
HILL for Literacy, Inc.

Professional Learning Communities Support
Arkansas Department of Education - Division of Elementary and
Secondary Education

Organizational Narrative

HILL QUALIFICATIONS

HILL for Literacy (HILL) is a 501c3 nonprofit providing technology-enabled consultancy and professional learning services to states, districts, and schools to improve literacy planning, practices, implementation monitoring, and outcomes with the aim to increase the number of students meeting state reading standards. We assist schools to implement RtI (Response to Intervention) in language and literacy grades Prek-12. Founded in 2001 as The Hanson Initiative for Language & Literacy at the Massachusetts General Hospital Institute for Health Professions with seed funding from the Hanson family, HILL became an independent organization in 2010. Over 20 plus years, we have partnered with over 600 urban, suburban and rural schools in multiple states in the Northeast. During the school year 2023-2024, the organization:

- Served 618 schools
- Trained 8,750+ teachers
- Reached 220,000+ students

HILL remains committed to providing efficient, effective, and equitable solutions to more schools at an affordable cost. We leverage our literacy and implementation expertise to create, customize and scale an assessment and program agnostic RtI Framework. The HILL approach affords flexibility to accommodate the wide variety of district-provided materials, goals, support structures and teacher expertise. This, in tandem with our expertise in literacy, implementation, and now technology-enabled services, makes HILL different from competitors offering consulting services or teacher professional development.

HILL Online

In 2017 HILL began to use technology, HILL Online (HOL), to enhance services and augment synchronous support in schools. HOL, an award-winning, web-based application with a suite of custom components, offsets the need for direct expert support in schools through technology-enabled needs assessments, data-based decision making, and professional learning. Today HOL is used in more than 100 districts in the Northeast. In our most recent review at the end of SY 2023/2024, 79% of 454 teachers surveyed reported that use of HOL will lead to improved student literacy outcomes. These HOL assets assist HILL in providing high quality support and services at an affordable cost.

The current HOL components are:

- **Expertise** is a continuously updated library of resources. It has 15 fully developed learning series – both synchronous and asynchronous. A library of infographics, mini-lessons, and modeling videos are designed to build practitioner knowledge of the science of reading (SOR), student data analysis and use, program implementation, leadership routines, and the application of this knowledge to inform high-quality and equitable literacy instruction. Approximately 4,000 educators from more than 100 districts across the Northeast are enrolled in Expertise courses.
- **Continuum** uses student assessment data to provide precise instruction and intervention protocols for teachers and interventionists to maximize student reading growth. Continuum analyzes student literacy assessment data from common evidence-based student assessment

systems. Using algorithms, Continuum generates instructional recommendations and progress monitoring plans. Continuum is currently used in 148 schools reaching over 74,000 students.

- **Roadmap**, a third component, is a school-based RtI Gap Analysis tool (needs assessment).

HILL EXPERIENCE

Connecticut

2019- present CT Partnership for Literacy Success, coaches and trainers have supported over 70 schools across 16 Alliance districts in Connecticut since 2013. In partnership, the expert team of reading coaches, trainers, professional developers, and evaluators from the Connecticut State Department of Education, the University of Connecticut's Neag School of Education, HILL and Literacy How work directly with schools and districts to provide reading coaching, leadership training, professional development, and family engagement.

2023 - ARPA Right to Read Professional Learning Series (Leadership Series) The goal of the series is to support districts in the installation and implementation of a RtI framework for their literacy models. The Learning Series, funded by the CT Right to Read Act, is supported by a powerful partnership that includes HILL, the CT State Department of Education, Literacy How, and the University of Connecticut.

2023 - Science of Reading Professional Learning Series (SOR) teaches critical components of literacy instruction, integrating current research into each module and translating it into classroom application. The series consists of 10, 2.5-hour facilitated, synchronous modules held via Zoom and continued learning through asynchronous materials and follow up activities. Through 2023 and continuing today, HILL has trained 770 CT educators across 130 CT districts through this Leadership and SOR Series.

2024 - Open Access Professional Learning (OAPL) for literacy in PK to 12. The HILL's propriety suite of Science of Reading (SOR) evidence-based literacy learning professional development for classroom educators and administrators that span the PreK, elementary and secondary grades translates findings of research from multiple fields to increase educator proficiency in the knowledge and practices that are aligned to current research, as well as helping educators identify students at risk for reading difficulties. The most recent OAPL offering trained 130 educators in summer 2024.

