

# **MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT FOR SCHOOL-BASED LITERACY COACHES AND/OR LITERACY INTERVENTIONISTS**

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BETWEEN THE SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND THE

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SCHOOL DISTRICT (DISTRICT) FOR THE 2025-26 SCHOOL YEAR.

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## **I. BACKGROUND**

The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) provides training for Read to Succeed (R2S) state-funded, school-based reading/literacy coaches employed by the district to serve primary and elementary schools and monitors the district's utilization of literacy coaches to ensure state funding is applied in a manner consistent with the requirements set forth in the Read to Succeed Act (Act 114) and Proviso 1.50 of the SC General Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 2025-26.

A reading/literacy coach is an instructional leader with expertise in the science of reading, evidence-based practices, and state standards, skilled in supporting educators as adult learners. They provide job-embedded, collaborative support—such as co-teaching, modeling, and data-driven conversations—to strengthen teaching and improve student literacy outcomes.

The district agrees to employ an appropriately qualified and endorsed school-based reading/literacy coach who works directly with teachers to bring about improvements in the classrooms that impact student achievement in literacy. The work of the literacy coach is shaped by evidence-based research, content knowledge, and knowledge of appropriate reading strategies to enhance learning.

For the 2025-26 school year, select schools may apply for a waiver to use their allocation towards a literacy interventionist (see Section VI).

This Memorandum of Agreement is due to the SCDE by September 8, 2025.

## **II. DISTRICT REQUIREMENTS FOR FUNDING AND USE OF FUNDS**

For each primary and elementary school, the school district shall be eligible to receive up to \$62,730 or the actual cost of salary and benefits for a full-time school-based reading/literacy coach (Proviso 1.50 for FY 2025-26). For the 2025-26 school year, the Office of Finance expects the final allocation to be \$53,540.29 per coach. School districts may use existing local funds currently used for reading assistance as the local support.

A district may only utilize these funds to employ school-based reading/literacy coaches that may serve in a primary, elementary, or middle school or a combination of these schools depending on

the area of highest need in the district. The school district must align the placement of coaches to the district reading plan that is approved by the SCDE.

To **receive and maintain** funding in accordance with this program, the district agrees to and assures the SCDE of the following:

Pursuant to S.C. Code § 59-155-180(C),

- (1) “To ensure that practicing professionals possess the knowledge and skills necessary to assist all children and adolescents in becoming proficient readers, multiple pathways are needed for developing this capacity.”
- (2) “A reading/literacy coach shall be employed in each elementary school [or primary or middle school as amended by Proviso 1.50 for FY 2025-26]. Reading/literacy coaches shall serve as job-embedded, stable resources for professional development throughout schools in order to generate improvement in reading and literacy instruction and student achievement. Reading/literacy coaches shall support and provide initial and ongoing professional development to teachers based on an analysis of student assessment and the provision of differentiated instruction and intensive intervention.

The reading/literacy coach shall:

- (a) model effective instructional strategies for teachers by working weekly with students in whole, and small groups, or individually (*i.e. The classroom teacher must remain in the room, actively observe, and stay engaged while the reading/literacy coach models a lesson. The intent is for the teacher to learn a new instructional skill through observation*);
  - (b) facilitate study groups;
  - (c) train teachers in data analysis and using data to differentiate instruction;
  - (d) coaching and mentoring colleagues;
  - (e) work with teachers to ensure that research-based reading programs are implemented with fidelity;
  - (f) work with all teachers (including content area and elective areas) at the school they serve, and help prioritize time for those teachers, activities, and roles that will have the greatest impact on student achievement, namely coaching and mentoring in the classrooms; and
  - (g) help lead and support reading leadership teams.
- (3) “The reading/literacy coach must not be assigned a regular classroom teaching assignment, must not perform administrative functions that deter from the flow of improving reading instruction and reading performance of students and must not devote a significant portion of his or her time to administering or coordinating assessments.” Schools and districts accepting funding to support a coaching position agree that the literacy coach must not serve as a full- or part-time administrator.

Additionally,

- **\*NEW** – To build long-term literacy growth and to support compliance with Act 114, all principals assigned a state-funded reading/literacy coach are *required* to attend a beginning-of-year leadership webinar in partnership with their assigned coach. This joint

session will review the expectations outlined in the MOA, clarify roles and responsibilities, and provide guidance for effective collaboration throughout the school year.

- The link for principals and reading/literacy coaches to register for the leadership webinar is in the *State Funded Reading/literacy coach Allocation and Agreement Memorandum*.
  - **Please share this new requirement with your principals and reading/literacy coaches.**
- The district accounts for the specific amounts and uses of all funds provided pursuant to this agreement and agrees not to use these funds for any purpose except in accordance with this agreement.
- The district provides information on the names, certification numbers, qualifications/endorsements, and email addresses of reading/literacy coaches funded by the state appropriations to the SCDE.
- By accepting the funds, a school district agrees the funds will not be used to supplant existing school district expenditures, except for districts that either are currently, or in the prior fiscal year, were paying for literacy coaches with local funds.
- Funds appropriated for reading/literacy coaches must be used to provide primary, elementary, and/or middle schools with school-based reading/literacy coaches who shall serve according to the provisions in R2S Act. The district agrees to cooperate with any compliance and technical assistance visits from the SCDE during the 2025-26 school year.
- *It is imperative to note that funds allocated for reading/literacy coaches are restricted solely to support the employment and work of individuals serving in the capacity of reading/literacy coaches, as defined by the Read to Succeed Act and aligned with the approved district reading plan. These funds **may not** be used for other instructional or non-instructional personnel, nor should they be repurposed for general staffing needs.*
- *Reading/literacy coaches must serve exclusively in that role and are not to be assigned duties outside the scope of their responsibilities as outlined in Act 114 and the SCDE guidance. This includes, but is not limited to, serving as general classroom teachers, test coordinators, administrative assistants, instructional coaches, interventionists (unless a waiver has been granted), or any other role not directly connected to the duties of a certified reading/literacy coach.*
- *Districts found to be misallocating these funds or misusing coaches for duties outside the scope of literacy coaching may be subject to corrective action, including potential recapture of funds.*
- *The intent of this funding is to ensure focused, evidence-based reading instruction and support, which is critical to the long-term success of students and the integrity of the state's literacy efforts.*

