



2021 Annual Report

**Why Reading Matters and
What We're Doing About It**

Vision

Everyone is empowered through literacy.



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Mission

We advance literacy and learning through evidence-based practices in the classroom, home, and community.



Foreword



A focused Mission. A bold Vision. A new brand and name that speaks clearly to who we are—The Center for Literacy & Learning. The Center did not waver from its course in 2021 to take on a name change, a strategic and well defined mission, and a visionary rebirth that emboldens its role in transforming literacy and early childhood practice and outcomes.

At a time of unprecedented challenges, The Center stepped up and answered the call to address learning loss, early child development, and collaborative policy reform. At a time of great uncertainty, The Center took bold steps to grow and emerge as a leader in literacy and early childhood education reforms and programs. We prioritized serving teachers and students, reeling from the pandemic and multiple hurricanes, through our work at the school, school district, and state levels. We also recognized the need to grow our support of learning and engagement in the home by supporting parents, families, and caregivers through our family and community engagement programs.

Throughout the growth, strategic decisions, and bold initiatives we have not lost sight of our humble beginnings around one determined parent's dining room table some 30 years ago. We are forever connected to the legacy built from one voice to now thousands of voices across the nation, and even around the globe. We are forever connected to the belief that every child deserves every opportunity to be met where they are in their own educational journey. The movement is just beginning. And, as was the case 30 years ago, there is plenty of room at our table for YOU!

Dr. John Wyble
President & CEO



Note from the Chairman



Despite the challenges of a disruptive pandemic, our organization grew, expanded partnerships, and increased impact in 2021. Since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, we quickly pivoted and offered services to educators, parents and families, and the community overall through virtual means instead of our traditional in-person delivery. We dug deep and completed a comprehensive strategic planning process and emerged as a newly branded organization, with a name more reflective of our Mission: The Center for Literacy & Learning. We were able to do all of this because of the leadership and commitment made by the Board of Trustees through our 30 year history. With cross-sectoral leaders who are passionate about the cause of literacy on the Board, we built a solid foundation with resources, vision, and leadership necessary to be successful; even in historically challenging times. That is why, as we reflect on past accomplishments and growth, I am confident that our best days are ahead! Thank you for your continued support.

Charles Lacoste
Chairman
Board of Trustees



Note from the Chairman-Elect



As 2022 is already off to an incredible start with a record number of attendees at Plain Talk About Literacy and Learning®, we reflect briefly on a historic 2021 for The Center for Literacy & Learning. As we celebrate 30 years of service, leadership, and impact, we know the needs for literacy programs, family engagement, and early childhood education are as important as ever. We also recognize and appreciate the increased attention and support for these important needs. Preparing for our next 30 years, The Center will continue to focus on reaching underserved communities and supporting educators, families, and communities across Louisiana and beyond. As a national organization with 30 years of impact and nearly 400 years of combined educator experience on staff, we will continue to bring this conversation to a national level. Indeed, we have accomplished much. Still, there is much more work to do. The Center for Literacy & Learning will be there to lead!

Ronnie Slone
Chairman-Elect
Board of Trustees



Shared Values

Excellence

Thought Leadership

Strategy

Relationships

Advocacy



A Tribute to Earl Michael Willis



Our friend and colleague, Michael Willis, passed away in May 2021. Michael's passing was heartbreaking to all who knew him and is still sorely felt by The Center's team. He was a beloved team member whose legacy lives on in the work we do. Michael Willis was the Vice President of Advocacy, a role in which he built strong relationships across a wide variety of leaders and community members. He relentlessly advocated for systemic changes to improve educational outcomes for students in Louisiana.

Michael embodied the values of The Center. He was passionate about his work to The Center's mission and honoring his sister through the charity he founded, Running for Rachael.

As we reflect on the year 2021, we remember and celebrate Michael's many accomplishments, his vibrant personality, and his contributions toward improving literacy outcomes in his home state of Louisiana.



Why Reading Matters in Louisiana

On February 1, 2022, The Center for Literacy & Learning launched a survey to understand the nature of skills gaps among Louisiana-based employers, with a special emphasis on literacy skills. The questions shared with business and community leaders drew from the questions asked in the Business Roundtable (BRT) 2016 Education and Workforce Survey, whose responses were reported in the national Business Roundtable report, *Why Reading Matters and What To Do About It*. The main findings from the survey are included here. Additional surveys about literacy and literacy instruction will be rolled out over the next year.

