Thank you for these questions. Again, we apologize for the timing of the Istation launch, but as with any new tool, the learning curve will be worth the investment when it results in long-term educational gains that ultimately benefit students and teachers across North Carolina. Istation has a nationwide reputation for being quick to implement, easy to understand, and strong in delivering results.

Read to Achieve RFP and Funding Questions:

1. Please explain to us why it took two years to select a vendor for the K-3 reading diagnostic tool. Also, we would like to know where the money is coming from for stipends and devices as part of this rollout.

DPI complied with all legal, equitable, and ethical requirements associated with a state procurement. The process to select a vendor for the K-3 reading diagnostic had to be restarted twice to ensure the committee's compliance with our state's stringent but important procurement laws.

Funds to support this rollout are coming from Read to Achieve. More on this will be discussed at the upcoming Superintendents' Quarterly meeting in Asheville.

2. It is our understanding that Pamela Shue, Associate Superintendent for Early Childhood Education, did not lead the RFP process. Instead, the Chief Strategy Officer, Chloe Gossage, led the process. Is it possible for Ms. Gossage to make a presentation to us outlining the RFP process, including what changed in the RFP for each of the three iterations?

While we cannot discuss details of the procurement process, we can confirm that this understanding is incorrect.

Every member of the team tasked with selecting a vendor for the K-3 reading diagnostic tool signed a non-disclosure agreement. As required by procurement protocols, members with knowledge of the process are not to share any information about the process with anyone outside the team. Doing so would jeopardize the legal, equitable, and ethical requirements associated with a state procurement.

We will have a presentation with what information we can share at the Superintendents' Quarterly meeting.

3. Did the committee at any time during the RFP process make a recommendation for a tool other than the one that was ultimately selected?

No consensus was reached by the RFP evaluation committee, so there was no recommendation. We will have a presentation with what information we can share at the Superintendents' Quarterly meeting.

4. Can DPI provide a description of the reading diagnostic RFP process and what LEA representatives served in the process?

While we cannot discuss details of the procurement process, we will have a presentation with what information we can share at the Superintendents' Quarterly meeting.

5. I certainly appreciate the investment in early learning with iStation. I am concerned however, we are not doing K-3 math. Here is the dilemma, many of us in the field use iReady K-8 in both math and reading. I hate to now convolute the mix with another program. Would it be possible at this point to allow iReady districts to get the funds intended for iStation or have iStation math added so K-3 will be all iStation, allowing districts to use iReady 4-8 or iStation if they purchase?

This will also be addressed in the presentation on Monday.

Istation questions:

1. We are connecting with the EC Section of DPI to determine their involvement in the decision and that of MTSS. I also have information that the staff at NCDPI who are to implement this change have not yet been trained. It is my understanding that all of DPI was unaware of the decision, is that accurate?

The evaluation panel was made of DPI staff from multiple areas of the agency. Procurement protocols restrict sharing information with anyone outside of the evaluation panel. If you reach out to DPI staff, please know that they must follow procurement protocols.

The announcement for the new assessment program was made on June 7th. Multiple DPI divisions were present for Istation's introduction on June 12th. Istation has worked with DPI stakeholders to finalize dates, times, and locations for training the field, including face-to-face sessions, webinars, and podcasts available on demand.

2. Our concern is the recent decision from NC DPI to discontinue the contract with Amplify - mCLASS. The state has determined that iStation will be our K-3 diagnostic reading tool in accordance with the K-3 Read to Achieve act. Our concerns are as follows:

mCLASS DIBELS were predictive, valid and reliable measures that allowed us to use the data for district, school, student groups and individual student level analyses.

Istation has research partnerships with some of the most prestigious research universities in the country, including Johns Hopkins University, the University of Central Florida, and Southern Methodist University. Third party research has been conducted and dozens of studies have been published to affirm Istation's predictability, validity, and reliability. These studies can be found here.

3. Our district has created infrastructures and support systems specifically for these measures that have been in place for approximately 5+ years. Multiple stakeholder groups have been provided professional learning on these measures, infrastructures and support systems (i.e., classroom teachers, Intervention Teams, School Psychologists, etc.)

