



Glean Education's Ed Leaders in Literacy Podcast Episode #20 - Shanna Beber & Catasha Edwards (Louisiana Department of Education)

- Shanna Beber: When we refer to our teacher professional growth or our leaders' professional growth, it's not just a training that we're looking for. It's also that support that's provided when high-quality feedback is given. And so whether that feedback is through a principal, assistant principal or one of our literacy coaches, we want to ensure that the feedback they're receiving helps them to grow.
- Speaker 2: The results, they've been immediate, and we had one of the biggest shifts in the state.
- Speaker 3: It's almost magical when it all comes together. And I think to myself, "This is what education is about."
- Speaker 4: There were inequities everywhere. My students in South Texas ultimately taught me more than I taught them.

Speaker 5: Over 40% of our students were leaving third grade with less than proficient reading skills, and that was just something we had to stop.

Speaker 6:

The bottom line is that we can prevent reading failure. We can change the trajectory of these students' lives, and I just want to shout from the rooftops, "It can be done."

Speaker 7: From Glean Education, this is Ed Leaders in Literacy, a podcast series that features educators and administrators who have made hard decisions about instruction, curriculum, intervention and school systems to close the achievement gap and build equity by improving literacy.

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Jessica Hamman: I'm Jessica Hamman, Founder of Glean Education. And on the show today is Shanna Beber and Catasha Edwards from the Louisiana Department of Education.

Jessica Hamman: Shanna Beber is the Director of Literacy at the Louisiana Department of Education. Over the past 20 years as an educator, she has served as a classroom teacher, instructional coach, district curriculum coordinator and literacy coordinator, as well as an executive master teacher. Shanna not only has a deep passion for literacy but also for coaching teachers. This passion led to the development of the department's literacy vision to have improved student literacy outcomes through high quality instruction and interactions by effective teachers supported by leaders and families. She prides herself on the progress Louisiana has made in such a short amount of time and is honored to lead the literacy team as they strive to provide every child with what they need to become skilled readers.

Jessica Hamman: Catasha Edwards is a Literacy Leader Professional Development Specialist at the Louisiana Department of Education. Over her two



decade career as an educator, she's served as a classroom teacher, assistant principal and principal. Currently, she supports the strategies and initiatives aligned with the Louisiana State literacy plan with an emphasis on resources and support for school and district level leadership. Catasha truly believes that learning to read is a civil right and considers it an honor to support statewide literacy outcomes for all students.

Jessica Hamman: Shanna and Catasha, thank you so much for joining us today.

Shanna Beber: Thank you so much for having us.

Catasha Edwards: Hi, Jessica. I'm delighted to be here today.

Jessica Hamman: It sounds like you're doing some wonderful work at the state level. To get us started tell us a bit about your roles at the department and what brought you here.

Shanna Beber: Sure, absolutely. So I'll start off a little bit about what brought us here and then we can go into our roles that we currently serve.

Shanna Beber: So we began by looking at all the literacy data. We have a new superintendent, so Dr. Brumley came in and instantly knew that



this was area that he wanted to address as our fall 2019 scores showed that only 51% of our students K-3 were reading at proficient levels. And then in the fall of 2020, which was after the pandemic hit, we had a decline in our literacy rates and that dropped to 45% proficiency for our K-3 students.

Shanna Beber: And so we knew that this was a huge area. We were not okay with those numbers, as you can imagine, and so we knew this was an area that needed to be addressed. And so Dr. Brumley decided to put literacy as a top priority across the department and created a literacy team to come in and lead this work.

Shanna Beber: I was brought in as the Director of Literacy to jumpstart this work. I started off with a small, little team of only two other people and since then, in the last year, I've been excited to say that we've expanded to six of us, and Catasha's one of the people we've been able to bring on to support our leaders. As we know, our leaders definitely need the support in supporting our teachers that are really doing the heavy work.

Shanna Beber: So I'll let Catasha introduce herself.