11 Questions

Convenience Sampling

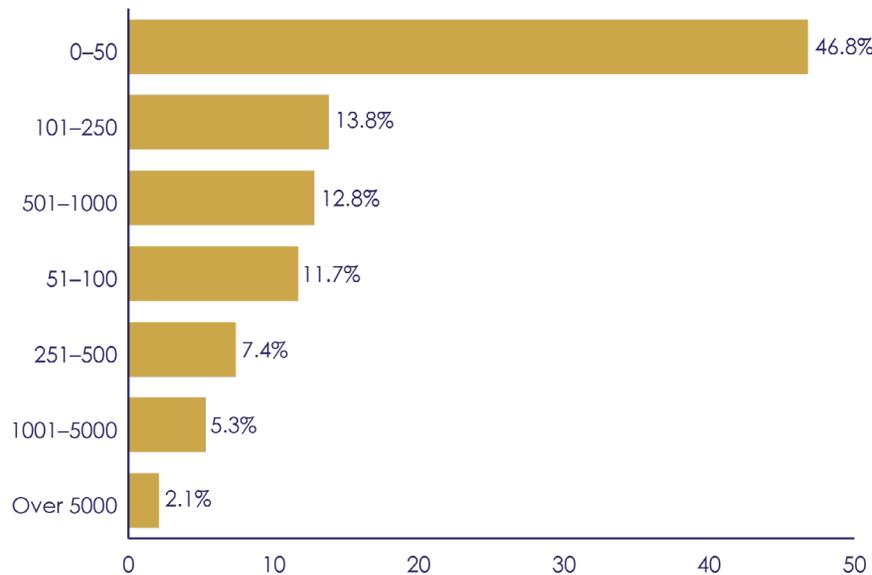
Anonymous Responses

Data collected from February 1, 2022 to March 29, 2022



Who Responded

While a majority of respondents worked in workplaces with 0-100 employees, larger organizations were also represented.



The survey was emailed to a contact list of Louisiana business leaders and shared during Lunch and Learn events throughout Louisiana between February 1 and March 10, 2022.

We received 94 Responses from individuals from a variety of sectors, with the most representation from education, non-profit, government, and financial sectors.

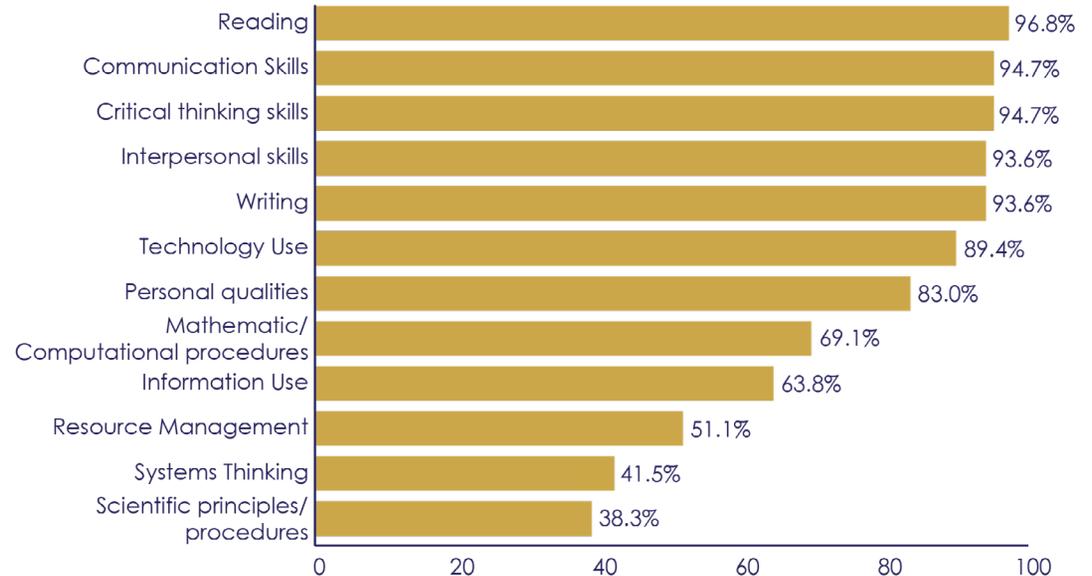


Employability Skills

We asked a question on what the most essential job skills for the Louisiana workforce based on the employability skills identified by the Perkins Collaborative Resource Network.

