STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: August 26, 2026

To: Local Educational Agency Leads

Route To: Principals, Assistant Superintendents of Curriculum and Instruction, Supervisors, Instructional Coaches, Teachers

From: Jorden Schiff, Ed.D., Assistant Commissioner
Division of Teaching and Learning Services
Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery

Deadline: September 16, 2026

Launch of STRONG-ER Leadership Team Training and Literacy Coaching Support

Continuing efforts to strengthen foundational literacy skills among students, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) is pleased to announce the Systems for Tiered Reading and Ongoing Growth in Early Reading (STRONG-ER), a literacy coaching opportunity for local educational agencies (LEAs), in partnership with Rutgers University. The project is designed to build local capacity to implement the New Jersey Tiered System of Supports for Early Reading (NJTSS-ER) through year-long literacy leadership team training and coaching support for educators, ensuring young learners have access to the tools and resources needed to become strong, confident readers. Participating LEAs should be prepared to examine, and as needed, shift instructional practices towards evidence-aligned structured literacy principles.

Applications are due by Wednesday, September 16, 2026.

Benefits
Participating LEAs will benefit from:

- Live webinar-based training focused on implementation of NJTSS-ER components including universal literacy screener data analysis, evaluation of Tier I materials, and creation of Tier I guidelines
- Ongoing guidance, feedback, and support provided via coaching sessions conducted by NJTSS-ER Regional Coaches
- Support in completing online courses and utilizing implementation resources (e.g., action planning guidelines, materials, and tools)
- Cross-district communities of practice to facilitate continuous improvement

Districts may also be afforded an opportunity to continue to receive this training with coaching support in subsequent school years.

Eligibility Criteria
This opportunity is open to all LEAs serving kindergarten through 3rd grade which are NOT engaged in other NJDOE-supported coaching initiatives such as:

- New Jersey Tiered System of Supports for Early Reading (NJTSS-ER) 4 & 5 Cohorts
- Building Responsive Instruction through Data-Guided Evaluation (BRIDGE) 1 Continuation
- BRIDGE 2
- Cultivating Ongoing Achievement through Coaching in Literacy (COACH)
- Office of Special Education's Coaching Pilot

To maximize impact and advance equitable outcomes, coaching support will be prioritized for districts where data indicate the greatest need for accelerated literacy growth. This includes districts with lower Grade 3 NJSLA ELA proficiency rates, lower Grade 3 phonics literacy screening outcomes, and larger performance disparities affecting students with disabilities and multilingual learners.

Applying
Interested LEAs can submit an online application. Applications are due by **Wednesday, September 16, 2026.** LEAs will be notified of their selection by October with project activities starting later that month.

Initiative Overview: Technical Assistance Session
A technical assistance session providing a more detailed overview of the initiative will be held on **Wednesday, September 9, 2026, from 10:00-10:30 AM**. Interested participants can register for the event by signing up at the NJDOE Homeroom events page.

Contact Information
For questions regarding the STRONG-ER Coaching Support, please contact the Office of Learning Equity & Academic Recovery at LEAR@doe.nj.gov. Additional guidance and resources are available on the Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery website.