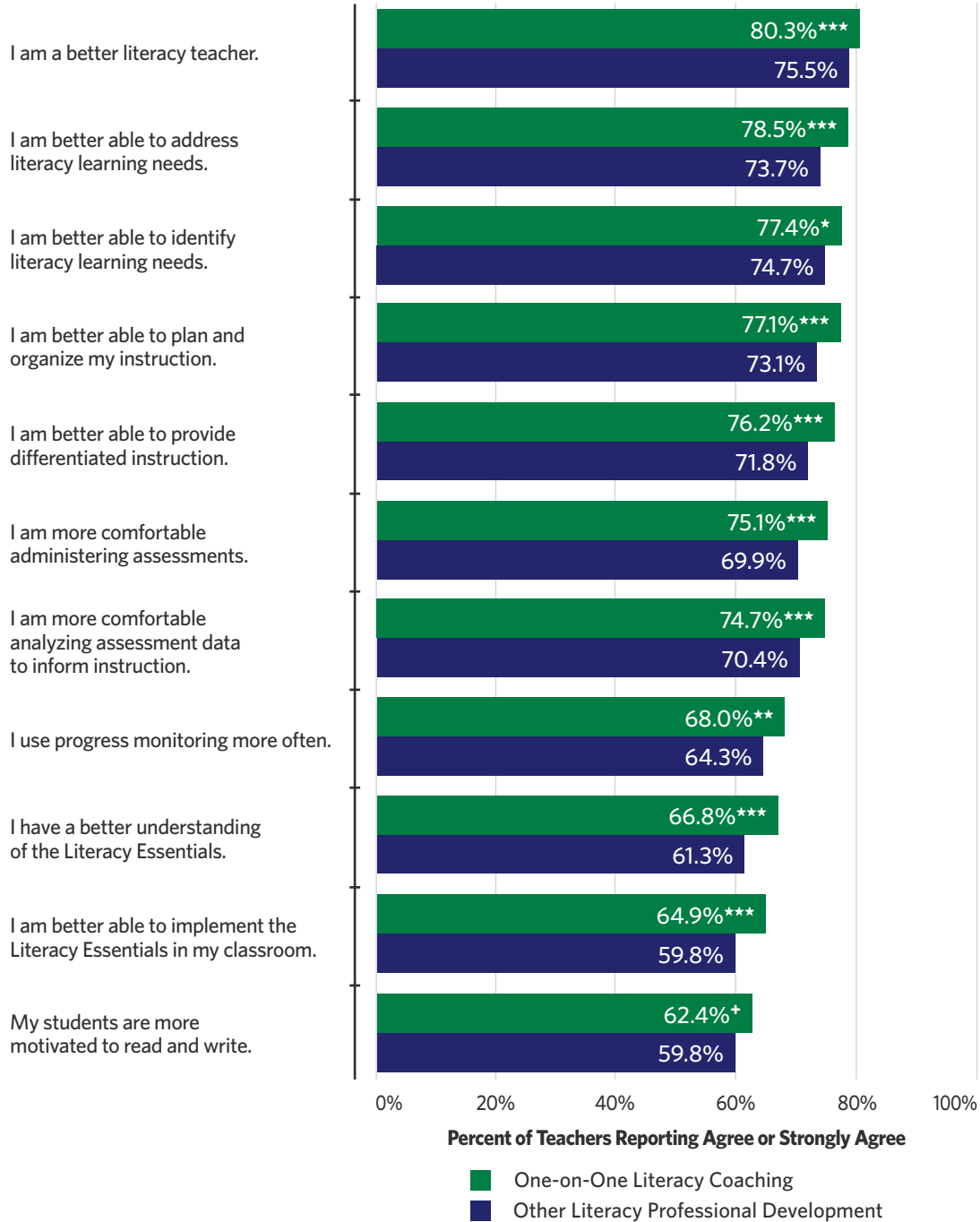
**As a Result of the One-on-One Literacy Coaching I Have Received...**



*Note: Teachers were asked, “To what extent do you agree with the following statements about how the one-on-one literacy coaching (from any provider) you have received this school year has affected your literacy instruction?” (Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree).  $p < 0.10$  <sup>+</sup>,  $p < 0.05$  <sup>\*</sup>,  $p < 0.01$  <sup>\*\*</sup>,  $p < 0.001$  <sup>\*\*\*</sup> indicates statistically significant differences between ISD and district- or school-based literacy coaches. Only teachers who indicated that they received literacy coaching were asked this question. Source: 2021-22 EPIC Read by Grade Three Law survey of educators.*