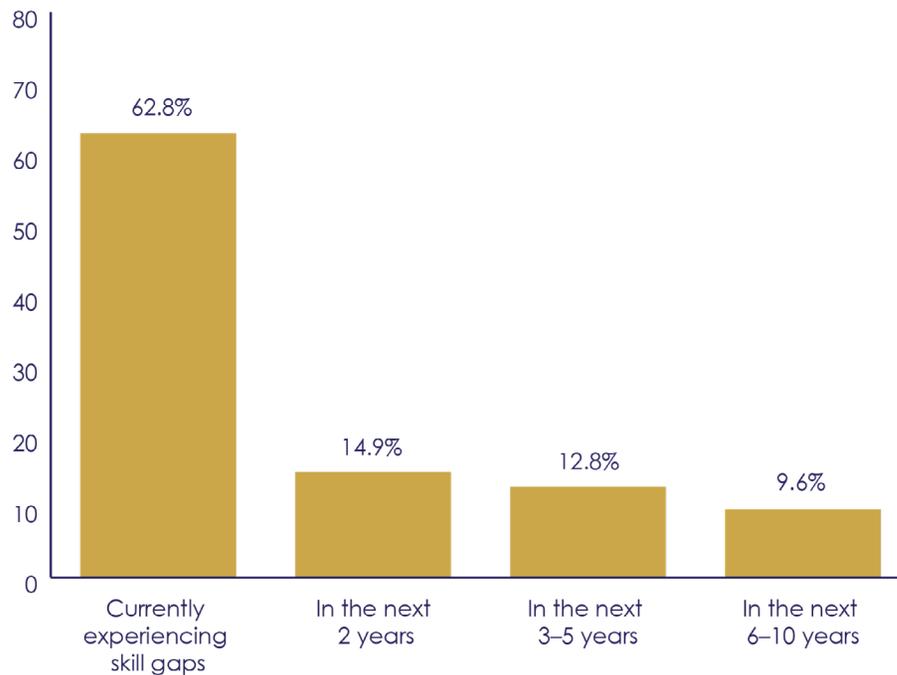
Reading, writing, critical thinking, and communication, all related to reading proficiency and comprehension, were among the top five skills that the respondents noted as essential to be hired at their organizations. Over 90% of respondents reported these skills as essential for employment at their organizations.

Which of these skills are essential for employees to be hired at your organization? Please check all that apply.



When Might Louisiana Experience Skills Gaps?

When are skills gaps expected to occur within your organization?



63% of the respondents reported their workplaces currently experiencing skill gaps, with an additional 15% of respondents expecting skills gaps within the next two years.

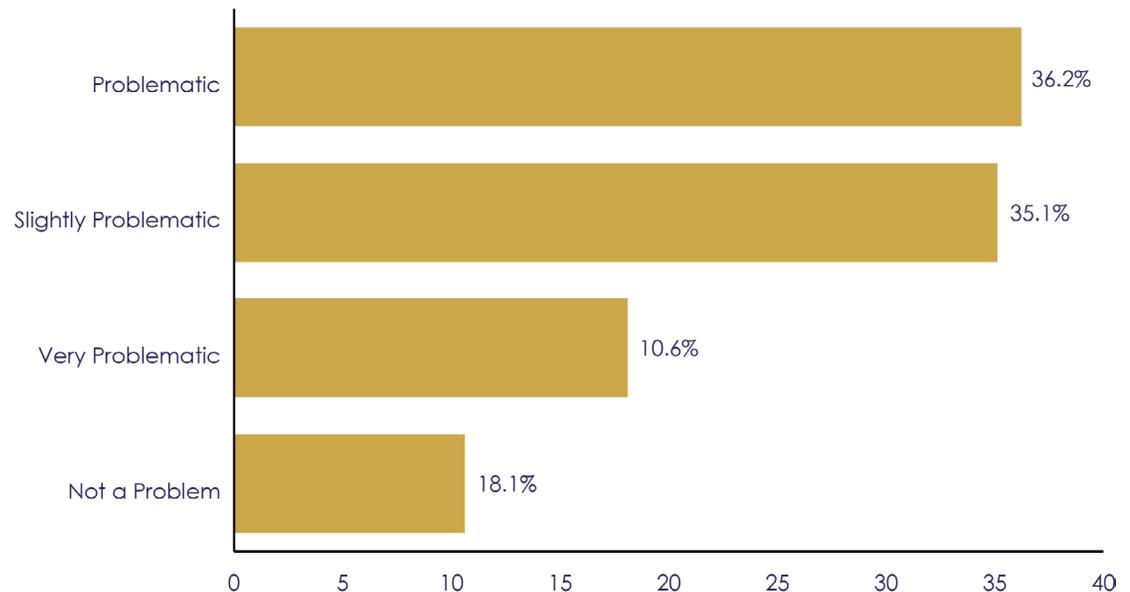


Are Skills Shortages A Problem for Louisiana Employers?