Catasha Edwards: Thanks, Shanna. I am an educator of 20 plus years, and with my background as a school level leader and a foundational grades teacher, this was my dream job, my dream position, because I'm able to focus on literacy and leadership simultaneously. So in my role in the department, I'm able to build out resources and



supports, as well as be a resource and support for school and district level leaders. And we know that if we want to have true systemic change related to literacy practices, that leadership has to increase their learning around literacy. So I'm excited to be a part of this process.

Jessica Hamman: That's fantastic.

Jessica Hamman: Shanna, give us some of the background behind some of the changes that have already taken place. What went into laying the groundwork for the initiatives that are now underway?

Shanna Beber: Yeah, I mean, definitely starting looking at that data. And I will say that, yes, COVID took a big hit on our students, but our data was not pretty prior to even COVID. This has been a need for a long time, especially for many of our subgroups, as well, where the proficiency level was even lower. And so we knew that there was something that needed to be done.

Shanna Beber: We were very fortunate that we had an Early Literacy Commission that was brought in to look at the data and make some recommendations for the department to act on. And then in 2020 we also received a \$2 million state fund to help pilot a literacy coaching pilot to really help us determine what were those big moves we needed to make across the state in order to increase our literacy scores?



Shanna Beber: We had 13 schools that participated in this pilot across the state, and we chose our comprehensive intervention required schools, which are our most struggling schools to participate in this pilot. So we had 13 literacy coaches and then we hired two literacy coordinators to support that work. And throughout that time they focused on high quality instruction provided through high quality materials. They went through a science of reading training. They developed their intervention plan, as well. And then they also focused on families.

Shanna Beber: And so we had some key findings that came from this pilot and those four key findings were that goal setting is essential, time and materials matter, intensive professional development is necessary and that families are essential. So those findings then led us to what we call our four literacy pillars and all of the work that we do is grounded around these four pillars.

Shanna Beber: And so we truly believe that literacy outcomes will increase when, number one, our schools create and monitor literacy goals; number two, we provide students with high quality core instruction partnered with explicit literacy interventions and extensions based off of student need; number three, we provide teachers and leaders with ongoing professional growth around literacy development; and then, number four, as I mentioned, families are an essential role in the literacy development of children at all ages and stages.



Shanna Beber: And so that led us to those four pillars I just mentioned and all of the work we do is grounded around those four pillars. So the strategy that we've built out, the collaboration we do with other divisions around the department that impacts that work, such as academic content, our assessment team, our diverse learners team, every time we have conversations around this work, we constantly come back to those four pillars.

Shanna Beber: And then we were really excited in the spring of 2021. We had two big policy pieces that were approved through legislation, and we really think that these two big pieces are what got the moves rolling. And so one big one was Act 108 and this requires that all of our K-3 teachers and leaders, leaders meaning our assistant principals, principals, literacy coaches, that they're all required to go through a literacy foundation's training that's grounded in the science of reading.

Shanna Beber: We have extended that offer to our teacher preparation providers, which is exciting. We've had a large number of our university professors that have jumped on board for this training. So we're really excited about that work. And because, as I mentioned, our superintendent has put this as a priority, he's also put aside additional funding from our Esser funds. The state set aside funds to pay for this training for all the teachers, as well as the teacher preparation providers.

Shanna Beber: So we did not put that burden on the school systems. They already have the burden of having to do the logistics of getting all of the



teachers and leaders trained, but we were excited to be able to fund that for them.

Jessica Hamman: Well, that's amazing that you can support them in that capacity, as well.

Shanna Beber: Yes, because what we know is Louisiana, in the past several years, has done a great job of identifying high quality instructional materials. And we really believe that the piece that was missing was the teachers understanding the why behind those materials, the why we don't skip chronological awareness activities? Why there's a scope and a sequence to decoding? And so we really felt that the content, the teacher knowledge piece, was really the missing gap and so we wanted to ensure that they had the opportunity to get this training.

Jessica Hamman: And it seems the bridge to implementation too, not just the why, but how to implement it in the classroom? [crosstalk 00:11:43].