**FIGURE 6.2. K-3 Teachers' Perceptions of Literacy Coaching Compared to Other Professional Development**

**As a Result of the One-on-One Literacy Coaching/Other Literacy PD I Have Received...**



*Note: This figure combines results from multiple survey questions. Teachers were asked the extent to which they agreed with statements about “how the one-on-one literacy coaching (from any provider) you have received this school year” and “how the other literacy professional development (not including one-on-one literacy coaching) you have received this school year” affected their literacy instruction. (Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree).  $p < 0.10$  +,  $p < 0.05$  \*,  $p < 0.01$  \*\*,  $p < 0.001$  \*\*\* indicates statistically significant differences between ISD and district- or school-based literacy coaches. Only teachers who indicated that they received literacy coaching (other literacy professional development) were asked to respond. Source: 2021-22 EPIC Read by Grade Three Law survey of educators.*

## Teachers Perceive Literacy Coaching to Be More Beneficial Than Other Literacy Professional Development

Figure 6.2 shows teachers' perceptions of the effect of literacy coaching relative to other literacy professional development (e.g., large-group professional development, professional learning communities, literacy-related conferences) on their instruction. Overall, teachers have positive perceptions of both types of support, and over three-quarters of teachers who received either one-on-one literacy coaching or other professional development agreed that it made them a better literacy teacher.

However, significantly more teachers believe that literacy coaching positively affects their practice relative to other non-coaching literacy professional development. This pattern is consistent across all areas covered in our survey, providing evidence of teachers' perceptions that coaching is a more effective form of professional development.

## MOST EDUCATORS BELIEVE ISD EARLY LITERACY COACHES WILL HAVE A POSITIVE EFFECT ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Given that teachers broadly believe literacy coaching helps them improve their practice, it is somewhat unsurprising that educators believe ISD Early Literacy Coaches will be effective in improving student achievement in Michigan. Indeed, Figure 6.3 shows that most teachers, principals, and district superintendents believe that ISD Early Literacy Coaches will be effective in this regard.

However, significantly fewer K-3 teachers expressed this belief in the 2021-22 school year than in 2019-20. By contrast, significantly more superintendents believed that ISD Early Literacy Coaches would be effective in improving student achievement in 2021-22 relative to 2019-20.

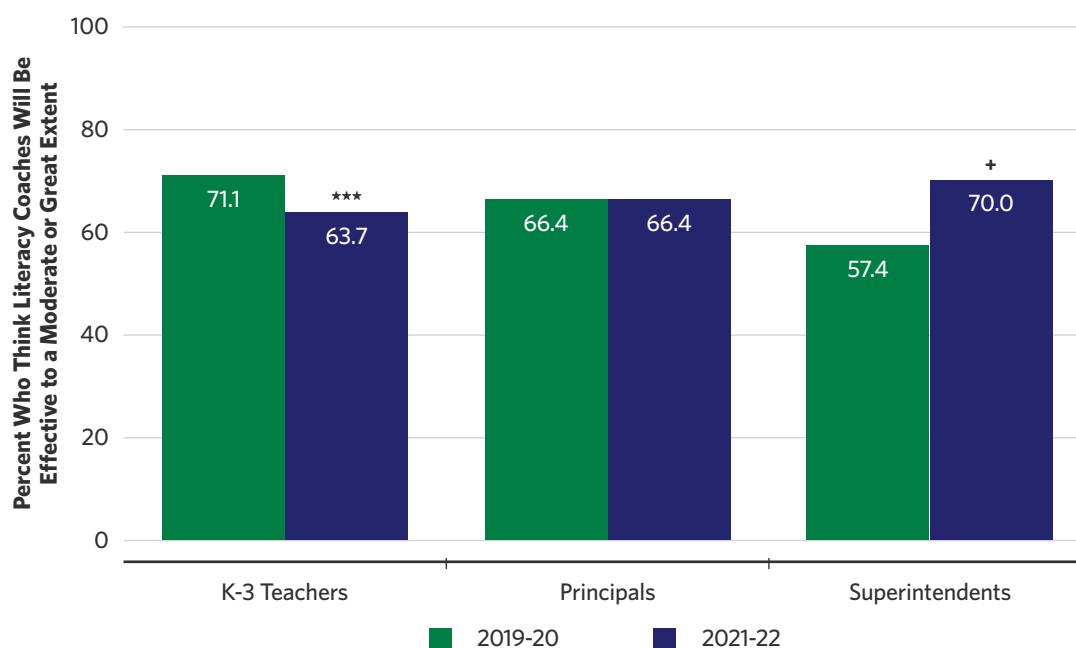
It is possible that teachers' diminishing perceptions of ISD Early Literacy Coaches' ability to improve student achievement is related to their experiences as the Read by Grade Three Law was implemented. In particular, they may have initially believed that increased state funding for coaches would mean greater access to literacy coaching, but over time, they realized that this might not be the case. EPIC's [Year One](#) and [Year Two](#) Reports indeed show that just 13% of K-3 teachers in 2019-20 and 10% in 2020-21 received literacy coaching from an ISD Early Literacy Coach (Strunk et al., 2021, 2022b). Thus, teachers may have wanted literacy coaching but were unable to access it. Evidence from earlier sections of this report further suggests this might be true, as ISD Early Literacy Coaches are spread across several educators and buildings and many of them report facing time-related constraints and that multiple responsibilities/duties pull them away from their role as a coach.