The survey included a question on how much of a problem skills gap is for the respondent's organization. This question was based on the BRT 2016 Education and Workforce Survey.

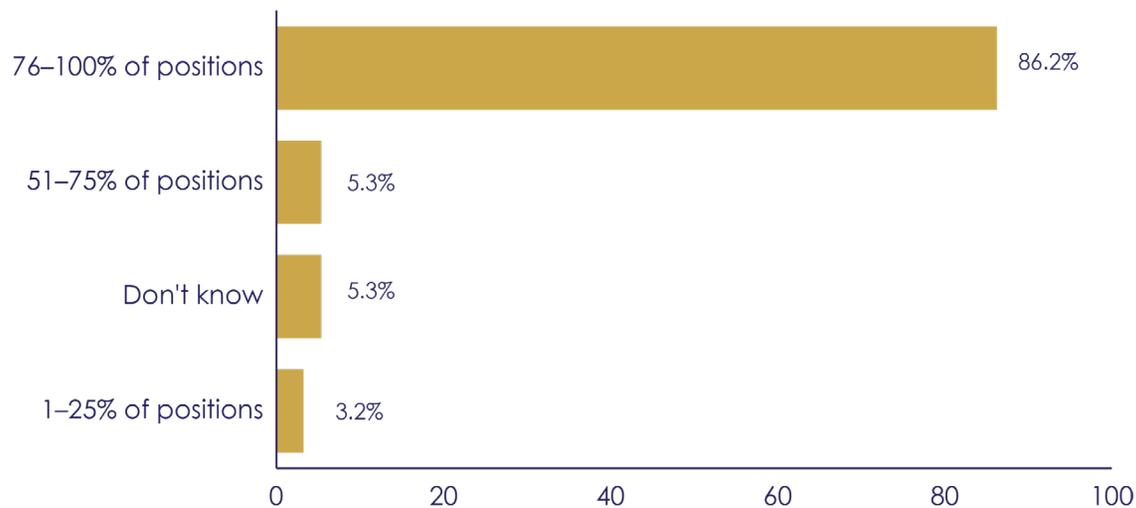
46.8% of the respondents reported that skills shortages were problematic or very problematic for their organization. Only 18.1% reported that skills gap were not a problem for their organization.

To what extent do you consider skills shortages to be a significant problem for your company, specifically in Louisiana?



Basic Reading Skills at Work

What percentage of your current workforce requires basic reading skills?



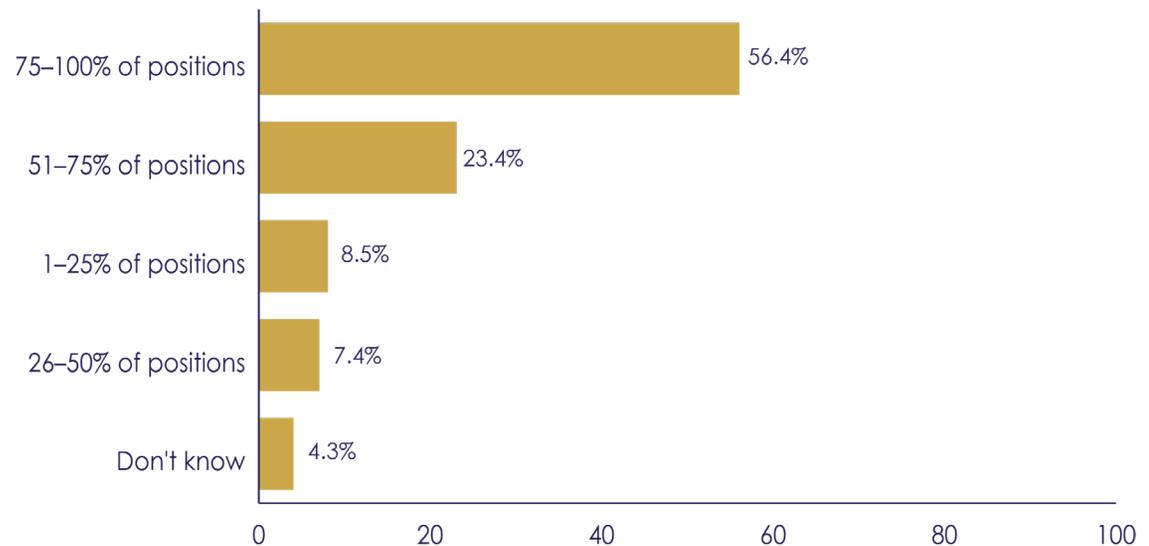
Most respondents reported that over 76% of the job positions at their organization require basic reading skills for their jobs.



