



ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Foundational Literacy Coaching

Guide and Expectations

2025 - 2026

Purpose/Overview

Repeated studies by Joyce and Showers have shown that when teachers participate in standard in-service models, they apply less than 20% of their learning back in their classrooms, as shared in the chart below (Showers, Joyce, & Bennett, 1987; Showers & Joyce, 1995.) Given the diverse needs of students and the expectation that students learn an increasingly rigorous curriculum, most teachers need ongoing, side-by-side support as they attempt to incorporate effective instructional practices into their classroom routines. Therefore, the professional learning described in the Foundational Coaching Grant is job-embedded professional development through one-on-one instructional and facilitative coaching support.

Relationship Between Levels of Impact and Components of Training

	Awareness Level Plus Basic Understanding	Skill Attainment	Application/ Problem Solving
Presentation of Theory	85%	15%	5-10%
Modeling	85%	18%	5-10%
Practice & Feedback	85%	80%	10-15%
Coaching	90%	90%	80-90%

From: Student Achievement through Staff Development (Joyce & Showers, 1988)

The Foundational Literacy Coaching Initiative was established in 2021 as the P-3 Literacy Coaching Initiative to advance instruction in early literacy skills and promote student learning through targeted deployment of well-trained literacy coaches. This coaching model is designed to help close the achievement gap among key student subgroups in Arizona through ongoing, evidenced-based training and support in effective literacy instruction within a coaching model. This targeted coaching supports the state's plan to increase the percentage of third graders passing the state assessment to 73% as defined by the Arizona Progress Meter and to have every student reading at grade level by the end of third grade. Foundational Literacy Coaches support teachers in implementing evidence-based core reading curriculum, instruction, and assessment; professional development focused on the foundations of early literacy instruction; and the use of assessment data collection and analysis for driving instructional decisions and goal setting. The primary focus of this grant is improving Tier 1 Core instruction.

The Arizona state budget designates funding for literacy coaches to be deployed to schools within LEAs in most need to support the implementation of evidence-based reading instruction based on the science of reading. The literacy coaches support pre-k to

third grade teachers in building capacity in the science of reading, implementing evidence-based reading practices, and raising student achievement.

Role of Literacy Coaches

The role of the foundational literacy coach is to build teacher capacity in implementing the Arizona ELA Standards using literacy instructional practices which will improve student learning and performance. The role of a coach, defined by C. Toll, is “one who helps teachers to recognize what they know and can do, they assist teachers as they strengthen their ability to make more effective use of what they know and do, and supports teachers as they learn more and do more” (2006). Therefore, a clearly articulated role is essential to the success of the initiative.

Responsibilities of the foundational literacy coach include building the capacity of pre-k through 3rd grade classroom teachers, ESS teachers, and reading interventionists in reflective practice focused on improving reading instruction/student achievement in following ways:

- Providing information and training to teachers in a variety of settings (e.g., whole group staff development, grade level meetings, one-on-one)
- Modeling and co-teaching instructional strategies and techniques
- Supporting teachers in implementation of new skills through instructional or facilitative coaching
- Observing new and experienced teachers in the classroom during the reading instructional tiers to provide specific one-on-one feedback regarding evidence-based practices to individual teachers during the coaching conferencing process
- Assisting in planning and implementation of a 120-minute literacy block (90-minute core that includes small group differentiation and a 30-minute intervention period) with an emphasis on phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, in addition to oral and written language
- Providing professional learning opportunities related to core and intervention programs to support instruction
- Providing resources, tools, and research for enhancing instructional practices
- Supporting teachers to deepen their understanding of content knowledge, evidence-based reading strategies, and how to use a variety of assessments to monitor student achievement
- Supporting grade level teams in analyzing data and designing next steps for instruction
- Meeting with the school administration and leadership team on a regular basis to examine school data and assist in school-wide planning and implementation of meaningful literacy professional learning opportunities
- Supporting the development of the MOWR literacy plan as a member of the school literacy committee

- Engaging in reading data conversations with teachers and assisting in goal setting, data/evidence collection and analysis, instruction, and assessment
- Supporting teachers as they work collaboratively to plan reading lessons, small group differentiation, and interventions
- Aligning efforts to the school's mission, vision, and literacy plan as they coincide with current reading research
- Staying informed of latest reading research
- Maintaining confidentiality to build trustful and respectful relationships
- Maintaining a high level of ethical behavior and confidentiality
- Recognizing and celebrating accomplishments of all teachers
- Continuing to build their knowledge and understanding of evidence-based practices in early literacy and coaching
- Networking with other literacy coaches

LEAs who are granted funds for a foundational literacy coach **must** use the job description provided by ADE and make certain the coach has relevant qualifications throughout their selection process. This will be addressed in the Assurances portion of the grant application.