Shanna Beber: Correct. And then including the leaders in that, as well, because we know our leaders are going in the classrooms. They're providing support, they're providing walkthroughs with feedback, they're providing observations and evaluations. And so we want them to also understand what they're looking for and what teachers are expected to do when it comes to teaching children how to read.



Jessica Hamman: And so you mentioned Act 108. Was there any other policy that also supported this work?

Shanna Beber: Yes. So we also had Act 438 and we like to call that one our literacy bill on steroids because there was so much that was put into that literacy bill that it really brought some great initiatives for our teachers and leaders. And so Act 438 requires ... We currently had a fall literacy screener that we were doing, but it also requires not only that fall literacy screener, but an annual literacy assessment that would be taken at the end of the year, as well, to identify the students who are below grade level.

Shanna Beber: Also, for our teachers to be informed of where our students are at to be able to share those reports with our parents and our families so that they understand the interventions their students are going through at school. And then, on top of that, what are some things they can support their children with at home.

Shanna Beber: And then also it would become a part of our district and schools' performance scores, which is something that has never been done before. And Louisiana's excited to lead this work to really put accountability all the way down to kindergarten, especially when it comes to teaching our children how to read.

Shanna Beber: And the Act also included requiring teacher preparation programs to equip our pre-service teachers with the knowledge around the



science of reading and preparing them on how to teach children to read.

Shanna Beber: And then the last big piece was requiring that all of our K-3 schools have a literacy plan. And in that plan, not only do they have to provide the data and the goals they've set, but they have to also provide the actions they're going to take in order to meet those goals. So things like what high quality instructional materials will they be using? What will their literacy blocks look like as far as scheduling is concerned? How will they plan to provide students with those interventions and extensions I mentioned earlier? How will they continue to support and provide professional growth for their teachers, as well? And then, ideally, how will they also include their families in this work too?

Jessica Hamman: What occurs to me as you're talking through all of this is this incredibly holistic view of how to support school districts. So we have all the pieces that are recommended by research, high quality PD, intensive assessment that is universal. I hear high quality curriculum, focus on implementation and instruction that's backed by policy.

Jessica Hamman: It just seems like what you guys are doing is giving the school districts the systems to put this in place and support this literacy improvement statewide. And I think that that's thrilling to hear the organization behind it. So I commend you. That's [crosstalk 00:15:11].



Shanna Beber: We appreciate it. It's been a long year, some overwhelming times, but we are so excited about the impact that this work will have. I mean, you can't ask for any bigger impact on the life of a child than to ensure that they become literate.

Jessica Hamman: Was there any states that served as inspiration to this model that you guys are building?

Shanna Beber: Well, we're Louisiana so, of course, we're right next door to Mississippi, and Mississippi has made huge gains, really highlighted on their 2019 NAEP scores with all of the growth and they've been great partners with us. We're excited we're going to go do a visit with them soon, but we've had lots of collaboration opportunities for them to share the moves that they made, as well. So we've definitely partnered with Mississippi a good bit.

Jessica Hamman: In mentioning Mississippi, it cues me back to something that you had mentioned earlier in your discussion of the work that you are doing at the department and that you guys are doing on the state level regarding coaching. Can you talk to us a little bit about the role of coaching in this implementation model?

Shanna Beber: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, research shows that a teacher can sit through a PD, a sit and get, and it doesn't necessarily mean that they understand how to apply that or what it looks like in implementation. So providing the literacy coaches ... And I'll take a



step back real quick to say that the literacy coaches that we've provided through our grant funding, we were very lucky Dr. Slack was on the team. She's since retired from the department, but she was able to get us a hundred million dollar literacy grant. So we had the comprehensive literacy state development grant for a hundred million and that's how we are funding our literacy coaches this year across the state. But we are putting them in our schools that need it most.

Shanna Beber: So we have our comprehensive intervention required schools and our urgent intervention required schools that are receiving these funds. And so they're in our schools that have our striving readers. And so, as I mentioned with the implementation piece, oftentimes some of your most struggling schools have a harder time retaining teachers, or they, typically, have a large number of uncertified teachers. And so we want to make sure there's extra supports for them.