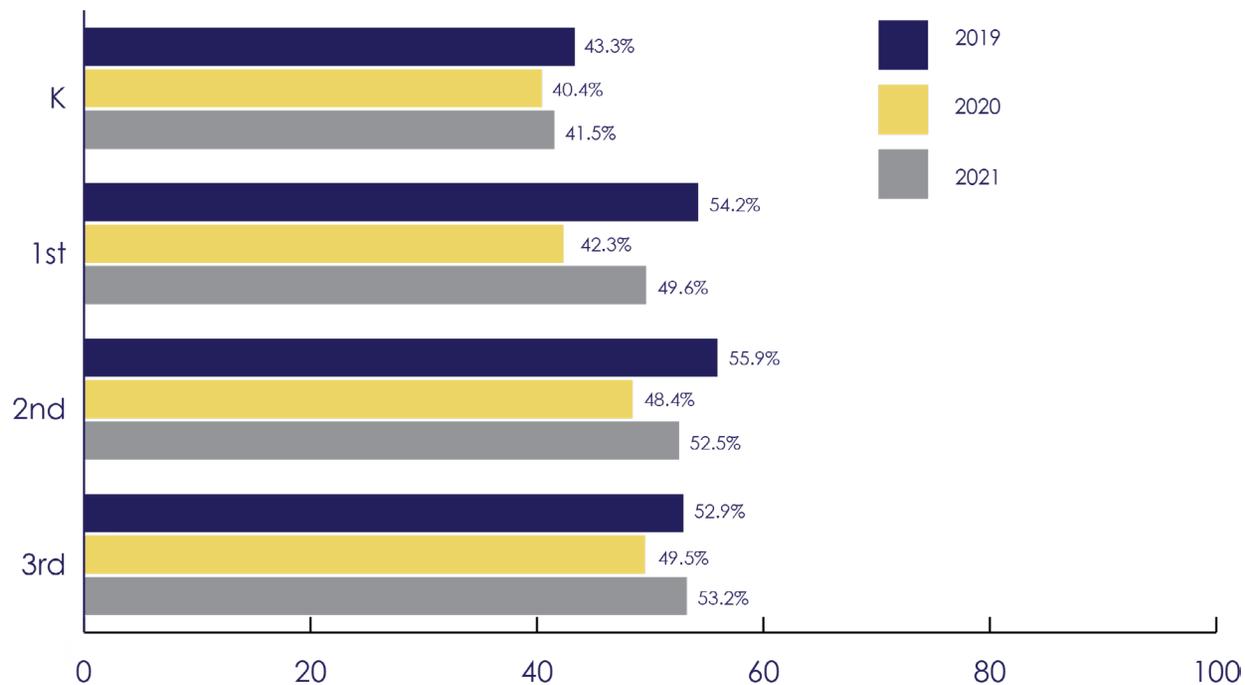
Advanced Reading Skills at Work

A majority of respondents reported that over 76% of job positions at their organization require advanced reading skills for their jobs. An additional 23% of respondents reported that 50—75% of positions.

What percentage of your current workforce requires basic reading skills?



Reading Skills Among Louisiana's Future Citizens and Workforce



Note: Data visualized from data published in LDOE's *Fall 2021 Reading Report: School, District, and State Results for Kindergarten through Grade Three*

According to the Louisiana Department of Education's *Fall 2021 Reading Report*, approximately 50% of Louisiana students are considered "Below Benchmark" and therefore at risk.

This categorization is based on student performance on the DIBELS 8th, Acadience Reading, STEEP, and STEP assessments.



Reading Skills Among Louisiana's Future Citizens and Workforce

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), administers assessments to samples of students representative of the national student population.