Additionally, each coach must be limited to supporting one qualifying school unless otherwise approved by ADE. However, the coach may provide and support district-wide professional development in evidence-based early literacy practices as well as the use of reading curriculum.

What don't literacy coaches do?

With the focus on improving literacy understanding and practice through job embedded professional development, foundational literacy coaches must remain focused on their purpose to achieve desired results. When instructional coaches serve in multiple capacities at a school site, their purpose and work is diminished. The foundational literacy coaches should not participate in the following:

- Evaluating teachers
- Providing information that would be used in evaluation
- Serving as a substitute teacher
- Serving as the principal designee
- Serving as the testing coordinator or primary test administrator
- Taking primary responsibility for the instruction of a specifically assigned group of students
- Performing clerical duties outside the primary job responsibilities
- Developing or preparing school budgets
- Disciplining students in an administrative capacity
- Covering duties

What is the role of the principal in supporting literacy coaches?

A school principal serves many roles and responsibilities on a campus. Within the context of foundational literacy coaches, principals must overtly and covertly support the initiative and efforts of the coach. In doing so, the principal should intentionally structure a professional learning community, share the responsibility in leading and learning, and support instructional coaching practices. Here are a few specific actions the principal should consider:

- Meet with coaches on a weekly basis to establish coaching priorities
- Understand and promote evidence-based literacy strategies and practices aligned with the science of reading and writing
- Collaborate with coach to monitor and adjust building instructional goals and strategies based on data
- Promote and expect staff participation in professional learning opportunities and implementation of effective practices in the classroom
- Articulate the “why” of coaching and the roles and responsibilities of literacy coaches
- Attend professional development sessions and assist in facilitation of sessions
- Protect coach from responsibilities outside of the job description

Selection Criteria and Expectations of the Foundational Literacy Coach Grant

The grant will be used to fund literacy coaches for eligible LEAs across the state. LEAs will apply for funding to pay for a literacy coach that will be deployed within one of the select qualifying schools in the district/charter to directly support evidence-based literacy instruction in grades pre-k to third. The literacy coach will receive targeted training in effective coaching and the science of reading. Coaches will also participate in site visits with the Literacy Coach Coordinator. There will be additional opportunities for professional development through virtual book studies and monthly virtual office hours.

As with any grant, there are specific requirements and expectations to fulfill during the life of the grant. This grant is no exception and has criteria for selection and expectations for implementation and use of funds, should the grant be awarded.

LEA Selection Criteria

Schools eligible for the Foundational Coaching Grant are in the lowest 10% as selected through a data collection process to identify schools with the highest need. The data set includes, but is not limited to, the following elements:

- School and district/charter performance on the 3rd grade statewide English Language Arts exam
- School and district/charter performance on K-3 literacy benchmark data

- Percentage of students eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch
- Percentage of students from vulnerable populations
- Rural and tribal status

Once schools are identified, they will receive targeted outreach informing them of the opportunity with encouragement to apply. While an LEA must be eligible to apply for the grant, the grant is still competitive. Awards will be determined by the evaluation of grant applications from eligible schools using a rubric.

The goal of this grant is to significantly raise student proficiency in reading, as evidenced by AASA and literacy screener data, by building educator capacity in teaching the ELA standards. Beginning in FY25, eligibility for the grant will be reevaluated on a three-year cycle; however, continuation from year to year is dependent on the school's implementation of guidelines and is subject to end prior to completion of the three-year cycle if requirements are not met.

Funding from the grant will be used to pay coach salaries and benefits up to the eligible amount. Additionally, funds may be used for in-state travel and related expenses in alignment with district policies and guidelines. All training for coaches and administrators will be provided/facilitated by ADE through grant funds.

