

NC ACCESS BEST PRACTICES



Office of Charter Schools
NC ACCESS PROGRAM
NC Department of Public Instruction

School Culture

Literacy Skills

Reading Mastery

Implementation Description

Pocosin Innovative Charter (PIC), nestled in rural northeastern North Carolina, serves a K-8 student population where the vast majority are reading well below grade level. “Children who are behind their peers in reading struggle with low self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy. Low achievement in reading is also the common denominator in school discipline, attendance and dropout problems, and juvenile crime” (The Children’s Reading Foundation). With this research in mind, PIC’s leadership focused on addressing this critical need. The school leadership used NC ACCESS funds to purchase the [Reading Mastery Transformations](#) program (RMT) and started implementing it during the 2021-2022 school year, the schools’ third year of operation. While there are many programs to choose from, it is important to consider an option that can be implemented equitably and with fidelity across the school. Therefore, once the program was selected, staff training began, and school leaders established a school-wide support structure.

Teachers, teacher assistants, and other staff members who lead reading groups all participated in research-based literacy instruction training. The initial training focused on reading instructional fundamentals and six targeted practices all teachers are expected to use when teaching reading. Following this groundwork delivered by the school’s Director, two consultants from RMT met with each teacher to explain the program and work side by side with them to deliver model lessons. Research shows that ongoing coaching is also important to improving teacher instructional practice (Kraft, 2018), so these same consultants provided coaching support throughout the school year observing each teacher and providing feedback and suggestions to the teacher after each observation. Teachers also had the opportunity to visit another school and observe the successful implementation of these practices in the classroom. Finally, school leadership began training their own coaches. By utilizing NC ACCESS funding, the Director and two staff members were able to participate in the [National Institute for Direct](#)

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About This School

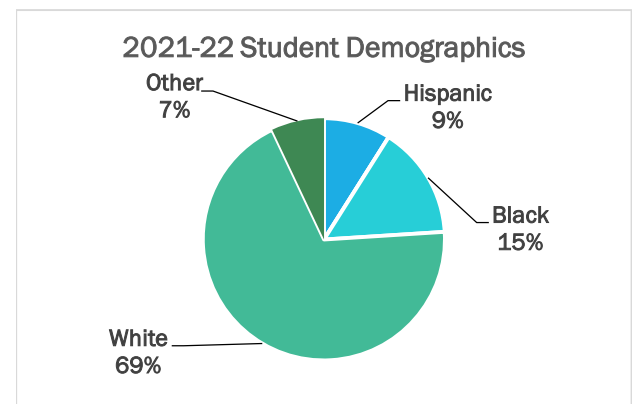
Pocosin Innovative Charter

We provide a unique educational choice for our community and region. We share a passion for providing our children with a rigorous curriculum designed to teach them skills connected to our local history and culture and to prepare them for a successful future. We have a focus on agriculture and provide classes and opportunities for students to actively participate in agriculture activities.

Year School Opened: 2019-20

Grant Awarded: 2021-22

Initial Grade Levels Served: K-8



% ED Student Population: 39%

Urbanicity: Rural / Creswell, NC

Persons in Poverty (Washington County)⁵: 24.3%

[Instruction](#) training and will use the knowledge they have gleaned to provide long-term support and coaching for teachers at PIC.



School leadership understands the challenge of learning and implementing something entirely new and wanted to provide the necessary support to make this a smooth adjustment. They established a common 90 minute reading block each day. This time may be used differently based on student needs and grade level, but students participate in small groups and are all focused on reading skills. There is also protected time in the schedule for data meetings. Data is generated through RMS provided assessments administered after every 10 lessons. These meetings took place every couple of weeks early in the year and focused on using data to adjust student placements and identify instructional needs. Later in the school year, they met less frequently but continued using the data to assess student progress.

PIC is only halfway through the implementation of this initiative, and they have found that the staff has easily adopted the new practices. Teachers have also noted that students are more confident in their reading skills, and their increased ability to “read to learn” is positively impacting their performance in other subject areas.

Results

At the start of the 2021-22 school year, only one 3rd grader was reading at grade level. By the end of the year 64% of the 3rd grade students were proficient readers as measured by State EOG Assessments.

You can learn more about the school's EOG data [here](#).

[Star assessments](#) were administered 5 or 6 times throughout the year and the growth of 225-250 Lexile points for 3rd graders is noteworthy.

Challenges

Overcoming the concern that many teachers have about preparing students for a state test was a challenge. School leadership continually worked to deemphasize the focus on state testing and encouraged teachers to shift their mindset to becoming comfortable with and implementing the new curriculum with fidelity and allowing student growth to follow naturally.

Future Modifications

PIC will continue to improve the fidelity of implementation of the Reading Mastery Transformations program. School leaders intend to begin using the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in order to obtain nationally normed data that can be used to guide further instructional improvements.

Critical Components

Getting Started

It is essential to quickly garner staff buy in when implementing any new program. Because PIC staff saw the urgent need to address students' reading difficulties, they were very receptive and quickly began implementing the new materials.

Creating a positive, supportive environment where teachers felt free to try new strategies aided in the rapid adoption of the curriculum.

Ongoing Supports

There are any number of reading programs available to schools, but each of them must be implemented with fidelity in order to achieve the desired results. A continual focus on using data to improve instructional practices will ensure continued growth for all students. Teachers will continue to receive specific feedback on areas that need improvement along with strategies that can be used to address these needs.

Equity Connections

PIC's decision to focus on literacy instruction is especially impactful for the educationally disadvantaged students who make up a large percent of the school's population. Research shows, "Students who have lived in poverty are three times more likely to drop out or fail to graduate on time than their more affluent peers; if they read poorly, too, the rate is six times greater...For black and Latino students, the combined effect of poverty and poor third grade reading skills makes the rate eight times greater" (Casey Foundation, 2011). Developing educationally disadvantaged students into proficient readers is critical to closing the achievement gap, and effective literacy instruction is not merely a program, but rather a tool to change the trajectory of a child's life (Butters, 2018).

Research

1. Annie E. Casey Foundation. (April 8, 2011). "*Students Who Don't Read Well in Third Grade Are More Likely to Drop Out or Fail to Finish High School*". Accessed on June 1, 2022. Retrieved from <https://www.aecf.org/blog/poverty-puts-struggling-readers-in-double-jeopardy-minorities-most-at-risk>
2. Butters, H. (November 6, 2018). "*Improving Reading Outcomes for Economically Disadvantaged Students*". Edutopia. Accessed June 7, 2022. Retrieved from <https://www.edutopia.org/article/improving-reading-outcomes-economically-disadvantaged-students>
3. Kraft, M.A., and Blazar, D. (2018). "*Taking Teacher Coaching to Scale: Can personalized training become standard practice?*". *Education Next*, 18(4), 68-74.
4. The Children's Reading Foundation. (N.D.). "*What's The Impact?*". Accessed on June 10, 2022. Retrieved from <https://www.readingfoundation.org/the-impact>
5. United States Census Bureau. *Quick Facts North Carolina*. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/NC/PST045219>