Massachusetts

2022 Early Literacy Professional Development grant supported Massachusetts educators in strengthening their knowledge base for early literacy. At the conclusion of the project in June 2023, there were over 280 MA educators across 93 districts who participated in these HILL-created modules.

2021 MA Literacy Support Network for Coaches and Building Based Leaders This grant supported school literacy coaches and building-based literacy leaders grades K-5 in implementing Massachusetts' data-based decision-making model. HILL was responsible for designing, planning and facilitating five virtual network meetings providing training, resources and tools to 120 educators from 62 districts.

2021 GLEAM (Growing Literacy Equity Across Massachusetts) HILL designed, delivered, and facilitated a monthly professional development collaborative network for literacy coaches and leaders from GLEAM schools across the state. The project is ongoing.

2020 DESE Early Grades Literacy grant to increase student proficiency in early reading, specifically foundational skills, using scientific, evidence-based practices, materials, and assessments. HILL provided training to 12 DESE consultants on the foundational literacy skills of reading, including: phonological awareness, phonics, word reading and fluency, evidence-based instruction and practices, assessment and data analysis and coaching.

Vermont

2017- 2024 Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union (SVSU) HILL has been providing professional development and consultation around RtI and systematic and evidence-based reading instruction for elementary and middle schools, as well as providing professional development to district administrators and Title 1 and Special education teachers.

The HILL continues to work with districts throughout New England including its work with CT State Department of Education and MA DESE. The HILL is also providing training directly through contracts to over 40 school districts in Massachusetts as well as a private day school and has also worked with a large district in New York and a district in Maine. We maintain an ongoing relationship with University of CT's Neag School of Education and Massachusetts teachers who complete our SOR training series are able to receive PDPs toward their license renewal through Westfield State University.

Awards/Recognition

2024, The HILL received certified provider status in the RIVET Education Professional Learning Partner Guide. RIVET evaluates and recommends partners who provide professional learning around high quality instructional program implementation and curriculum-aligned services to schools and districts. *See our page here:* <https://plpartnerguide.org/partner/hill-for-literacy/>

HILL for Literacy is an approved High-Quality Professional Learning Partner (HQPL) supporting HQIM as indicated in the AR Professional Learning Partner Guide.

2024 –HILL Online received the Silver Brandon Hall Award. The Brandon Hall Group is a research and analyst firm which recognizes EdTech solutions from innovative and cutting-edge trailblazers in education.

Overarching Professional Learning Approach:

Our professional learning model rests on the premise that all educators can rise to excellence in their teaching craft. Educator success is built on a system-wide approach that builds on evidence-based practices through classroom application and targeted feedback, guided coaching and supportive leadership, collaborative colleagues shared language and methodologies, and the use of data to drive instruction.

The Standards for Professional Learning, enumerated by *Learning Forward*, capture the essential levers in our delivery model:

- **Learning Communities:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.
- **Leadership:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning.
- **Resources:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning.
- **Data:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.
- **Learning Designs:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.
- **Implementation:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long-term change.
- **Outcomes:** Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards.

Educators come to the field with many strengths, but also disadvantages when it comes to teaching language and literacy in their classrooms. HILL's 20 years of experience providing professional learning through district partnerships has shown us that teachers need ongoing knowledge building, and assistance to implement evidence-based practices in how to teach and grow language and literacy skills in students.

Addressing this problem is not easy, as teachers are expected to deliver evidence-based reading instruction with high fidelity. Literacy leaders (administrators, internal and external coaches) must coordinate, guide, and support teachers in identifying the unique literacy needs of each student, customizing resources to meet these needs, knowing how to deliver and adjust instruction if needed, and then determining if it worked and why. The HILL works to develop the knowledge and skill, to do this critical work.

The HILL is unique in its district-wide approach to building professional knowledge through our model of assessing prior training and current knowledge, determining areas of support (Science of Reading, Data-Based Decision Making, etc.), surveying potential delivery structures (district wide professional development sessions, grade level training and support, professional learning communities by school, direct 1-1 coach or teacher support, etc.) and customizing a plan for partnership. HILL Online is the most efficient and cost-effective operational structure through which sustainability for literacy change is driven.