The COVID-19 pandemic may have also played a role in teachers' diminishing perceptions of ISD Early Literacy Coaches' ability to improve student achievement—either because of or independent of literacy coaching itself. As we reported in our [Year Two Report](#), the COVID-19 pandemic shaped the provision of ISD Early Literacy Coaches, as fewer teachers reported receiving literacy coaching from them and for fewer hours than before the COVID-19 pandemic (Strunk et al., 2022b). Further,



in Section Five of this report, we describe the ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic affected literacy coaching, with coaches providing coaching remotely or navigating safety precautions. This likely altered teachers' experiences with literacy coaching, which may have led them to believe it would be less effective for student achievement. On the other hand, the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on student achievement have been well-documented, nationally and in Michigan (e.g., Kuhfeld et al., 2022; MDE, 2021; National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2022). This may have led teachers to be less likely to believe that literacy coaching will be enough to counteract the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**FIGURE 6.3. Perceptions of ISD Early Literacy Coaches' Effect on Student Achievement**



Note: Teachers, principals, and superintendents were asked, "Please indicate the extent to which you believe ISD Early Literacy Coaches will be effective in increasing student achievement." (Not at all, To a small extent, To a moderate extent, To a great extent, I don't know).  $p < 0.10$  +,  $p < 0.05$  \*,  $p < 0.01$  \*\*,  $p < 0.001$  \*\*\* indicates statistically significant differences between 2019-20 and 2021-22. Source: 2019-20 and 2021-22 EPIC Read by Grade Three Law survey of educators.

## SUMMARY

Overall, the far majority of Michigan educators have positive perceptions of literacy coaching. Teachers who receive literacy coaching largely agree that it has a positive effect on their instruction and has made them better literacy teachers—regardless of the type of literacy coach they worked with. Teachers are also more likely to agree that literacy coaching has a positive effect on their instruction compared to other non-coaching forms of professional development. Further, most Michigan teachers, principals, and superintendents believe that the ISD Early Literacy Coaches funded under the Read by Grade Three Law will have a positive effect on student achievement throughout the state. This remains true despite limited access to these coaches and the major disruption that the COVID-19 pandemic caused to literacy coaching.



07



Michigan's Literacy  
Coaching Landscape

# Section Seven: Key Takeaways and Recommendations

# Section Seven:

## Key Takeaways and Recommendations

This report provided an overview of literacy coaching in Michigan, highlighting differences between types of literacy coaches. In particular, we used statewide survey data and data from interviews and surveys of a subset of Michigan's ISD Early Literacy Coaches to better understand who Michigan's literacy coaches are, what they do, and the challenges they face, both independent of and as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We also explored educators' perceptions of Michigan literacy coaches' effect on teachers' instruction and student achievement. In this final section, we outline key takeaways and consider the implications of our findings for future policymaking.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

#### Michigan Literacy Coaches Are Highly Qualified

When it comes to their educational credentials and prior experience, Michigan literacy coaches often exceed the requirements outlined in the Read by Grade Three Law and possess qualifications that are more in line with the research-based Coaching Essentials. This includes the ISD Early Literacy Coaches funded under the Read by Grade Three Law as well as district- and school-based literacy coaches.

Nearly all Michigan literacy coaches have completed a graduate degree or post-BA university coursework, and the vast majority have an endorsement added to their teaching license. However, these credentials are not always in literacy-related fields. Coaches also average over a decade of classroom teaching experience—mostly in grades K-3—and over five years in instructional coaching and leadership positions.

## Supports for Michigan Literacy Coaches Vary Widely, Which May Be Related to Greater Challenges for Those Receiving Less Assistance

ISD Early Literacy Coaches receive significantly more supports (e.g., professional development, training resources, access to other literacy professionals) than district- and school-based literacy coaches, in particular concerning the development of knowledge and skills that the Read by Grade Three Law and Coaching Essentials say literacy coaches should possess. This disparity may result from the wide range of developmental opportunities available to ISD Early Literacy Coaches through the ISD Early Literacy Coaches Network. In addition, literacy coaches working in charter districts receive significantly fewer supports than those working in TPS districts, especially network-based supports that would facilitate their collaboration with other coaches. These include opportunities to collaborate with other coaches, professional organization membership, access to literacy experts, and attending conferences.