Shanna Beber: What we saw in the pilot is we had teachers who said, "This is amazing that we have someone who specifically is focused on supporting me as a K-2 teacher. And that's all this person does is help me to grow in my journey as a teacher in providing what our students need most." And we know that if there is a lack of educational opportunity in kindergarten, and we've already created large gaps from kindergarten to first grade from a lack of educational opportunity, then those gaps will only continue to get bigger as they move on through the grade levels.



Shanna Beber: So we just wanted to make sure that our earliest learners are receiving the biggest supports that they can possibly have, which is through a high quality teacher and how to implement all that new learning that they're getting through their training.

Jessica Hamman: And I love that idea that it's supporting. It's not evaluative. It's an effort to make the work of those K to two teachers easier and support them in their implementation.

Jessica Hamman: Catasha, were you going to add something?

Catasha Edwards: I was just going to piggyback off of what Shanna shared about the literacy coaching pilot. And the pilot was where these initial key findings were used to develop the pillars. But in this current school year, in the 2021/'22 school year, those literacy coaches have expanded. It's been scaled to where we have 221 coaches across the state and they're supported by, where in the pilot there were two regional literacy specialists. So we have now 16 regional literacy specialists that are supporting those 221 coaches across the state.

Catasha Edwards: And another addition is that where we were really focused on K to two in our pilot, our coaching has been expanded to pre-K to 12. So I think that we're going to see continual gains as we continue to scale out their coaching.



Jessica Hamman: Does it look different? Does the coaching model look different in elementary school versus the higher levels?

Shanna Beber: So what we're seeing is it doesn't look that different. They're supporting ELA instruction in that core instruction, but we have students all the way to 12th grade that are struggling to read and still need those interventions. And, if anything, I think the upper grade teachers struggle the most with knowing how to support them. That's not the training they went through as a pre-service teacher or even the training they get currently. And so having that literacy coach there to support how to help our students who are in those upper grades that are still struggling to read, how do we support them and how do we help bridge the gap?

Shanna Beber: And then I'll add in we're really excited. One of the big pieces we'd like to move forward with is also to get literacy coaches in our early childhood networks because the data also shows that about 40% of our kindergartners enter kindergarten ready. And so we know that there's some work and literacy starts all away from birth. And so we know there's some work that we can be doing in our early childhood networks to support literacy development, as well.

Jessica Hamman: Are there any partners that you have for research that are working with you to assess these pieces and how they're working?



Shanna Beber: So I'm part of the ExcelinEd Early Literacy Network, which right now I believe it's 21 states, if I'm not mistaken, that are all part of this network and we come together, we collaborate, the different literacy leaders across the nation that are in this network. And then I also have [inaudible 00:21:19] where they've supported some of the work, as well. I have a little group of ... A little team that supports our literacy work and is there to lend a hand in whatever research we may need.

Shanna Beber: But then I'll also give a shout out to our Louisiana department's research team. We put in a request and they do a phenomenal job of digging into the research and literature and providing us with that information, as well.

Jessica Hamman: Oh, that's exciting.

Jessica Hamman: So let's take just a quick step back if we can and dive into those four pillars a little more because I think that people are looking for a formula or a recipe for success, and it's almost like you've broken out these four steps for statewide literacy success that you want to keep your eye on.

Jessica Hamman: So I'd love to hear more about goal setting that you mentioned. So when people are looking to create goals, either for their school or their district or their counties or states, what goals are you looking



for that a school should have in order to support these lofty goals of literacy improvement?

Shanna Beber: What we're asking for school systems to do is really start paying attention to that literacy screener. So you take them at the beginning of the year and what does that mean for a student? How do you break down that data to really determine where each child is at and what their individual needs are moving forward? Whether that is to intervene because they're below proficiency or whether that is to extend their learning because they're at grade level or above grade level?

Shanna Beber: And so we're asking them to set goals around their literacy screeners, around those diagnostics, and then pinpoint an area to focus on and then progress monitor that area really to emphasize individual student needs, placing them in flexible groups so that you're able to move in and out of those groups based off of what the results from your data is showing you.