Service Delivery Model

HILL's Online Expertise platform provides educators with timely job-embedded, contextual professional learning to ensure they understand the how and the why of effective reading instruction and have a common foundation of background knowledge across their school or district.

We offer a fully asynchronous SOR professional learning series through a partnership with Axiom Learning Solutions. The asynchronous SOR series provides educators with a targeted, meaningful, and efficient learning experience. In fact, 544 teachers surveyed who participated in our asynchronous training report that they have a good or excellent understanding of the course content. The delivery of an asynchronous series of trainings provides for greater feasibility, sustainability, and equity in learning. Each Module/eLearning provides the background knowledge for educators to engage in implementation of the topic and to more strategically use their in-person time with the facilitator to address their specific needs.

We encourage the utilization of existing leadership teams or the creation of a district literacy leadership team to guide this effort. Additionally instructional coaches or literacy mentors/lead teachers are invaluable in providing educators with implementation support. Existing structures such as Professional Learning Communities and Coaching Cycles are utilized and if these do not exist, we work to build professional learning time into schedules.

Facilitators at HILL may partner with LEAs/District Literacy Leadership Teams to provide consultation and support to install systems and structures for accomplishing follow-up tasks.

1. Science of Reading

The HILL's Science of Reading professional learning series empowers educators to understand and act upon scientific, evidence-based practices, materials, and assessments and equips educators with the foundational knowledge to teach reading to students through an asset-based approach and provides a strong base-knowledge to differentiate instruction amongst students. Developed over 5 years, these modules can be translated across any reading program or instructional pathway. HILL has spent extensive time creating its SOR series to implement a cohesive structured approach to instruction that integrates speaking, listening, reading, and writing by providing explicit, systematic, diagnostic-prescriptive instruction in phonological and phonemic awareness, sound-symbol correspondence, syllables, morphology, semantics, and syntax.

HILL's SOR modules are grounded in the study of the relationship between cognitive science and educational outcomes. Each session is designed to cover high leverage/high impact content and immediately turnkey this into instructional practice. Furthermore, asynchronous training makes it more feasible for schools to do this within a very challenging environment providing flexibility and cost effectiveness.

Teachers have and will continue to receive credit and professional development points toward license renewal. We partner with Westfield State University in Westfield, MA to offer 2 graduate credits to participants. *See Appendix A for course overview and syllabus.*

This Series will provide:

- **K-5 Teachers and Literacy Leaders** foundational knowledge on how children learn to read and utilize language for literacy growth that they can immediately be turnkey for use in their classrooms.

The topics addressed are:

1. The Brain and Reading
2. Oral Language and Literacy
3. Features of Effective Instruction: What, Why, How
4. The Power of Phonemic Awareness
5. Word Blending: A Hierarchy of Skills
6. The Role of Automaticity
7. Text Reading: What (with Whom), When and How
8. Growing Vocabularies
9. Building Comprehension
10. Pulling it All Together

Expected Outcomes:

Participants will:

- Build knowledge of how the brain learns to read and use this knowledge strategically to provide meaningful reading instruction with their own students. Participants will:
- Make connections in the relationship between reading and the development of oral language.
- Learn and practice using high-leverage instructional routines that support reading acquisition.
- Discover the key role that automaticity plays in becoming a proficient reader.
- Explore the cognitive processes are involved in deeply understanding text.
- Interrogate how we know whether we are using the right assessments to determine student need.
- At each juncture teachers will have structured opportunities to apply all content in their classrooms and reflect upon their implementation within the context of the course.

- Deliver instruction that is explicit, systematic, culturally responsive and impactful regardless of what reading program/HQIM is in use.
- Use their knowledge in combination with student assessment data to articulate where each student is on the continuum of reading skill.
- Deploy explicit routines using features of effective instruction to bring students to mastery on a target skill.
- Enhance Core Literacy/HQIM instruction to maximize the benefit to students.
- Contribute to a professional community that maximizes current, evidence-based literacy practices to best benefit their students.

Prerequisites:

- None except for access to a classroom with students K-5.