It may be that this uneven distribution of support across coaching providers results in greater challenges for those receiving less assistance. ISD Early Literacy Coaches indeed report facing significantly fewer challenges than district- or school-based literacy coaches, while charter coaches are significantly more likely than TPS coaches to report challenges related to insufficient access to other literacy professionals to collaborate with. Further, while the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily changed the way all coaches delivered literacy coaching, ISD Early Literacy Coaches reported facing fewer challenges navigating these changes.

## Michigan Literacy Coaches May Be Spread Too Thin

While there is limited research suggesting an ideal number of teachers with whom literacy coaches should work, the best available evidence suggests that coaches can effectively work with about 14 teachers (Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2011). However, in 2021-22, ISD Early Literacy Coaches and district-based literacy coaches reported working with an average of 18 educators across an average of four schools, and for ISD Early Literacy Coaches, more than two districts. This suggests that coaches may be spread too thin to be able to provide the level of support to maximally improve teachers' literacy practice.

Indeed, like literacy coaches in other states (e.g., Florida; Marsh et al., 2008), Michigan literacy coaches report facing significant time constraints in their work. They report that insufficient time during the school day to work with teachers is the greatest hindrance to their work, in addition to other time-related constraints such as insufficient time to meet individually with teachers or visit their classrooms.

## Teachers Who Could Most Benefit From Literacy Coaching May Not Be Receiving It

The teachers who are receiving literacy coaching may not be the ones who most need assistance. ISD Early Literacy Coaches report that the majority of teachers they work with request literacy coaching, as opposed to being identified based on other criteria such as their performance or being new to their grade level. If the teachers who request coaching are not the ones who could benefit most from it, this may not be the most effective way to allocate literacy coaches.

## ISD Early Literacy Coaches Allocate Their Time As Designated by the Law and the Coaching Essentials

The ISD Early Literacy Coaches funded under the Read by Grade Three Law largely follow the Law's requirements and the Coaching Essentials' recommendations regarding the ways they spend their time, the coaching activities they engage in, and the areas of instruction they emphasize in their work. In particular, they spend the most time providing literacy coaching to teachers and the least time performing non-coaching administrative duties or working with students outside the context of coaching a teacher. They are also significantly more likely than district- and school-based coaches to engage in evidence-based literacy coaching activities and emphasize evidence-based areas of literacy instruction in their coaching.

## Michigan Educators Have Positive Perceptions of Literacy Coaches

Teachers who have received literacy coaching widely agree that it improved their literacy instruction in several ways and made them better literacy teachers. This is true regardless of whether they worked with an ISD or a district- or school-based literacy coach. Further, they are more likely to agree that literacy coaching positively affected their instruction compared to other non-coaching forms of professional development. Teachers, principals, and superintendents also believe that the ISD Early Literacy Coaches funded under the Read by Grade Three Law will be effective in increasing student achievement throughout the state.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS AND PRACTITIONERS

## Increase Funding for Literacy Coaching

Overall, Michigan literacy coaches are highly qualified, implement evidence-based coaching practices, and emphasize evidence-based areas of literacy instruction in their work with teachers. Further, educators—especially the teachers who have worked with literacy coaches—have positive perceptions of coaches' effect on literacy instruction and student achievement.

At the time of writing this report, Michigan policymakers have introduced legislation to amend the Read by Grade Three Law (*Senate Bill 12, 2023*). While the main objective of this legislation is to repeal the third-grade retention component of the Law, it is important to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of other components of the Law—including literacy coaching—to make informed decisions about future policy and funding. The findings in this report suggest that literacy coaching is indeed being implemented with fidelity and that it has a positive effect on Michigan educators, suggesting that the state should continue and expand funding for literacy coaching.

One way this funding could be used is for expanded training for literacy coaches. As described above, the uneven distribution of supports across different types of literacy coaches may mean that those receiving less assistance experience greater challenges. Currently, many supports—including those provided through the ISD Early Literacy Coaches Network—are available to ISD Early Literacy Coaches thanks to state funding allocated for this purpose. More funding is necessary to expand the reach of these supports to district- and school-based coaches and to coaches working in charter school districts.

Another use for expanded funding would be to hire more literacy coaches. Literacy coaches in Michigan work with many educators—more than may be ideal (Elish-Piper & L’Allier, 2011). More funding to hire additional literacy coaches could help ensure that each coach is tasked with coaching fewer teachers.

