# Overview

In an effort to assist schools across the Commonwealth in improving student literacy, VDOE staff shares information learned through interviewing school personnel about specific practices and processes in instruction and assessment they believe contributed to students’ success and improvement in reading.

# Aligned Curriculum and Instruction and Focus on Literacy

Participants reported feeling there was a big turnaround after understanding and aligning their written, taught, and tested curriculum.

Participants reported focusing first on their classroom instruction, including relevant academic tasks that lend to comprehensive literacy, before remediation programs. They intentionally exposed all students, including students receiving special education and English learners, to high-quality, relevant, grade-leveltexts from individual published authors, and they allowed student choice for independent reading, regardless of the measured reading level of a text.

# Strategic Use of Data and Assessment

Participants reported embedding formative assessment in all lessons and using that assessment data to guide daily instructional decisions, repair student misunderstandings, and provide specific, intentional feedback to students. They resisted the urge to give students reading passages with multiple-choice or technology-enhanced type items during instructional time or when a formative assessment was more appropriate, using benchmarks and other summative assessments at planned, strategic times.

# Setting Goals and Monitoring Progress

Participants reported that students set their own performance goals using their own assessment and reading data, which helped with student buy-in and encouraged students to be aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Teachers also set their own clear, measurable goals that were both feasible and ambitious, based on student data.

# Supportive Leadership

Participants reported strong leadership, which included a culture of immediate, targeted, quality, helpful feedback that was framed to be specific to student learning and supportive, not punitive. Supportive leadership was also evident in intentional staffing: reorganizing in order to put teachers and other educators in the “right” places, having trained and qualified reading tutors and specialists on their teams, and having systems and structures in place to prepare for teacher turnover.

# Targeted Professional Development

Participants attributed some of their success to the development of professional learning communities (PLCs) and the availability of targeted, data-supported professional development, providing evidence that the school or division was invested in learning for staff as well as students.

# Results

Through these practices and processes used for instruction, assessment, and beyond, participants reported, in addition to improvements in student literacy, a resulting culture change, a feeling of collective responsibility for teacher and student success, and a restoring of belief and sense of belonging in the student community.