The 2019 NAEP data reports Louisiana as one of 9 jurisdictions that performed significantly worse than the National public. Only 55% of Louisiana 4th grade students were at or above Basic, compared to a national average of 65%.

Similarly, only 26% of 4th grade students were at or above NAEP Proficient, compared to a national average of 34%. NAEP reports Louisiana's performance as significantly lower than that of the national public.

Note: Data discussed above are available at the National Assessment of Education Progress website: <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile>

55%

Louisiana 4th Graders
At or Above Basic

26%

Louisiana 4th Graders
At or Above Proficient



Shaping Louisiana's Literacy Story

The national, state, and local data all share the theme of Louisiana's struggles with ensuring the development of reading proficiency among our students. The Center for Literacy & Learning team consists of and works collaboratively with national experts, as well as state, school, school system, and community leaders to rewrite Louisiana's literacy story. We continue to work with cross-sectoral partners at all levels to make impactful changes at home, in schools, and in communities through evidence-informed approaches to literacy instruction and supports. We also urgently advocate for policy changes at the local and state levels to increase available resources for effective literacy instruction, informed by decades of research. In recognizing the key role that families play in advancing student literacy skills, we continue to expand our programming directed at empowering families with information on best ways to reinforce their children's interest and skills in reading.





2021 Year In Review

Mission Advancement

- Virtual Plain Talk 2021
- Literacy Coach Model Contract and Implementation
- Launch of Louisiana Reads! Pilot
- Completion of Cohort 6 of Cornerstones
- Expansion of Growing Reading Brains
- Lit Academy 2021

Awareness and Outreach

- Revision of Organizational Vision, Mission, and Values
- Completed Organizational Rebranding and Website Updates
- Increased Social Media Presence and Reach
- Expanded relationships with Schools and School Districts Across LA
- Presence of The Center's Regional Literacy Specialists in 262 schools



2021 Year In Review

Advocacy and Outreach

- 5 Lunch and Learns in North, Central, and South Louisiana
- Literacy and Economic Development Summit 2021
- Meetings with LA Congressional Delegates in Washington, DC
- Renewal of Early Literacy Commission
- Literacy Day at the Capitol

Sustainability and Organizational Efficiency

- Adoption of technological solutions for communication tracking, data reporting and program management
- Transitioned to Online Time Tracking and Expense Reporting
- Adoption of toll-free number and hybrid-friendly Cox Business Voice with Webex
- Summer and Fall Staff Retreats with Expanded Team





Keynote PRESENTERS



Day 1
Chelonnda Seroyer



Ernesto Ortiz



Day 2 Panel
Carolyn Strom



Natalie Wexler

Thought LEADERS



Kristin Anderson



Kymyona Burk



Amy Elleman



Nadine Gaab



Jan Hasbrouck



David Kilpatrick



Pati Montgomery



Timothy Odegard



Hilderbrand Pelzer, III



Carey Wright



Nancy Young

Increase your impact.



Plain Talk About Literacy & Learning ®

Every year, The Center hosts Plain Talk About Literacy and Learning ®, an international conference that brings together researchers, policy makers, educators and other practitioners tied together by their research and practice-based interest in literacy. Plain Talk is an intensive professional development experience that equips participants with the old and new research on the Science of Reading and evidence-supported practical strategies to improve literacy instruction and outcomes.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic surge in cases, the organization quickly pivoted to offer Plain Talk as a two-day virtual conference in February 2021. The virtual event had the largest attendance at Plain Talk until that point.

1362

Conference Participants
from

5

Countries

49

US States and Territories



Plain Talk About Literacy & Learning [®]