## Integrate Literacy Coaches More Purposefully Into ISDs, Districts, and Schools

There also are steps the state and individual ISDs, districts, and schools can take to make the most out of the current literacy coaching landscape. First, the state could provide guidance to ISDs, districts, and schools about how to select teachers for literacy coaching. Given that teachers are most often identified for literacy coaching by volunteering for it, they may not be the ones who could most benefit from this type of support. ISDs, districts, and schools might instead identify teachers for literacy coaching based on teachers’ needs, such as experience level (e.g., newer teachers are prioritized for coaching) or evaluation data. They might also identify teachers who work with high proportions of students who are struggling with literacy, which could be indicated by students’ achievement scores on formative or classroom-based assessments and activities, having designation of “reading deficient,” or having a learning disability such as dyslexia.

Second, ISDs might consider how to implement a train-the-trainer model of coaching in which the ISD Early Literacy Coaches who receive supports through the ISD Early Literacy Coaches Network then train district- and school-based coaches in the practices they learn during these trainings. Some ISDs may already be taking this approach. Implementing this more broadly could expand supports to more literacy coaches without requiring more funding for them to attend the trainings themselves. In doing this, ISDs should again be purposeful about making any supports known and available to coaches working in both TPS and charter schools within their ISD.

Third, schools and districts might consider how to integrate literacy coaches more intentionally into their operations and initiatives. Prior literature suggests that the time constraints Michigan literacy coaches face may be related to a lack of clarity for their role (e.g. Marsh et al., 2005, 2008; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Poglinco et al., 2003) and school schedules that do not provide teachers sufficient planning time to meet with coaches (Marsh et al., 2008). Integrating literacy coaches more intentionally could help ensure that their role is clear and that they are able to find dedicated time to meet with teachers. According to the Coaching Essentials, literacy coaching is most effective when done as part of a multi-year school- or district-wide initiative focused on student learning and when administrators show their support for such an initiative (ELTF, 2016a). Some ways administrators can do this are by presenting literacy coaches as a source of expertise, participating in professional development about literacy coaching that is facilitated by literacy coaches, and giving coaches autonomy over their schedules. Administrators can also clearly describe and endorse the focus of literacy coaching to teachers and explicitly encourage teachers to work with coaches. More intentionally integrating literacy coaches into a school- or district-wide literacy coaching initiative can help ensure that coaches’ roles are clear and that there is time dedicated to teachers and coaches meeting together.

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## APPENDIX A. COMPARISONS BETWEEN SURVEY SAMPLES AND TARGET POPULATIONS (INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL CHARACTERISTICS)