Grant Narratives

Once LEAs/schools are identified as eligible, they are encouraged to apply for the grant through GME. There will be several questions to answer to help set the stage of what LEAs and schools already have in place and how adding foundational coaches can further support your work. The list below represents key ideas and questions to consider for the application.

- Question- How many coaches are being requested? Please note that grant funds and coaches are allocated ONLY for eligible schools within a district. Not all schools that qualify must be served by a Foundational Literacy Coach. Each coach may serve at only one school unless otherwise approved by ADE.
- Question- Describe each selected educator's qualifications to be the Foundational Literacy Coach, including education, experience, and training.
- Question- Briefly describe how the district/charter will support the selected educator in improving high quality, evidence-based coaching in early literacy to PK-3 educators. Specifically, explain how the school principal and district administrator(s) will take part in training themselves to learn, support, and effectively implement system-wide literacy instruction aligned with the Science of Reading.
- Question- What other district initiatives are currently underway, and how will the Foundational Literacy Coach role align with and support these initiatives? Include

any initiatives that may be contrary to evidence-based literacy research, such as guided reading, the use of leveled readers, and any other balanced literacy practices currently being used.

- Question- Describe how the Foundational Literacy Coach will specifically support educators with building understanding of the science of reading, meeting the needs of students with reading difficulties, and using evidence-based reading instruction.
- Question- Please describe specific goals for this grant position(s), and how the success of the Foundational Literacy Coaching program will be measured.
- Question- The goal of this grant is to significantly raise student proficiency in reading, as evidenced by AASA and literacy screener data, by building educator capacity in teaching the ELA standards. Eligibility for the grant will be reevaluated on a three-year cycle. Please describe the LEA/school plan for continuing to build teacher capacity in evidence-based literacy practices after the term of the grant.

Assurances

Finally, as part of the grant application process, there will be the expectation that assurances are made to the purpose and goals of the Foundational Literacy Coaching Grant. The assurances relate to the information in this document and specifically address hiring expectations and an understanding of the coaching role.

- All parties have read the descriptions above including the review and use of the Foundational Literacy Coach job description during the hiring process as well as understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a foundational literacy coach.
- LEA and school leadership support of the literacy coach in their role, expectations, and practices.
- LEA will use funds in alignment with grant expectations and purpose.

Grant Timelines

The Foundational Literacy Coaching grant will be open for select districts/charters to apply. This is a rolling application, and the grant will remain open until all funds are allocated. Once awarded, grantees will begin the hiring process for a foundational literacy coach using provided job descriptions, being conscious of training dates which begin in August 2025.

Grant Timeline	
Outreach begins to those eligible to apply	April 2025
Grant application opens	April 2025
Application review begins	May 2025
Award announcements begin	May 2025
Training begins for coaches	August 2025

Professional Learning

On-going professional learning is critical for educators. With this training, they can continue to refine skills and practices to provide more rich experiences for students. The same is true for literacy coaches in the Foundational Literacy Coaching Initiative. Training has been designed to train coaches in coaching practices and literacy skills. Additionally, training opportunities will be available to administrators within the schools and districts/charters in which the coaches are deployed.

All foundational literacy coaches will be trained in both well-researched coaching practices and evidence-based literacy instruction. The opportunities offer extensive training for literacy coaches in the necessary strategies, techniques, and approaches for providing ongoing specific feedback and support to teachers on how to plan, deliver, and assess effective evidence-based reading instruction to increase student achievement.

Through participation in the various trainings, the literacy coaches will learn adult learning theory, a variety of coaching techniques and strategies, and approaches that can be utilized to provide teachers with specific feedback on evidence-based reading instruction in the classroom. This training also offers the literacy coaches a structured process to address rigor and instructional practices by facilitating grade level meetings, professional learning sessions and one-on-one coaching conferences.

In addition to the monthly training, all foundational literacy coaches will participate in other district/charter and state training and virtual or in-person meetings and/or site visits.

Literacy Coach Office Hours

Regular Literacy coach virtual office hours are facilitated by the State Literacy Coach Coordinator. Meeting topics may include best practices in reading instruction, differentiated coaching for teachers, and analyzing and monitoring assessment data to enhance daily student instruction. These meetings may include coaching practices and/or literacy specific foci. While these meetings are optional, coaches are encouraged to attend these meetings for further skill and content development.