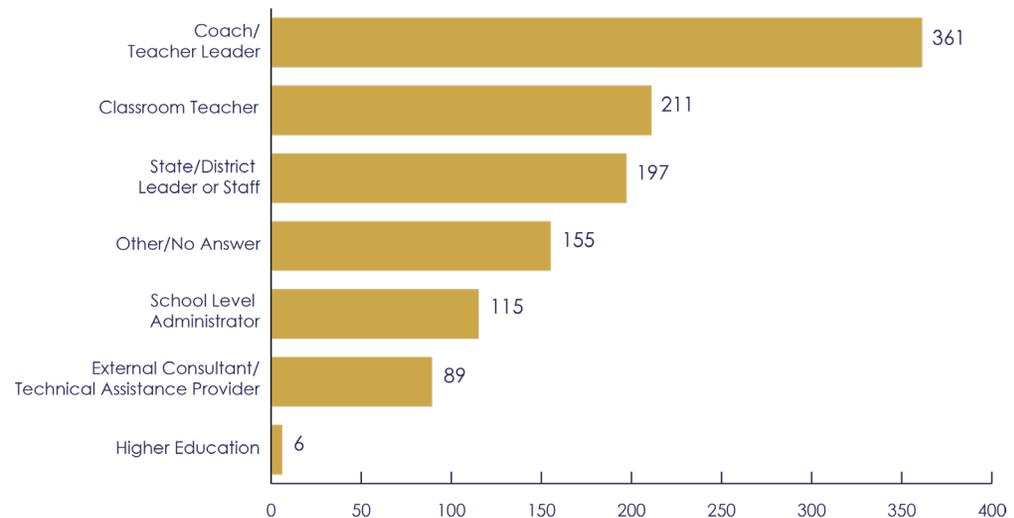
98.3%

Conference Participants reported attendance increased knowledge of the science of reading

96.6%

Conference Participants reported the usefulness and relevance of content as very good or excellent

The conference served a wide variety of K-12 educational and administrative roles.



Literacy Coach Model

To address learning loss resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) awarded The Center an emergency contract to support the immediate needs of Louisiana schools.

Through this contract, The Center serves as the facilitator for regional literacy specialists who provide ongoing support to literacy coaches in struggling schools (CIR/UIA-A). To meet the needs of this emergency contract, The Center rapidly hired and trained 15 regional literacy specialists, a program director, and a program coordinator in July 2021.

60

Local Education Agencies

262

Schools

180

Literacy Coaches



Literacy Coach Model

Despite the disruptions to many school districts due to the COVID-19 pandemic and multiple hurricanes, the regional literacy specialists built relationships with schools, school systems, and literacy coaches. They supported awareness around the Science of Reading and evidence-based literacy instruction strategies. The regional literacy specialists support literacy coaches through observations, modeling, resource-sharing, and co-planning.

The Director of Evaluation and Data also developed a detailed evaluation plan and a customized database to document the implementation and outcomes associated with this program to ensure accountability and continuous program improvement.



Louisiana Reads!

In Fall 2021, The Louisiana Reads! program was funded by two grants from the Huey and Angelina Wilson Foundation and RosaMary Foundation. As a result, the team planned events in the Greater New Orleans and Baton Rouge areas.

Though the initial launch was disrupted by both the COVID-19 pandemic surges and hurricanes, The Center adapted to plan and administer outdoor events that support the development of children's literacy skills at home.

The books distributed in 2021 included 9 unique titles that feature a diverse range of child protagonists who are empowered and reflected positively.



Louisiana Reads!

804

Families Served

2412

Books Distributed

9

Events



Early Childhood Programs

The Center's Child Development Associate (CDA) and BESE-approved Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate program, Cornerstones graduated Cohort 5 of early childhood teachers in April 2021. In June 2021, The Center commenced the coursework for Cohort 6.

In July 2021, The Center hired Gabrielle Izzo, Director of Early Childhood Programs, to expand The Center's work surrounding early childhood and early childhood literacy.

In 2021, Early Childhood team members coached teachers at three schools as part of a contract with Head Start Program.

50

Early Childhood Educators

30

Early Childhood Centers/
Schools

11

Parishes/Counties



Lit Academy

94

Participants
from

24

Schools & School Board
Offices

8

Local Education Agencies

On June 14 and 15, 2021, The Center hosted the Lit Academy in Lafayette, Louisiana. This team-based professional workshop was offered to 24 school-based teams selected by the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE).

The sessions addressed what research findings suggest about effective literacy instruction and strategies for evidence-informed curriculum choice, curriculum implementation, data collection, analysis, and interventions.

Lit Academy provides information on effective literacy instruction not just to teachers who implement curricula and lesson plans, but also to school and school district leaders who play key roles in planning and making decisions related to curricula and school-wide strategies to support students.



Science of Reading Learning Academy

In 2021, The Center's Literacy and Learning specialists provided professional development based in the Science of Reading to seven schools, in Louisiana, New York, and Washington, D.C.

The Center hired Janee' Butler and Courtney Babin as Literacy and Learning Specialists to expand the scope and reach of professional development offerings. The Center's Literacy and Learning Specialists delivered Growing Reading Brains, our signature professional development program to 131 participants in 2021. An additional 8 participants received a customized professional development training based on the Science of Reading.

