NC SIP Reading Sites
Fidelity Observation and Inter-rater Reliability Process

As part of participation in the North Carolina State Improvement Project (NC SIP), Local Education Agencies (LEAs) are required to observe teachers who 1) have completed Reading Foundations training, 2) have completed Reading Model training, AND 3) are implementing or will be implementing a reading model program.

WHO SHOULD CONDUCT FIDELITY OBSERVATIONS?
Each NC SIP LEA should use the following criteria to determine who should conduct fidelity observations of NC SIP designated teachers.

1. The observer should have, at a minimum, completed a full training course in the reading model being implemented by the teacher who is to be observed. When possible, the observer should be a trainer in the reading model being implemented.¹

2. Everyone within an LEA who will be conducting fidelity observations should have completed the inter-rater reliability (IRR) process. IRR helps ensure that all persons who are rating teachers are using similar criteria for assigning ratings. The IRR process should be completed as described below.

Inter-rater Reliability Process

Step 1. A Literacy Consultant (LC) or designee within an LEA should arrange to conduct an observation of a teacher with the individual who is being trained to use the fidelity observation instruments.

Step 2. During the observation, each person (LC/designee and trainee) should independently complete the fidelity observation form. After the observation, the ratings should be compared and discussed.

Step 3. To calculate the IRR score, each item on the form should be compared and the number of items that agree (were given the identical rating) should be determined. The percentage of items that were in agreement is then calculated. For example: If 20 items were rated (including 0, 1, 2, and 3 ratings) and on 13 of the items the two observers agreed, the IRR would be calculated by dividing 13 by 20 for a score of .65.

Step 4. Determine the need for additional IRR sessions. In the example above, the score of .65 is not sufficient. The goal is to achieve IRR score between .80 and .90. Additional training should be done as well as additional observations until this level of agreement is reached.

WHO SHOULD BE OBSERVED?

New Teachers
New teachers are defined as those teachers in your LEA who completed or finished the series of trainings (i.e., Reading Foundations and Reading Model training) between October 1st of the last school year and September 30th of the current school year. For example, new teachers for the 2012-13 school year would be those teachers who completed both Reading Foundations and Model training between October 1, 2011 and September 30, 2012 OR finished the series by completing the second of the two trainings between October 1, 2011 and September 30, 2012. All new teachers in each LEA should be

¹ If there is no one in an LEA who is trained in the reading model and can serve as an observer, then persons who have been trained by a Reading Consultant to conduct fidelity observations and who have obtained an acceptable IRR score (i.e., greater than .80) may conduct fidelity observations.
observed. New teacher cohorts will not be included in the sample the year after they complete their observations unless they do not receive a satisfactory fidelity score (i.e., 2.5 or above) for their last observation.

**Continuing Teachers**

Continuing teachers are defined as those teachers who completed both Reading Foundations and Model training before October 1st of the last school year. For example, continuing teachers for the 2012-13 school year would be those teachers who completed Reading Foundations and Model training before October 1, 2011. Typically, these teachers will have implemented a reading model program for at least one school year. Half (50%) of the continuing teachers in each LEA should be observed. The evaluators will select the sample in order to help ensure that different continuing teachers are selected each year such that all continuing teachers will be observed every 2 years.

**HOW AND WHEN SHOULD FIDELITY OBSERVATIONS BE CONDUCTED?**

For both new and continuing teachers, qualified observers (see above) should conduct observations using the fidelity observation form that corresponds to the reading model being implemented by the teacher who is to be observed. If the observer has access to a laptop computer or tablet with internet access, they can complete the fidelity observation form online while they are conducting the observation. Otherwise, the observer can complete a printed version of the fidelity observation form by hand and then later enter the observation online. Printed and online versions of the fidelity observation forms can be found on the NC SIP website under Reading Forms and Surveys.

All observations should be conducted during the school year. **New teachers are to be observed THREE times.** Observations should be spaced throughout the school year so that improvements in implementation can be observed (e.g., observe one time in fall, winter, and spring). The score from the last fidelity observation is the score that will get reported for new teachers. **Continuing teachers are to be observed ONE time during the school year.** It does not matter when during the school year this observation occurs.

**HOW SHOULD FIDELITY OBSERVATIONS BE SCORED, REPORTED, AND USED?**

All observations, even those completed by hand, must be submitted online using the online fidelity observation forms. The online versions of the fidelity observation forms can be found on the NC SIP website under Reading Forms and Surveys. Once submitted electronically, the fidelity score will automatically be calculated and sent via email to the observer along with an electronic version of the completed observation. The fidelity score is calculated by dividing the total number of points by the total number of items applicable to the lesson. Valid fidelity observation scores range from 0 to 3.

In addition to submitting observations electronically, the fidelity observation scores for those NC SIP teachers observed during the current school year should be reported on the student progress data reporting forms (i.e., so all of the teachers who report student data may not have fidelity scores). For new teachers, only the last fidelity observation score should be reported.

Fidelity observation scores should be used to improve teacher instruction. If a new teacher (last observation only) or a continuing teacher scores less than a 2.5, this teacher should be referred to the LEA’s designated NC SIP coach to receive technical assistance aimed at improving his/her implementation of the reading model. These teachers will be included on the list of teachers to be observed the next school year in order to check that growth is being made.