Jessica Hamman: Catasha, did you want to add something to that regarding goals?

Catasha Edwards: Well, I would just say that we really want to move beyond compliance that we're not administering those early literacy screening measures out of an area of compliance, but we're looking to really see the value in it. And, like Shanna said, we're going to use that to drive, even drive our instruction.



Catasha Edwards: We have this tier one curriculum, but based on what our students need, what are those intervention pieces look like? How are we supporting our students in small groups based on those literacy goals that we set? So just knowing that pillar of explicit instruction with a high quality curriculum, that it is supported with those explicit interventions and extensions, because I think that gets lost. We really target interventions, but how are we extending in areas where students may be at benchmark or above? So just really looking at the whole child.

Jessica Hamman: And so looking at instruction in curriculum if, again, school, district or state is looking to make sure that they have what is evidence based and high quality, what does that look like? What are the components they need to see in order to know that that instruction is high quality and that the curriculum is supporting that work?

Catasha Edwards: In Louisiana, I would say the high quality curriculum has been a focus here for a while. So there is an instructional materials review process. So we want school systems to feel comfortable that if they're selecting a curriculum from that high quality materials list, that it has been vetted, but the training that's being provided is going to really expound on the implementation of the curriculum.

Catasha Edwards: So we're looking at ... This piece is a high quality tier one curriculum, but if it's not implemented correctly, then that's where



some of the loss, a learning loss, occurs. So I would say just really focusing that instructional piece around the science of reading, which all of the pillars are all of these moving parts at the same time. So if we're hitting on all of these parts simultaneously, we're going to see growth in all areas.

Shanna Beber: Agreed, Catasha, because how do we know that the curriculum's working? We'll see it in our student goals that they've set.

Jessica Hamman: And I think it's really important to call out and highlight the work that you guys have done historically with regard to curriculum in Louisiana, and Louisiana believes Curriculum Review site is one that's really nationally recognized for promoting high quality reviewing and promoting high quality curricular materials that are standard aligned. And I just think it's important for our listeners to know about that as a resource, as well.

Jessica Hamman: And so when you make the important point about the professional development that helps link the curriculum to the instruction and the implementation of it, what are you looking at for your professional development opportunities? You had mentioned science of reading. Can you tell us some of the elements that you look for at the state level to support your teachers?

Shanna Beber: I mean, I think it's important to note that we're not just talking about professional development in the form of a training. So we have definitely set forth, I mean, through literacy policy Act 108 to



ensure that our teachers do go through the training, but I think it also adds on to the importance of teacher collaboration and encouraging our schools to create schedules that allow for opportunities for teachers to collaborate.

Shanna Beber: And then on top of that, I'll add in the professional growth that occurs when high quality feedback is given. And so whether that feedback is through a principal, assistant principal or one of our literacy coaches, we want to ensure that the feedback they're receiving helps them to grow. When we refer to our teacher professional growth or our leaders' professional growth, it's not just a training that we're looking for. It's also that support that's provided through leaders or us as a department and the supports that we provide, the supports that Catasha provides.

Shanna Beber: And I'll let Catasha share a little bit about even our professional development series that we've placed out, as well.

Catasha Edwards: Two things that come to mind with our discussion: Building out our literacy library, we really have just this really amazing team. It would've been amazing if everyone of our six people could have been on because everybody adds a different lens that they operate through. So just to shout out to our team.

Catasha Edwards: But really in that literacy library, we have built out these leader PD series that are available for school and district level leaders. But there's also a companion series for teachers that one of our



colleagues has built out for teachers because we know that all teachers are going to receive that science of reading training, but we can't wait until their district signs up.

Catasha Edwards: So there is a teacher PD series that's an introduction to the science of reading where school and district level leaders may want to take that into their PLCs and utilize those resources and materials to support them. We want to be able to support schools and districts where they are, be able to tier that support. So that's a very important piece of what we're doing with the PD team.