	Spring 2020			Spring 2021			Spring 2022		
	Sample	Population	Difference	Sample	Population	Difference	Sample	Population	Difference
<b>ISD Early Literacy Coaches</b>									
Percent Female	100.0%	99.3%	0.7%	100.0%	99.6%	0.4%	98.8%	99.2%	-0.5%
Percent Hired Within Past 5 Years	68.2%	65.8%	2.4%	56.2%	48.2%	7.9%	56.7%	46.0%	10.7%
Percent Black or African American	3.0%	3.3%	-0.3%	6.8%	5.3%	1.5%	4.3%	4.2%	0.1%
Percent Hispanic	1.5%	1.3%	0.2%	1.2%	1.1%	0.2%	0.6%	0.8%	-0.2%
Percent Asian	1.5%	1.3%	0.2%	0.6%	0.4%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Percent Other Non-White Ethnicity	2.3%	2.0%	0.3%	3.1%	2.8%	0.3%	1.2%	1.1%	0.1%
Percent Elementary Certified	86.8%	87.6%	-0.8%	59.3%	60.4%	-1.2%	63.8%	61.5%	2.3%
Percent with ELA/Literacy/Reading Endorsement	59.8%	58.4%	1.5%	100.0%	99.6%	0.4%	98.8%	99.2%	-0.5%
<b>Other Literacy Coaches</b>									
Percent Female	N/A	N/A	N/A	98.1%	93.0%	5.1%	95.7%	92.8%	2.9%
Percent Hired Within Past 5 Years	N/A	N/A	N/A	29.7%	34.0%	-4.3%	28.1%	30.7%	-2.6%
Percent Black or African American	N/A	N/A	N/A	7.9%	11.5%	-3.6%	7.3%	10.3%	-3.0%
Percent Hispanic	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.2%	1.5%	-0.3%	0.6%	1.2%	-0.6%
Percent Asian	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.5%	0.5%	0.0%	0.6%	0.8%	-0.1%
Percent Other Non-White Ethnicity	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.9%	1.5%	0.4%	1.9%	1.5%	0.4%
Percent Elementary Certified	N/A	N/A	N/A	57.8%	68.7%	-11.0%	60.5%	65.0%	-4.5%
Percent with ELA/Literacy/Reading Endorsement	N/A	N/A	N/A	98.1%	93.0%	5.1%	95.7%	92.8%	2.9%
<b>K-3 Teachers</b>									
Percent Female	95.2%	95.1%	0.1%	93.9%	94.5%	-0.6%	93.6%	94.5%	-0.9%
Percent Hired Within Past 5 Years	40.4%	33.6%	6.8%	41.0%	35.5%	5.5%	43.6%	38.0%	5.7%
Percent Black or African American	6.6%	3.7%	2.9%	4.7%	6.5%	-1.8%	4.1%	6.9%	-2.8%
Percent Hispanic	1.3%	1.3%	0.0%	1.4%	1.4%	0.1%	1.4%	1.4%	0.0%
Percent Asian	0.7%	0.7%	0.0%	0.9%	0.7%	0.2%	0.8%	0.8%	0.0%
Percent Other Non-White Ethnicity	1.4%	1.2%	0.2%	1.6%	1.3%	0.3%	1.3%	1.4%	0.0%
Percent Elementary Certified	95.6%	92.7%	2.8%	36.4%	38.8%	-2.3%	33.5%	36.0%	-2.5%
Percent with ELA/Literacy/Reading Endorsement	38.7%	40.1%	-1.4%	93.9%	94.5%	-0.6%	93.6%	94.5%	-0.9%
<b>K-5 Principals</b>									
Percent Female	68.4%	60.0%	8.4%	69.3%	61.5%	7.8%	62.8%	61.2%	1.6%
Percent Hired Within Past 5 Years	36.8%	30.5%	6.3%	37.4%	30.9%	6.5%	36.7%	29.4%	7.4%
Percent Black or African American	11.1%	13.7%	-2.6%	13.4%	14.5%	-1.1%	8.4%	13.2%	-4.8%
Percent Hispanic	1.2%	1.3%	-0.1%	1.0%	1.3%	-0.3%	1.0%	1.4%	-0.4%
Percent Asian	0.3%	0.4%	-0.2%	0.0%	0.4%	-0.4%	0.5%	0.7%	-0.1%
Percent Other Non-White Ethnicity	1.6%	1.0%	0.6%	0.5%	1.0%	-0.6%	0.8%	1.1%	-0.4%
Percent Elementary Certified	70.2%	67.3%	2.9%	35.1%	32.6%	2.5%	37.0%	32.3%	4.6%
Percent with ELA/Literacy/Reading Endorsement	35.7%	32.5%	3.1%	69.3%	61.5%	7.8%	62.8%	61.2%	1.6%
<b>District Superintendents</b>									
Percent Female	34.9%	26.9%	8.0%	38.3%	30.2%	8.1%	37.5%	29.0%	8.5%
Percent Hired Within Past 5 Years	39.8%	36.2%	3.5%	42.0%	38.1%	3.8%	35.2%	37.1%	-1.9%
Percent Black or African American	5.2%	6.6%	-1.4%	4.3%	6.8%	-2.5%	5.7%	7.2%	-1.6%
Percent Hispanic	1.6%	0.6%	1.0%	2.5%	1.0%	1.5%	1.1%	1.0%	0.1%
Percent Asian	0.5%	0.2%	0.3%	0.0%	0.3%	-0.3%	1.1%	0.5%	0.6%
Percent Other Non-White Ethnicity	1.0%	0.9%	0.1%	1.9%	1.1%	0.7%	3.4%	1.7%	1.7%
Percent Elementary Certified	46.9%	25.3%	21.6%	22.4%	21.5%	0.9%	30.7%	23.3%	7.3%
Percent with ELA/Literacy/Reading Endorsement	29.5%	21.0%	8.4%	38.3%	30.2%	8.1%	37.5%	29.0%	8.5%