### III. JOB QUALIFICATIONS

The SCDE must publish guidelines that define the minimum qualifications for a reading/literacy coach. These guidelines must deem any licensed/certified teacher qualified if, at a minimum, he or she:

- (1) holds a bachelor's degree or higher and the R2S Literacy Coach or R2S Literacy Specialist endorsement; or
- (2) holds a bachelor's degree or higher and is actively pursuing the R2S Literacy Coach or R2S Literacy Specialist endorsement; or
- (3) holds a master's degree or higher in reading or a closely related field and is actively pursuing the R2S Literacy Coach or R2S Literacy Specialist endorsement.

Within these guidelines, the SCDE must assist districts in identifying a reading/literacy coach if the school is not successful in identifying and directly employing a qualified candidate. The provisions of subsection (A), including the local support requirements, shall also apply to any allocations made pursuant to this paragraph.

#### **IV. SCDE READING/LITERACY COACH INSTITUTE FOR R2S LITERACY COACH ENDORSEMENT**

State-funded reading/literacy coaches are required to earn the R2S Literacy Coach Endorsement. Coaches may earn the endorsement through pre-approved college coursework or professional development. SCDE encourages coaches to earn the endorsement by taking “*Principles of Coaching*” and “*Action Research in Literacy Coaching*” through the SCDE’s Reading/literacy coach Institute. This two-year professional learning sequence is designed to equip coaches with the foundational knowledge and applied skills essential to effective literacy coaching. Upon successful completion of both courses, the coach will earn the R2S Literacy Coach Endorsement. Course registration details will be included in a forthcoming memorandum.

Districts wishing to offer alternative R2S Literacy Coach Endorsement training will need to reach out to the Office of Instructional Supports (OIS) for next steps prior to August 19, 2025.

#### **V. ADDITIONAL AGREEMENTS**

The SCDE and the district agree to minimum additional qualifications and responsibilities for a school-based reading/literacy coach. The additional qualifications are as follows:

- Has knowledge of and the ability to apply adult learning theory within professional learning experiences;
- Works effectively with adults and motivates them to change practices;
- Has experience as a successful classroom teacher;
- Has experience in increasing student achievement in reading;
- Has knowledge of evidence-based reading research, quality reading instruction, and a depth of content knowledge;
- Has an ability to integrate reading strategies into other content areas;
- Is experienced in data analysis to inform instruction; and
- Has excellent communication, presentation, interpersonal, and time management skills.

The additional responsibilities include:

- Assist with the development of the school's annual Reading Plan submission;
- Must participate in the SCDE R2S Literacy Coach Institute or pre-approved college coursework approved by the SCDE;
- Attend all literacy coach meeting/training sessions;
- Meet monthly with administration to discuss progress (review data), issues, and concerns based on goals;
- Serve as job-embedded, stable resources for PLOs that adhere to professional learning standards;
- Continue to participate in job-embedded professional development. This professional development will be based on the needs of coaches; and
- Complete documentation and surveys related to job functions.
- Must attend quarterly SCDE Regional Coach Support Meetings (virtual during school hours).

## **VI. LITERACY INTERVENTIONIST WAIVER**

Districts must prioritize reading/literacy coach funds for certified reading/literacy coaches. Only schools where fewer than one-third of third graders scored Does Not Meet on the SC READY Reading assessment may request to use these funds for interventionists who spend more than fifty percent of their time providing direct support to struggling readers in grades kindergarten through grade five. Districts seeking a waiver for this allocation certify that their schools meet the necessary criteria for this funding flexibility.

## **VII. SPECIFIC PARTIES AGREEMENT DOCUMENT**

This link should be provided to each participating school and the survey completed by the appropriate parties by the same date as the original Memorandum of Agreement is signed and submitted. [Click here to access the survey](#). Districts with a large number of coaches/state funded interventionists may also choose to input the necessary data into this [spreadsheet](#) and email the completed form to [mgibbons@ed.sc.gov](mailto:mgibbons@ed.sc.gov).

## **VIII. TERMS AND TERMINATION**

The SCDE reserves the right to withdraw funding issued pursuant to this agreement if the SCDE determines that the school or district is not utilizing such funding in a manner consistent with legislative requirements for funding, qualifications, and the roles and responsibilities as outlined herein.

## IX. SIGNATURES

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Name of District

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Print Name of District Superintendent

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Signature of District Superintendent

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Date

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District Superintendent Email Address

Return the **completed signature page** of the Memorandum of Agreement by September 8, 2025 to:

Marie Gibbons

R2S Team Lead, Office of Instructional Supports [mgibbons@ed.sc.gov](mailto:mgibbons@ed.sc.gov)