The Science of Reading: Primary Grades

- Designed for grades **K-2 teachers**, special educators, reading specialists, ESL/MLL teachers, principals, and literacy coaches. Asynchronous or synchronous module options.
 - Asynchronous: 10 self-paced asynchronous learning modules (approximately 1.5-hours per module) with asynchronous application and reflection (approximately .5 hours per module)

The Science of Reading: Intermediate Grades

- Designed for grades **3-5 teachers**, special educators, reading specialists, ESL/MLL teachers, principals, and literacy coaches. Asynchronous or synchronous module delivery options.
 - Asynchronous: 10 self-paced asynchronous learning modules (approximately 1.5-hours) with asynchronous application and reflection (approximately .5 hours)

Resources and materials provided for all courses include handouts, presentation slides, online resources, instructional routines and lesson templates. *See Appendix B for example of SOR Primary Module 1.*

Evaluation and Assessment

Participants are assessed through a number of different interactive measurement tools that track and measure how research is translated into classroom practice for each participant. These are comprised of 1) What, So What, Now What, 2) Application of New Learning, and 3) Reflection (After Application).

HILL surveys participants 3 times throughout the duration of the 10-module series to gather course, access, and usability feedback allowing HILL team members to respond to enrollees. There is also an end-of-course survey to evaluate and improve overall delivery and course content.

SOR Efficacy Data

District Snapshot, Lawrence MA

In SY 22-23, HILL for Literacy delivered the Primary and series to 267 PreK-2 teachers in Lawrence Public Schools, a majority minority urban district of 13,000 students, PreK to Grade 12. The data show a positive correlation between teacher participation in the SOR Professional Learning Series and the DIBELS screening data at both the middle (MOY) and end (EOY) of the year. The data indicates that students in schools with teacher participation in the Science of Reading (SOR) professional learning series are increasing their early literacy skills at faster rates than students in schools with fewer teachers participating in the SOR series. *See Appendix C for Lawrence SOR data highlights.*

University of Connecticut (UConn) Study

In summer 2023, the HILL partnered with researchers from UConn to conduct a study on 100 participants taking our Science of Reading Series for Primary & Intermediate Grades. Pre and post online surveys were conducted before and after each module to gauge the educators' understanding of the content and how it changed after the instructor led course. The study found statistically significant increases between participants' pre and post test scores on all modules. *See Appendix D for UConn efficacy data.*

2. Foundational Literacy

This series provides:

Teachers and Literacy Leaders with in-depth, directed training in how to plan and implement effective Small Group Lesson Plans. It is designed to provide the knowledge and ability to begin using data-informed small group instructional plans from the start of the school year. Application of this training lends itself to use with any Core Literacy Program/HQIM as the instructional plans may be adapted to any curriculum in use.

There are two different, aligned, training options for educators of Primary grade students, K-2 (4 Modules total) and educators of Intermediate grade students, 3-5 (3 Modules total) that range in time from 1-3 hours, to be completed incrementally as time allows. Training options are not strictly assigned to a set of grade levels, rather, options may be selected based on the varying strengths and needs of students in an educator's classroom.

The Series, described in *Appendix E*, is comprised of seven eLearning modules and the topics range in focus between the two series, but all include:

- The Brain and Reading
- Purpose, structure, and key features of the Foundational Skills Lesson Plan
- Features of Effective Instruction
- Foundational Skills Routines (vary between Primary and Intermediate)
- Backward Planning of a Foundational Skills Lesson Plan

Topics, Modules and Broad Learning Targets

Topic: Primary Initial Training

Module 1: Introduction

Module 2: Foundational Skills Lesson Plan

Module 3: Backward Planning

Topic: Intermediate Initial Training

Module 1: Introduction

Module 2: Foundational Skills Lesson Plan

Module 3: Fluency Lesson Plans

Module 4: Backward Planning

Prerequisites

- **Currently Providing Support for Foundational Skills Acquisition:** Learners should be teachers, tutors, coaches or administrators who support learner/s (General Ed, SWD, EL, etc.) that would benefit from foundational skills instruction and support.
- **Basic Understanding of Core Programs:** Learners should have a foundational knowledge of the reading programs used within their school or district.
- **Experience with Student Data:** Familiarity with collecting, analyzing, and using student performance data to inform instruction is beneficial but not mandatory.
- **Instructional Planning Skills:** Basic skills in lesson planning and instructional design to effectively integrate new strategies and materials is beneficial but not mandatory.
- **Professional Development Participation:** Prior participation in professional development sessions related to literacy and reading instruction is beneficial but not mandatory.