Administrator Training

All building administrators that will host a Foundational Literacy Coach:

- must attend an annual kick-off meeting.
- attend one initial intensive training alongside the coaches to align processes and protocols and develop a systemic approach to coaching on their campus.
- attend additional virtual meetings to continue to evaluate the systems and support.
- Attend 3 or more hours of training in the science of reading provided by ADE.
- School and district/charter leadership are encouraged to participate in any coaching or literacy specific training being provided.

Other Training

As funds allow, Foundational Literacy Coaches may be invited to attend other coaching and literacy specific training. Additionally, similar opportunities may be available for administrative teams and teachers on campuses where coaches are deployed.

Foundational Literacy Coach Documentation/Accountability

In supporting a consistent and worthwhile coaching practice, the foundational literacy coaches will plan and document daily responsibilities using an 80/20 formula. Specifically, 80% of the literacy coach time is concentrated on responsibilities that provide Pk-3 teachers with specific feedback and instructional supports using various coaching strategies such as job embedded professional development, observations, conferencing, modeling, co-planning, and co-teaching. A walkthrough protocol aligned to the science of reading will be provided and should be utilized for recording documentation and to provide supportive feedback to the classroom teacher. This documentation will be shared with the State Literacy Coach Coordinator monthly or as requested. Coaching calendar and goals will be shared as requested.

The remaining 20% of the literacy coach time is focused on responsibilities such as planning and delivering district/charter and school level professional development and conducting grade level and school literacy focused meetings.

Literacy coaches support teachers in effective implementation of the teaching-learning cycle. This cycle or framework demands teacher knowledge in four crucial areas: planning,

assessing, evaluating, and teaching. By appropriately allocating their time, coaches will be available to support each of those areas effectively.

Approximate Average Monthly Percentage of Foundational Literacy Coaching

Observing	25%
Co-planning/Co-teaching/Modeling	20%
Conferencing	15%
Facilitating Grade Level/ Reading Leadership Team Meetings	10%
Site Leadership Team meetings/meeting with principal	10%
Planning and Conducting Professional Development	8%
Coaching Academy & other scheduled professional learning	6%
Administrative tasks such as documentation and filing related to coaching	6%

Appendix A

Foundational Literacy Coach Job Description

Job Summary:

The Arizona Department of Education supports the hiring of Foundational Literacy Coaches for the purpose of facilitating and assisting Pk-3 teachers to increase performance of their student's early literacy skills, measured on the state reading assessment and approved literacy screener. The coaches will facilitate learning aligned to science of reading research and provide technical assistance to teachers that will improve implementation of aligned practices into daily literacy instruction and intervention. This work includes the integration of the Arizona's English Language Arts (ELA) Standards and Arizona's Early Learning Language and Literacy Standards, locally determined literacy curricula and intervention programs, and use of data collected from the administration of formal and informal assessment tools.

The Foundational Literacy Coach is responsible for assisting teachers in the implementation and effective delivery of scientifically based reading instruction with a focus on Tier 1/Core. Coaches will provide appropriate services to their assigned school for a cohesive, sustained, intensive, and classroom focused approach that is rigorous, engaging, and relevant for students. Literacy coaches will provide a non-threatening, open, professional, and collaborative work relationship with district/charter-level school personnel, other school-based coaches, principals, and teachers. They will be required to use data to effectively identify the needs of the assigned school to prioritize, schedule, organize, and provide technical assistance that builds educator capacity to provide effective literacy instruction so that students meet age and grade level literacy expectations by the end of 3rd grade and beyond.

Major Responsibilities:

Responsibilities of the foundational literacy coach include building the capacity of Pk-3rd grade classroom teachers, ESS teachers, and reading interventionists in reflective practice focused on improving reading instruction/student achievement in following ways:

- Provide information and training to teachers in a variety of settings (e.g., whole group staff development, grade level meetings, one-on-one)
- Model and co-teach instructional strategies and techniques
- Support teachers in implementation of new skills through instructional or facilitative coaching
- Observe new and experienced teachers in the classroom during the reading instructional tiers to provide specific one-on-one feedback regarding evidence-based practices to individual teachers during the coaching conferencing process