Catasha Edwards: But also equally as important is professional growth for family. So if you look into our literacy library, there's family engagement strategies and family literacy engagement strategic plan outline for school systems to be able to engage their families around literacy implementation because we know that teachers are important and school leaders are important, but families are equally as important. So getting us all on the same field with supporting student literacy outcomes.

Jessica Hamman: And I love the emphasis on supporting the school leaders with building their background knowledge so that they can help lead their team because they're the ultimate evaluators and the ones that drive the change, but often they don't have the opportunities for training that their teachers might have. So I think bringing them in is such a critical component.



Shanna Beber: And I'd like to add in real quick one thing Catasha didn't mention in that she leads is we also have our office hours. We have our science of reading office hours. We have our literacy calls that we place so they can call in, and Catasha and a few other team members are on the call where they can just ask those questions, like "This is what we're struggling with." Or "This is what our teachers are struggling with," as they're going through all this training and all these shifts that they're making and that we know are super important shifts that need to happen. But sometimes change is scary and they just need to be able to jump in and troubleshoot and have a thought partner. And so that's something else that we've got good feedback from that they're just there, and jump on and ask a question and we'll do what we can to support you.

Shanna Beber: And then also we'd love to come see you in your schools. So our favorite days are the days that we get to go into the schools, we get to see the kids, we get to see the changes that are happening and we get to highlight those. And so that's something else, another area of support we're providing our leaders and teachers, as well.

Catasha Edwards: Absolutely. Just some of the most rewarding experiences I've had at the department is just being able to be a thought partner with the school district. Them, like she said, giving us a call and say, "Hey, can you jump on a quick Zoom and let us know what you guys think about that?" So that it helps us as a department to know what resources may be necessary to build out and support. And just being able to ... Just be a resource. We always let them know that we are a visit or a Zoom away.



Jessica Hamman: And I love that because it shows a dedication to this as a journey. Sometimes you put things in place at a very high level and then there's not a lot of follow up and the problem is that it doesn't trickle down into implementation. It seems, from that one anecdote alone, how committed you are to the journey of what this is and the realities of the process.

Jessica Hamman: So do you guys have ... What would you say are the biggest barriers that you hear to this implementation? And in what ways are you a thought partner to overcoming some of those barriers?

Shanna Beber: I think one of the biggest barriers right now is just how overwhelmed teachers are. We have teachers leaving at rapid rates, they're retiring or they're changing professions. They're exhausted. I mean, life took a huge turn in the last 20 months. And so I think that's one big barrier that we struggle with, retention. And here we are asking you to now commit to an additional 50 to 75 hours of training to improve your practice.

Shanna Beber: So we've really just tried to be thought partners with school systems on how to support that learning. And so whether that is some of that learning happening during those teacher collaboration times or on those teacher professional development days that are already built into the system, some school systems have chosen to incentivize.



Shanna Beber: We have one school system that they're calling them literacy champions as they're making moves and it's amazing how excited they are just to be acknowledged for the efforts that they're making. But that's definitely one big barrier.

Shanna Beber: Another struggle has been our hurricanes. I would love to have shared our fall 2021 data with you, but we're just now wrapping up because we had some school systems that were out for eight weeks. We came back to school and a week later we were hit by a hurricane that wiped out a large number of areas, including the areas that we live in. And so we're still waiting to get that fall data which, it's almost December and here we are wishing we had it three months ago. But, unfortunately, we had school systems that needed additional time. I mean, and that wasn't ... We needed to make sure they could even get into schools.

Shanna Beber: And so that's been, again, a challenge, but that is, as Catasha said, we are a Zoom away or a visit away and that's what we've had. We've had school systems call and say, "Hey, we originally planned to have literacy coaches and we can't find enough teachers right now." So the thought of pulling teachers from the classroom would create additional vacancies. And so we work with them on how to use their classroom teachers as mentors and literacy leaders to help still support that growth, especially through the teacher collaboration piece.