Resources and materials are provided for the course.

See Appendix F for an example from Primary Module 2: Foundational Skills Lesson Plan.

3. Strengthening Instructional Quality

The HILL is an HQIM PL Partner for the following materials:

- Amplify CKLA Skills (2020)
- Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) (2015)
- Into Reading (2020)
- Wonders (2020)
- Wonders (2023)
- myView Literacy (2020)

In receiving this designation, HILL demonstrated trusted excellence, program expertise, and proven success in partnering with LEAs and SEAs in providing ongoing implementation support for teachers for the HQIMs listed above.

Through the Expertise platform of HILL Online, we offer high quality, customized professional learning, fully aligned to Science of Reading, to strengthen instructional quality of HQIM Implementation through:

1. PLC's focused on collaborative planning.
2. Using assessment data to drive instruction.
3. Building leadership capacity to support implementation of HQIM.
4. Increasing acceleration opportunities and student outcomes
5. Access to core HQIM for all learners (students with disabilities, English learners, etc.)

As enumerated above, we partner with districts to strengthen instructional quality through our professional learning model which has the *Learning Forward Standards for Professional Learning* at the core. We work with districts to strengthen their implementation of HQIM through an ongoing partnership with teacher learning and system-level sustainability as cornerstones of the effort.

As our newest offering is, our **Core Literacy Program/HQIM Implementation Series** to empower educators with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to effectively implement High-Quality Instructional Materials, ensuring data-driven, aligned, and purposeful instructional practices that lead to improved student reading outcomes. For this series, we seek to empower both teachers and literacy leaders with the knowledge, skills and tools to participate in ongoing implementation of HQIM efficiently and effectively.

This Series provides:

- **K-5 Teachers in grade-level teams** with the knowledge and tools necessary to implement their core literacy program in an evidenced based manner to meet the literacy needs of all students.
- **Literacy Leaders who support teachers** with the training materials and tools necessary to facilitate knowledge building around core program implementation and provide tools to support effective and evidenced based implementation.

The Series, described in *Appendix G*, is comprised of eight eLearning modules at an average length of 30 minutes/per module to be completed incrementally. The topics addressed are:

- **Module 0:** Guide for Literacy Leaders for Year 1 Program Implementation
- **Module 1:** Pacing Guide
- **Module 2:** Lesson and Cognitive Planning
- **Module 3:** Purpose and Routines of the Foundational Skills Block
- **Module 4:** Features of Effective Instruction: Foundational Skills Lesson
- **Module 5:** Building Background and Vocabulary
- **Module 6:** Independent Student Work
- **Module 7:** Program Assessments

Expected Outcomes:**Upon completion of this series, teachers and literacy leaders will be able to**

- Align priorities and use of a Core Literacy Program/HQIM consistently across their grade level.
- Gain increased confidence in the ability to understand comprehensive Core Literacy Programs/HQIM and implement them with integrity.
- Utilize Core Literacy Program/HQIM implementation materials with a clear sense of purpose and methodological soundness.
- Align the use of a Core Literacy Program/HQIM consistently across different grade levels.
- Support grade-level teams in aligning the use of a Core Literacy Program/HQIM for effective implementation.
- Engage teachers in a continuous cycle of professional learning, revisiting and reinforcing key training topics with current research and evidence-based practices.

Technology Requirements

- Computer or Tablet
- Internet Access
- HILL Online Expertise

Evaluation and Assessment

- Comprehensive Knowledge Check:
- Feedback Mechanisms:
 - Three Question Survey for all courses:
 - How likely are you to use the information from this course in your job? (Likert scale)
 - How likely are you to recommend this course to a colleague? (Likert scale)
 - Please let us know why or why not you are likely to recommend this course to a colleague. (Open response)

Additional appendices:

Appendix H – HILL for Literacy Annual Report

Appendix I – HILL for Literacy EEO Policy

Appendix J – Response Signature Page

Appendix K – Serviceable Counties Form

Appendix L - Professional Development Services Workbook