




STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: District Special Education Directors

FROM: Melissa K. Wlodarczyk Hickey, Reading/Literacy Director 

DATE: May 10, 2018

SUBJECT: Statewide K-3 Professional Learning Opportunity: ReadConn

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) is offering a free professional learning series for special education teachers and their K-3 general education partners to support the implementation of the Connecticut Core Standards in English Language Arts: Foundational Skills and comprehensive reading instruction. The comprehensive learning content is aligned to the teacher reading survey objectives, and designed specifically to support both K-3 special education teachers and K-3 general education teachers who serve students with disabilities.

Participants will develop the ability to identify a student's skills gap in the area of phonemic awareness, decoding, fluency, and comprehension and be able to address that gap in a timely manner to ensure each student is progressing as a reader. General and special education teachers will practice whole class and small group direct instruction in reading foundational skills. Teachers will learn the components of comprehensive literacy instruction, and immediately integrate new content into lesson planning for upcoming instruction.

Registration and Required Commitments of Participating Teams

This series is intended to support school-based teams, and commitment to the entire series is imperative.

Your school-based team must consist of:

- **one principal**
- **one K-3 school-based literacy leader;**
- **two K-3 special education teachers; and**
- **two K-3 general education teachers**

To register, go to: <http://surveys.pcgus.com/s3/Cohort-3-2018-READCONN-Team-Registration-Site>

The K-3 literacy leader is defined as a school-based individual with a formal literacy leadership role responsible for supporting K-3 teachers. All teachers on this team must currently teach Grades K-3, and may include teachers of English learners. Principals are responsible for registering teams for the program. Once the initial registration process has been completed, principals and team members will receive an e-mail from Public Consulting Group (PCG) Education with instructions on how to register for the appropriate sessions.

Additionally, the **district special education director and school principal** must participate in the half-day kick-off and mid-year leadership events, and the Capstone event.

If you have any questions, please contact Joanne R. White, Education Consultant, at 860-713-6751 or e-mail at Joanne.White@ct.gov.

Enclosure

ReadConn: Special Education K-3 Reading Skills Professional Development Series

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the “ReadConn Professional Development Series”?

The ReadConn Professional Development Series is focused on identifying students' needs related to critical early literacy skills and delivering explicit instruction regardless of reading approach or program. The learning content is designed specifically to support both K-3 special education teachers and K-3 general education teachers who serve students with disabilities. This series will increase teachers' expertise in identifying necessary foundational skills, spotting student skills gaps, and monitoring students' progress to create a rock solid foundation in early literacy skills. The program consists of six-person teams that include one school-based administrator, one literacy leader (school-based individual with a formal literacy role, responsible for supporting K-3 teachers in their professional learning in reading skills and knowledge), and two special education teachers and two general education teachers currently teaching Grades K-3, inclusive, and may include teachers of English learners. Cohorts are involved for one school year.

What role do special education and general education teachers play?

Teachers will attend the regional workshop sessions and the Capstone event with their team. With guidance from their school-based literacy leaders, teachers will also enhance their skills through self-paced online modules. Over the course of the school year, teachers will develop a strong understanding of the Foundational Reading Standards and engage in regular opportunities to apply their learning in the classroom, ensuring their learning is responsive to on-the-ground realities of their classrooms.

What role do literacy leaders play?

Literacy leaders will expand their content, pedagogical knowledge and effective practices for supporting special education and general education teachers in foundational literacy. Literacy leaders will fully engage in the learning series, attending every session and participating in virtual learning opportunities. They will participate in face-to-face workshops, collaborate with other Connecticut literacy leaders, and engage in four online self-paced modules. This is *NOT* a Trainer of Trainers model of professional development.

As a literacy leader, what are my responsibilities to my school or district?

Potential school-based literacy leaders and their school and district leaders should discuss any expectations before, during and after participation so that literacy leaders can make informed decisions about their role. Literacy leaders who already hold school or district leadership roles have a professional responsibility to provide guidance and share their learning with others.

What role do principals play?

Principals will also augment their knowledge base for supporting literacy leaders, and special education and general education teachers in effective foundational literacy instruction. They will take part in the ReadConn Kick-off and Mid-year Leadership Events, and Capstone event focused on their role in supporting teachers and literacy leaders.

