



**Georgia Council on Literacy
Meeting Minutes**

July 22, 2025 | Dalton State College | Dalton, GA

I. Coffee and Council Networking (9:00 a.m.)

- Informal networking as members and guests arrived.

II. Chairman's Welcome (9:30 a.m.)

- Chairman Johnson opened the meeting by framing the Council's extension by the General Assembly through 2027 and shared an anecdote about Georgia's commitment to literacy.

III. Member Recognition and Success (9:35 a.m.)

- The Chairman recognized Dr. Noris Price on her retirement from Baldwin County Schools.
- Newly appointed Council member, Rep. Carmen Rice (Columbus) was welcomed.
- Council members highlighted local literacy successes:
 - Katie Bennett (Forsyth County): Tier 1 Success Plans closed gaps for 23 of 35 at-risk K–3 students; dyad reading boosted fluency
 - Dr. Stephanie Westhafer (Jackson County): Integrating ELA with science/social studies via grade-level action teams, leading to richer vocabulary, comprehension, and student engagement; her classroom innovation earned the Robert E. Yager Excellence in Teaching Award.

IV. President's Welcome (10:00 a.m.)

- Dr. John Fuchko III, President, Dalton State College (DSC), emphasized the role of K-12 public education in regional economic vitality.
- Dalton State's partnership with four NW Georgia school systems guarantees teacher-candidates a practicum and job interview locally.
- DSC's high ranking among public institutions in Georgia and its affordability (83% graduate debt-free).

V. Chairman's Updates (10:10 a.m.)

- Chairman Johnson review:
The Executive Committee meets biweekly (Fridays, 8:30 a.m.) to advance Council work between quarterly meetings.
- FY26 Budget Synopsis: Overview of state appropriations aligned to the Council's strategic plan. Thank you for the legislative leadership for securing continued funding.

VI. HB 307 and HB 538 Monitoring Reports (10:20 a.m.)

- Sarah Richards provided an overview of the statutory duties of the Council.
- Stacey Lutz outlined Georgia's three-tiered coaching system (CSI, Let's Read Georgia, Growing Readers; \$18M, FY26).
- Amy Denty (GaDOE) detailed implementation approaches, teacher professional learning, LitLink conference, screener rollouts, and new ELA standards.
- Anne Marie Fenton (Georgia Professional Standards Commission) described the July 1 launch of updated GACE assessments (50+ tests, including Science of Reading).
- Susan Adams (DECAL) shared Birth-to-5 initiatives, Science of Reading provider trainings, and family engagement plans.

VII. Lunch and Presentation (11:30 a.m.) - Believe Greater Dalton/Georgia Reads Community

- Jason Mock, Anna Adamson, and Suzanne Harbin shared the success of Dalton's Birth-to-8 initiatives and summer literacy camps.

VIII. Georgia Literacy Plan Updates (12:15 p.m.)

- Sarah Richards (GOSA) reported on the research-based background document with the USG Literacy Consortium.
- Dr. Lindee Morgan reported that Year 1 Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) were developed, and Years 2–5 were in-progress.
- Implementation guidance outline will be developed by spring 2026.
- Key dates: September 9 workshop; November 13 Council meeting; June 2026 final report.

IX. Working Group Recommendations (1:15 p.m.)

- **Birth to Five (Westhafer):** CAPS support; intervention mapping; revised WKC and GELDS; DECAL Lab; mixed-delivery research.
- **K–12 (Bennett/Pilgrim):** Screening-intervention guidelines; educator voice; classroom celebrations.
- **School Leadership (Longgrear):** Superintendent and local BOE should be accountable through literacy metrics; leader professional learning, coach/leader joint training.
- **Teacher Prep (Lynch):** Survey grades 4–12 about professional learning offered; GACE data baseline; coaching best practices; analyze coaching statewide and develop a sustainability plan.
- **Community Engagement (Good):** Continue Georgia Reads; GMA municipal program collaboration; invest in libraries.
- **Barriers to Learning (McGiboney/Rice):** Four North Stars—Development and Access; Language Nutrition; Educator Support; Positive Climate; cross-sector collaboration; policy advocacy; attendance.

X. Public Comment (2:20 p.m.)

- Lisa Lidke (Wellstar Health/Small Talk): Embedding language nutrition, prenatal–age 8; provider and parent coaching; outcome research with Augusta University; telehealth expansions.

XI. Next Steps and Closing (2:30 p.m.)

- Georgia Reads app go-live - September 22, 2025
- Literacy Plan Workshop - September 9, 2025
- Executive Committee - Fridays in August
- Council Meeting - November 13, 2025 – University of West Georgia