## APPENDIX B. COMPARISONS BETWEEN SURVEY SAMPLES AND TARGET POPULATIONS (ISD- AND DISTRICT-LEVEL CHARACTERISTICS)

	Spring 2020			Spring 2021			Spring 2022		
	Sample	Population	Difference	Sample	Population	Difference	Sample	Population	Difference
<b>ISD Early Literacy Coaches (ISD Characteristics)</b>									
Percent low M-STEP ELA score	27.3%	32.4%	-5.2%	32.7%	34.9%	-2.1%	35.4%	32.2%	3.2%
Percent high M-STEP ELA score	30.3%	27.0%	3.3%	27.2%	29.9%	-2.8%	24.4%	31.0%	-6.6%
Percent low proportion of economically disadvantaged students	33.3%	40.5%	-7.2%	27.8%	31.0%	-3.2%	20.7%	28.0%	-7.2%
Percent high proportion of economically disadvantaged students	30.3%	27.0%	3.3%	32.7%	30.6%	2.1%	30.5%	26.8%	3.7%
Percent low proportion of non-White students	27.3%	27.0%	0.2%	15.4%	13.4%	2.1%	17.1%	13.0%	4.0%
Percent high proportion of non-White students	39.4%	37.8%	1.6%	51.9%	56.7%	-4.8%	46.3%	54.8%	-8.4%
Percent small ISD (i.e., low student size)	12.1%	10.8%	1.3%	13.0%	10.9%	2.0%	14.0%	9.6%	4.4%
Percent large ISD (i.e., high student size)	42.4%	40.5%	1.9%	54.3%	57.0%	-2.7%	45.1%	52.9%	-7.8%
<b>Other Literacy Coaches (District Characteristics)</b>									
Percent PSA/Charter	N/A	N/A	N/A	13.2%	12.9%	0.3%	15.6%	14.7%	1.0%
Percent Urban	N/A	N/A	N/A	27.6%	32.8%	-5.2%	25.8%	31.6%	-5.8%
Percent Suburb/Town	N/A	N/A	N/A	54.2%	50.7%	3.5%	56.4%	50.6%	5.8%
Percent Rural	N/A	N/A	N/A	18.2%	16.5%	1.6%	17.8%	17.8%	0.0%
Percent Partnership District	N/A	N/A	N/A	5.7%	6.6%	-0.9%	5.8%	5.7%	0.1%
Percent low M-STEP ELA score	N/A	N/A	N/A	30.5%	32.8%	-2.2%	24.1%	27.3%	-3.2%
Percent high M-STEP ELA score	N/A	N/A	N/A	34.0%	33.0%	1.0%	34.9%	36.5%	-1.6%
Percent low proportion of economically disadvantaged students	N/A	N/A	N/A	32.5%	32.2%	0.3%	39.6%	37.5%	2.1%
Percent high proportion of economically disadvantaged students	N/A	N/A	N/A	27.5%	31.0%	-3.4%	25.3%	29.9%	-4.5%
Percent low proportion of non-White students	N/A	N/A	N/A	12.7%	10.7%	1.9%	10.6%	10.7%	-0.2%
Percent high proportion of non-White students	N/A	N/A	N/A	31.5%	34.9%	-3.4%	27.8%	30.0%	-2.2%
Percent low proportion English learners	N/A	N/A	N/A	10.7%	9.7%	1.0%	10.8%	9.2%	1.6%
Percent high proportion English learners	N/A	N/A	N/A	47.1%	50.5%	-3.4%	43.6%	46.6%	-3.0%
Percent low proportion students with disabilities	N/A	N/A	N/A	13.2%	13.9%	-0.7%	15.4%	16.5%	-1.0%
Percent high proportion students with disabilities	N/A	N/A	N/A	17.6%	17.6%	0.0%	18.5%	15.8%	2.7%
Percent small district (i.e., low student size)	N/A	N/A	N/A	6.7%	5.3%	1.4%	5.9%	4.7%	1.2%
Percent large district (i.e., high student size)	N/A	N/A	N/A	64.8%	70.1%	-5.3%	65.4%	69.2%	-3.8%
<b>K-3 Teachers (District Characteristics)</b>									
Percent PSA/Charter	11.0%	10.7%	0.3%	11.8%	11.0%	0.8%	12.9%	11.2%	1.8%
Percent Urban	24.4%	20.4%	3.9%	21.6%	24.7%	-3.1%	20.1%	24.8%	-4.6%
Percent Suburb/Town	51.9%	57.4%	-5.6%	51.9%	53.8%	-1.9%	53.3%	53.6%	-0.3%
Percent Rural	23.8%	22.1%	1.6%	26.5%	21.5%	5.0%	26.6%	21.6%	5.0%
Percent Partnership District	12.5%	5.8%	6.7%	5.7%	6.0%	-0.4%	4.9%	6.3%	-1.5%
Percent low M-STEP ELA score	23.8%	15.7%	8.1%	21.4%	19.5%	1.9%	19.1%	19.9%	-0.8%
Percent high M-STEP ELA score	32.3%	42.8%	-10.5%	34.6%	39.9%	-5.2%	34.8%	39.7%	-4.9%
Percent low proportion of economically disadvantaged students	22.4%	15.6%	6.8%	34.9%	40.9%	-6.0%	36.3%	41.3%	-5.0%
Percent high proportion of economically disadvantaged students	34.2%	43.6%	-9.4%	21.5%	19.4%	2.2%	18.7%	19.9%	-1.2%
Percent low proportion of non-White students	17.7%	16.1%	1.7%	18.7%	15.0%	3.7%	18.5%	14.3%	4.2%
Percent high proportion of non-White students	25.0%	19.3%	5.7%	24.1%	24.1%	0.0%	20.9%	24.2%	-3.3%
Percent small district (i.e., low student size)	5.8%	3.8%	2.0%	6.4%	4.4%	2.0%	6.4%	4.4%	2.0%
Percent large district (i.e., high student size)	62.0%	66.0%	-4.1%	59.6%	67.2%	-7.5%	59.0%	67.2%	-8.1%