Shanna Beber: So that's just a couple. Catasha, I don't know if you can piggyback on any of those, but-

Catasha Edwards: Yeah, I was just going to add that even with the challenges with COVID, I think that our superintendent coining Louisiana as having a reading revival and keeping literacy as a priority and a focus. So even with the challenges with everyone being on board, that this is a focus and that we are going to go back and look at literacy, no matter what, I think that it is helping to prioritize literacy, especially foundational literacy. And that once we're able to stay the course, and we know that this is not going to happen overnight, but in a couple years, we're going to be able to see the fruits of the work that's happening.

Catasha Edwards: So I think that, right now, just developing trust and buy-in with teachers and prioritizing the priority of literacy, which our state is doing a great job of, we're going to be able to see those outcomes that we want to see.

Jessica Hamman: That is so wise. And I love that you said that, Catasha, that it is not going to happen overnight. And even though you weren't able to collect the fall data, the truth is this is a long term investment, right? I mean, what are you guys giving yourself in terms of time to see results? How many years are you giving yourselves? What is the goal?



Shanna Beber: So we looked at Mississippi, the amount of time that it took from their time that they passed policy till they saw those big gains. And so right now we are looking at also increasing our NAEP scores. So when next year's kindergartners get to fourth grade, we're hoping to see an increase of 10 scales points and that's really the goal we set. Well, it's a lofty goal but, I mean, it's what we want for our students. And if my team has anything to do with it, we're going to see that happen.

Jessica Hamman: I love that. Well, you talk about setting goals as an important pillar of the work they're doing on the district level and I think it makes sense to set goals for the work that you're doing at the state level too.

Jessica Hamman: So, Catasha, where do you see this work going?

Catasha Edwards: We're continuing to look for opportunities to expand our team. Most recently, we were able to add a six to 12 person to our PD team. So there, in that area, we're expanding our reach beyond that K-3, and she's going to really focus on four-12. So we're looking there and we already spoke about adding those literacy coaches in the early childhood arena. So then we're going to be expanding our reach from birth to 12. That is one of the areas that we're primarily focusing on.

Shanna Beber: And then I'll add in our families. I think that's the next big place that we've begun to put some things out there for families. We



know our next step is the outreach piece. How do we ensure that they have access to these materials? I mean, we said literacy starts at birth, and our families, they want this information and so we want to be able to give it to them.

Shanna Beber: And so when we can bring everyone together, our teachers, our leaders, our families, our community members around increasing our literacy rates, then everyone wins and not just now, but in the future our economy and just our overall opportunities for our children that we want them to have, the same opportunities every other child across the nation can have. And so we want to ensure that we equipped our teachers, our leaders and our families with the information they need to help this happen.

Catasha Edwards: And a key part of that, too, is we talked about the Early Literacy Commission, and all of those key stakeholders that Shanna mentioned are represented as a part of that Commission, where we have parents, we have prep providers, we have teachers, we have system level leaders to be able to go back and look at the progress that we made and make recommendations moving forward.

Catasha Edwards: So it's an ongoing process, but that's the great part of it is that I don't think we ever end. We just continue to evolve and expand.

Jessica Hamman: Well, this is just so exciting. And I'm thrilled to be talking with you all at the start of this process. And, hopefully, we can check in



regularly to see how it's going because it's work in action and could be a model for the rest of the nation to follow.

Jessica Hamman: So thank you for all the work that you guys are doing and continue to do and I can't wait to follow it and see your successes down the line.

Shanna Beber: We appreciate it. And we thank you for giving us the opportunity to share the work that we've been doing.

Jessica Hamman: If you'd like to learn more about the great things happening at the Louisiana Department of Education related to literacy, visit louisianabelieves.com/academics/louisiana-literacy. You can also visit Shanna Beber on Twitter @shannabeber.

Speaker 7: Thank you for listening to our Ed Leaders in Literacy Podcast.

Speaker 7: To find links to the articles and resources mentioned in this podcast, go to gleaneducation.com/edleaderspodcast and access them in the show notes.

Speaker 7: Bye for now.



Jessica Hamman: This episode was edited and produced by Nita Cherise.

