

NC Ready Schools Definition and Pathways

A ready elementary school provides an inviting atmosphere, values and respects all children and their families, and is a place where children succeed. It is committed to high quality in all domains of learning and teaching and has deep connections with parents and its community. It prepares children for success in work and life in the 21st century.

1. Leaders and Leadership

The principal advocates for and leads the ready school. School leaders believe that *all* children can learn and provide support and strategies for teachers and staff to acquire the requisite skills within the context of a learning community. Additionally, leaders of ready schools understand early childhood education and support teachers in the implementation of best practices for young children. The school garners support from the superintendent, central office, and school board.

2. Transitions

Effective transitions plans are school and community initiated to address the needs of the school, family, child, and community. There is ongoing communication and collaboration among elementary schools, early care and education (ECE), and families to ensure smooth transitions from the Infant-Toddler Program (Part C) to preschool, from preschool and home to school, and across grade levels within and between schools. The school participates in a variety of transition experiences for children entering pre-k or kindergarten and across grade levels (PreK-3).

3. Engaging Environments

The school projects an open, child focused, welcoming atmosphere characterized by friendliness, respect, high teacher and staff morale, and the use of appropriate practices that support emotional and social development. The building and grounds are safe, inviting, and developmentally appropriate. The school's learning environments actively engage children in a variety of learning activities.

4. Effective Curricula, Instruction, and Child Assessment

The school diligently employs educational methods and materials shown to be effective in helping a diverse population of children achieve appropriate academic growth to reach essential standards. Children with disabilities and other special needs are accommodated and included in the regular instructional programs to the maximum extent possible. Standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment are aligned between Early Childhood Education and the school, within a classroom, within a grade level, and across grade levels.

Research and data help to drive instructional practice, and teachers plan within and across grade levels to ensure alignment and multi-level intervention strategies.

5. Respecting Diversity

The school seeks to help children from all circumstances and backgrounds succeed; it interacts with children and their families in ways that are compatible with individual needs and family backgrounds. The school uses culturally appropriate curricula and instructional materials to enhance learning. Children with disabilities and from diverse backgrounds and circumstances are represented in curriculum, class materials, and activities. All of these children participate in a wide range of learning activities appropriate for their individual needs as full members of the school community.

6. Family, School, Community Partnerships

Schools and communities actively work together to address academic, social and cultural needs of their students and families. The school implements practices and policies that encourage a variety of opportunities for community and family participation in all aspects of school life. The school enhances families' capacities to foster their children's readiness and to support children's learning and development in and outside of schools. The school functions as a community and partners with the community to provide opportunities and services to children and families.

7. Teacher Supports and Adult Learning Communities

The school organizes classrooms, schedules, teams, and staff activities to maximize the support necessary for all adults to work effectively with children during the school day. Teachers are encouraged to participate in professional organizations. The school leads in establishing and effectively operating professional learning communities within and across grade levels.

8. Assessing Progress and Assuring Quality

The school systematically uses both formal and informal assessments to plan and tailor instruction to address individual student needs, to improve classroom practices and instruction, and to improve outcomes for *all* children. The school develops a data driven written improvement plan that includes strategies for maintaining its mission and goals over time and monitors progress toward them.