- Assist in planning and implementation of a 120-minute literacy block (90-minute core that includes small group differentiation and a 30-minute intervention period) with an emphasis on phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, in addition to oral and written language
- Provide professional learning opportunities related to core and intervention programs to support instruction
- Provide resources, tools, and research for enhancing instructional practices
- Support teachers to deepen their understanding of content knowledge, evidence-based reading strategies, and how to use a variety of assessments to monitor student achievement
- Support grade level teams in analyzing data and designing next steps for instruction
- Maintain records related to coaching cycles, professional development, and data related to early literacy screening
- Meet with the school administration and leadership team on a regular basis to examine school data and assist in school-wide planning and implementation of meaningful literacy professional learning opportunities
- Support the development of the MOWR literacy plan as a member of the school literacy committee
- Engage in reading data conversations with teachers and assisting in goal setting, data/evidence collection and analysis, instruction, and assessment
- Support teachers' collaborative work to plan reading lessons, small group differentiation, and interventions
- Align efforts to the school's mission, vision, and literacy plan as they coincide with current reading research
- Stay informed of latest reading research
- Maintain confidentiality to build trustful and respectful relationships
- Maintain a high level of ethical behavior and confidentiality
- Recognize and celebrate accomplishments of all teachers
- Continue to build knowledge and understanding of evidence-based practices in early literacy and coaching
- Network with other literacy coaches

Knowledge, Skill, and Ability

Knowledge:

- Knowledge of evidence-based research in the areas of reading, writing, listening, and speaking, and language
- Knowledge of the essential components of reading instruction
- Knowledge of the science of reading and structured literacy
- Knowledge of the Move on When Reading (MOWR) legislation

- Knowledge of Arizona's English Language Arts (ELA) Standards and Arizona Early Learning Standards (AZELS)
- Knowledge of literacy assessment systems, practices, and types
- Knowledge of effective strategies in working with adult learners
- Knowledge of evidence-based practices in literacy
- Knowledge and experience in literacy instruction, literacy intervention, and development of and/or implementation of instructional literacy resources
- Knowledge of reading processes, acquisition, assessment, and instruction
- Knowledge of scientific reading research and its application to effective classroom instruction, structure, and practices, as well as intervention
- Knowledge of multi-tiered system of supports model, and data analysis and application

Skills:

- Systematic, explicit, instructional delivery
- Experience providing professional development and technical assistance directly to school and district/charter staff
- Ability to effectively prioritize, schedule, manage, and organize multiple daily tasks to achieve goals
- Ability to administer and interpret reading assessments and use data to determine professional development needs, and recommend changes to improve school-wide and/or classroom instructional practices
- Ability to rapidly acquire and apply new skills and information
- Ability to provide effective instructional feedback
- Ability to identify problems and develop appropriate solutions
- Use effective written and oral communication skills, including the ability to engage in difficult and candid conversations with a variety of stakeholders
- Demonstrated leadership/managerial skills
- Demonstrated team building skills
- Demonstrated collaboration and facilitation skills
- Proficient in MS Word, MS Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint, and other tools

Abilities:

- Motivating others to achieve
- High degree of professionalism to ensure and protect the confidentiality of educators and students
- Strong work ethic, self-directed and reliable, and the ability to work both independently and collaboratively
- High quality interpersonal skills and the ability to relate to and interact with adults exhibiting a range of abilities and dispositions
- Persistent despite obstacles

- Ability to orchestrate change
- Valuing lifelong learning
- Belief that a coach can make a difference, despite the nature of the challenges
- Desire to grow professionally

Licenses/ Certifications

- Master's degree in education or related field with 3 years documented successful experience teaching reading -OR bachelor's degree in education or related field with 5 years documented successful experience teaching reading with a minimum of 3 years of literacy experience at the State, District/Charter, or School Level
- Valid Arizona Teaching Certificate
- Reading Endorsement or K-5 Literacy Endorsement

Preferred and Additional Qualifications:

- Successful experience facilitating adult learning and delivering professional development specific to literacy instruction (e.g., professional development feedback / surveys, letters from participants, etc.)
- Experience mentoring, coaching, and providing feedback about instruction to classroom teachers
- Experience leading others in a collaborative process
- Experience analyzing and using student achievement data for instructional purposes
- Ability to travel occasionally