## APPENDIX B. (CONT.) COMPARISONS BETWEEN SURVEY SAMPLES AND TARGET POPULATIONS (ISD- AND DISTRICT-LEVEL CHARACTERISTICS)

	Spring 2020			Spring 2021			Spring 2022		
	Sample	Population	Difference	Sample	Population	Difference	Sample	Population	Difference
<b>K-5 Principals (District Characteristics)</b>									
Percent PSA/Charter	14.9%	6.6%	8.3%	18.6%	10.9%	7.7%	15.4%	10.0%	5.4%
Percent Urban	23.0%	26.4%	-3.4%	22.8%	25.9%	-3.1%	17.1%	24.5%	-7.4%
Percent Suburb/Town	50.2%	52.2%	-2.0%	50.7%	51.4%	-0.6%	53.0%	52.1%	0.9%
Percent Rural	26.8%	21.4%	5.4%	26.5%	22.7%	3.7%	30.0%	23.5%	6.5%
Percent Partnership District	8.3%	13.8%	-5.5%	4.8%	6.3%	-1.5%	2.3%	5.9%	-3.6%
Percent low M-STEP ELA score	23.2%	22.6%	0.6%	28.2%	23.3%	4.9%	20.7%	22.2%	-1.5%
Percent high M-STEP ELA score	30.5%	36.5%	-6.0%	29.0%	35.5%	-6.5%	31.8%	35.1%	-3.3%
Percent low proportion of economically disadvantaged students	22.0%	20.7%	1.2%	30.1%	36.1%	-6.0%	33.6%	37.2%	-3.6%
Percent high proportion of economically disadvantaged students	33.9%	37.1%	-3.2%	26.2%	21.9%	4.3%	23.8%	20.6%	3.1%
Percent low proportion of non-White students	18.3%	15.5%	2.8%	18.4%	16.1%	2.3%	18.1%	16.3%	1.8%
Percent high proportion of non-White students	24.1%	24.8%	-0.7%	26.5%	24.9%	1.6%	20.7%	23.7%	-3.0%
Percent small district (i.e., low student size)	10.2%	3.6%	6.5%	10.2%	5.2%	5.0%	8.8%	5.3%	3.5%
Percent large district (i.e., high student size)	56.0%	69.2%	-13.3%	51.9%	65.1%	-13.2%	50.6%	65.4%	-14.8%
<b>District Superintendents (District Characteristics)</b>									
Percent PSA/Charter	19.6%	11.9%	7.6%	20.9%	15.1%	5.8%	13.8%	13.8%	0.0%
Percent Urban	10.6%	12.0%	-1.4%	13.7%	12.0%	1.6%	5.8%	12.2%	-6.4%
Percent Suburb/Town	48.1%	47.4%	0.7%	41.6%	46.8%	-5.1%	41.9%	46.6%	-4.7%
Percent Rural	41.3%	40.6%	0.7%	44.7%	41.2%	3.5%	52.3%	41.2%	11.1%
Percent Partnership District	2.7%	4.0%	-1.3%	1.9%	0.5%	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Percent low M-STEP ELA score	19.0%	15.1%	4.0%	21.7%	17.5%	4.1%	16.3%	16.2%	0.1%
Percent high M-STEP ELA score	25.5%	28.2%	-2.6%	19.1%	27.3%	-8.2%	32.6%	28.3%	4.3%
Percent low proportion of economically disadvantaged students	15.1%	15.3%	-0.1%	19.1%	27.8%	-8.7%	23.0%	27.0%	-4.0%
Percent high proportion of economically disadvantaged students	27.6%	27.6%	0.0%	22.3%	17.2%	5.1%	16.1%	16.3%	-0.2%
Percent low proportion of non-White students	29.7%	28.0%	1.7%	26.8%	27.6%	-0.9%	27.6%	26.1%	1.5%
Percent high proportion of non-White students	14.6%	14.7%	-0.1%	16.6%	15.9%	0.7%	12.6%	16.0%	-3.3%
Percent small district (i.e., low student size)	27.0%	13.1%	13.9%	32.5%	17.2%	15.3%	27.6%	14.9%	12.7%
Percent large district (i.e., high student size)	32.4%	38.4%	-5.9%	29.3%	36.6%	-7.3%	28.7%	36.8%	-8.0%



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