What role do district special education administrators play?

District special education administrators will develop a clear understanding of the relationships between components of the program, and how they can support optimal implementation across their district. They will take part in the ReadConn Kick-off and Mid-year Leadership Events, and Capstone event.

What is the purpose of the series?

The goal of this series is to respond to the needs of Connecticut K-3 teachers and literacy leaders around foundational reading skills by providing professional learning that encompasses the Reading Foundational Skills of the Connecticut Core Standards (CCS) in English Language Arts. The learning content is designed specifically to support both K-3 special education teachers and K-3 general education teachers who serve students with disabilities. This program aims to build capacity in teachers, literacy leaders, and school and district leaders that can be sustained and expanded.

With whom is the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) collaborating on this project?

ReadConn is brought to you through a partnership with Public Consulting Group (PCG) of Boston, MA, and LearnZillion of Washington, D.C.

How do I register?

Principals are responsible for registering teams for the program. To register, principals should:

- 1) direct internet browser to: <http://surveys.pcgus.com/s3/Cohort-3-2018-READCONN-Team-Registration-Site>;
- 2) select “Register Team”;
- 3) input first name, last name, e-mail address, role (*principal*), grade level (*N/A*);
- 4) input the information for team including one literacy leader, two K-3 special education teachers, and two K-3 general education teachers (inclusive, and may include teachers of English learners); and
- 5) choose “next,” and within one business day, principals and team members will receive an e-mail from PCG with instructions on how to register for the appropriate sessions.

District special education administrators can also register for the ReadConn Kick-off by directing their internet browsers to: <http://surveys.pcgus.com/s3/Cohort-3-2018-READCONN-Team-Registration-Site> and selecting “Register an Administrator.” They, too, will receive an e-mail confirmation from PCG with instructions on how to register for the event.

What is the difference between the ReadConn Leadership Events and the Regional Workshops?

The ReadConn Leadership Events establish and nurture the whole community of school-based literacy leaders across the state to enable them to learn from each other’s experiences and challenges. The ReadConn Leadership Events provide a safe space for them to master new content and effective skills for supporting adult learning back at their schools. The ReadConn Leadership Events are a pillar in the ReadConn program that ensure the transfer of foundational skills instruction into the classroom with a positive impact on student outcomes. Additionally, the ReadConn Leadership Events provide strategies and frameworks that are evidence-driven to support schools in establishing effective systems for K-3 reading instruction, and thereby improvement in student performance. After the in-person ReadConn Leadership Events, support continues via online coaching groups that connect regularly to study student work, work through challenges, and celebrate successes.

The Regional Workshops are quarterly and are offered multiple times across the state. Teams (i.e., literacy leader, two special education teachers, and two general education teachers) are expected to sign-up and attend each of the four interactive workshops together. Teams will be actively engaged in increasing their knowledge and expertise in identifying necessary foundational skills, spotting student skills gaps, enhancing their instruction in reading foundational skills, and monitoring students’ progress. This training introduces the content and activities of the online modules. Teams will have the additional opportunity to share and discuss key takeaways from trying out what they have learned in their schools.

What are the characteristics of literacy leaders and teachers who participate?

<p style="text-align: center;">Literacy Leader <i>1 per school</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Teacher <i>4 per school</i></p>
<p>A school-based individual with a formal literacy role and responsible for supporting K-3 teachers in their professional learning in reading skills and knowledge. <i>A literacy leader who is:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Passionate about using effective coaching and leadership practices to enhance teachers’ instruction and grow student results. ● Committed to deepening their understanding of how to support teachers and employ digital collaboration tools. ● Eager to learn more about literacy practices for teachers and students within the context of the CCS. 	<p>Two special education teachers and two general education teachers currently teaching Grades K-3, inclusive, and may include teachers of English learners. <i>A teacher who is:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Passionate about providing learners with opportunities to practice and master foundational literacy skills and strategies. ● Embracing a growth mindset about improving instructional and foundational literacy practices. ● Eager to collaborate with a community of teachers from across the state and build leadership skills. ● Energized about helping colleagues explore and apply new approaches to instruction so that all teachers are supported in teaching the CCS.