139

Participants

7

Schools

6

Counties

3

US States & Territories



Science of Reading Learning Academy



Literacy Day at the Capitol

On May 6, 2021, The Center hosted its annual Literacy Day at the Capitol. The Center provided every member of the Louisiana legislature with a children's book written by a Louisiana author and/or with a focus on Louisiana. Team members shared information with a variety of stakeholders on The Center's programs and the need to invest in high-quality literacy instruction and related policy.

The Center recognized Mack "Bodi" White as the Senator of the Year and Royce Dupleisis as the Representative of the Year for their leadership and support of literacy initiatives in Louisiana.



Literacy Day at the Capitol



Literacy and Economic Development Summit

On April 7, 2021, The Center hosted the Literacy and Economic Development Summit in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The event brought together business and industry leaders, educational advocates, policymakers, elected officials, and other stakeholders and leaders from across Louisiana to discuss the intersection of literacy and economic development.

The Center has since continued the discourse on the role of literacy in economic development through Lunch and Learn events and strategic partnerships.



CDL the Center for DEVELOPMENT & LEARNING

Join us

LITERACY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT

April 7 | 9 AM - 5 PM
River Center Library Branch, Baton Rouge

KEYNOTE SPEAKER



Dr. Kymyona Burk
Policy Director for Early Literacy
Foundation for Excellence in Education

Register at WWW.CDL.ORG/LEDS

Thank you to our sponsors



Lunch and Learn Sessions Across Louisiana

117

Community Stakeholders
Reached

5

Louisiana Cities

In 2021, The Center hosted five Lunch and Learn sessions across Louisiana to raise awareness of literacy-related challenges that faces Louisiana's communities and economy. These events provided opportunities to connect with and listen to community stakeholders to identify local needs, literacy initiatives, challenges and strategies to improve literacy across all communities.

The events brought together business and industry leaders; educational advocates and leaders; elected officials, and other stakeholders and leaders from each community. In November 2021, Eric McVicker joined as the Vice President of Advocacy to lead The Center's advocacy efforts.

2021 Lunch and Learns were held in Alexandria, Baton Rouge, Lafayette, Monroe, and Hammond.



Advancement and Sustainability

In 2021, The Center's activities were supported by contracts, grants, individual and corporate gifts.

The Center received grants to support educator professional development, Louisiana Reads!, and general operation.

Grantors included: Entergy Charitable Foundation, Greater New Orleans Foundation, Huey and Angelina Wilson Foundation, Walmart Foundation, Charles Lamar Family Foundation, Junior League of Baton Rouge, Fitzpatrick Foundation, and RosaMary Foundation.

In December 2021, Morgan Hilliard joined as The Center's Vice President of Advancement to lead The Center's advancement efforts.

\$112,000

Grant Funds

8

Grantors



2022 and Beyond

2022: What We're Up To

The Center for Literacy & Learning has been busy during the first quarter of 2022.

Here's a quick look at our work so far in 2022

- Plain Talk 2022 in New Orleans, Louisiana
- Continued work in over 60 school districts
- Increased capacity for early childhood programs
- Presence and presentations at regional and national conferences
- Celebration of 30 years of supporting literacy and education
- Planning a Virtual Summit
- Revisions to corporate and individual giving opportunities
- Improved internal processes
- Development and implementation of evaluation and research plans



A Call to Action!

We thank you for reflecting back on The Center's challenges and successes of 2021, and looking forward to the opportunities, ongoing work, and continuous improvement in 2022.

You are an important part of our community.

We urge you to think deeply about ways you can empower your community and economy with literacy. We hope you will be flagbearers for the cause of literacy and the multipronged work that The Center does to improve literacy outcomes in Louisiana and beyond. Reach out to us to discuss potential ways in which we can partner to support your community's goals.

Please consider donating a dollar a day for a year to support books and services that directly and indirectly support student's literacy education and literacy environments.

Follow our website and social media to be in the know on all that we're doing to transform the literacy landscape in Louisiana and around the country!



Help Celebrate
30 YEARS

Your investment of \$30 a month for 12 months can:

- Provide a 3-book bundle to a child monthly
- Supply certification tools to an early childhood teacher
- Help 12 families discover the love of reading at home
- Help 12 childcare teachers to get certified

Scan the QR code to securely make your donation today!



THE CENTER 
for Literacy & Learning



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