Istation supports will come through both in-person and digital structures. They will include:

- Live Getting Started Webinars (provided at first stages of implementation)
- Live Ongoing Webinars (provided at strategic times throughout the school year)
- Live In-Person Trainings (provided in a Train the Trainer format)
- On-Demand Virtual Modules: These will serve as a 24/7 virtual academy for all North Carolina educators throughout the school year and, again, follow the natural progression of the implementation across the school year. A quiz will be generated at the completion of each module. Upon mastery of content, a certificate will be generated for educators to print or download for their own records.

Istation's professional development is both tiered and personalized.

There will be multiple rounds of professional development throughout the school year to provide the right level of support to educators at the right time. The summer, fall, and spring trainings will all be unique in their own ways – with each session offering the most relevant content and impact for that particular part of the school year.

The initial trainings will be "Train the Trainer" modules. In these four-hour sessions, a significant amount of time will be invested in how to optimally bring high-caliber trainings back to the district and school environments, while differentiating training materials and context by role.

Additionally, Istation will host multiple webinars tailored for different audiences. On-demand virtual learning centers will also be created and tailored for specific roles.

4. The mCLASS DIBELS measures also provide the necessary tools for SLD 2020 determination within a Comprehensive Balanced Assessment System (i.e. Universal Screening, Progress Monitoring, Rates of Improvement, Gap Analyses)

Istation addresses all of the areas of Universal Screening, progress monitoring, rates of improvement, and gap analyses.

Benchmarks are continuous progress monitoring (CMP) and are automatically provided throughout the school year. Additional assessments may be administered for more frequent progress monitoring if needed or desired.

Rates of improvement and gap analyses are all provided in the real-time reporting features of Istation. Once a student completes a subtest within Istation, the data is immediately available to the teacher and any relevant administrators.

5. Istation it takes up to 20-30 minutes to administer, best practice indicates universal screening must be short/brief. mCLASS DIBELS usually takes 3-5 minutes

Each sub-test within Istation takes approximately five minutes. These sub-tests can be administered separately or all at once. The Oral Reading Fluency subtest, which takes 3-5 minutes, can oftentimes be used as the initial screener to determine the depth of need.

Educators have found that the additional subtests (e.g., listening comprehension, letter knowledge, etc.) provide very important diagnostic information.

6. iStation also goes against the items outlined in the Dyslexia Regulation (HB 149) that requires LEA's to use proper screening tools for early identification of Dyslexia and Dyscalculia.

This statement is incorrect. See next question.

7. Our primary concern is that the selection of iStation does not appear to be aligned with current state mandated laws (House Bill 149 (Dyslexia), Specific Learning Disability 2020 Legislation) and does not take into consideration the structures of MTSS (data-based decision making by using best practices for universal screening/progress monitoring). While iStation might fit a certain component of a balanced assessment system (diagnostic perhaps), it will not be able to replace mCLASS. We have concerns that iStation might have a detrimental impact related to: time students are assessed, classroom teachers assessment time and having to learn new measures/platforms/data literacy, etc., Intervention Teams, ECATS/MTSS Explorer (database), legislative requirements of Specific Learning Disability and building our district's Standard Treatment Protocol.

S.L. 2017-127:

SECTION 1. It is the intent of the General Assembly that all students with specific learning disabilities, including dyslexia and dyscalculia, receive the necessary and appropriate screenings, assessments, and special education services to provide interventions for learning difficulties with language, reading, writing, and mathematics.

… [SECTION 2 is policy definitions]

SECTION 3. Prior to the start of the 2017 2018 school year, the State Board of Education shall ensure that ongoing professional development opportunities are made available to teachers and other school personnel on the identification of and intervention strategies for students with dyslexia, dyscalculia, or other specific learning disabilities. Prior to the start of the 2017 2018 school year, the State Board of Education shall also develop and make available information electronically to parents, educators, and other concerned groups that provides further data concerning characteristics of children with dyslexia, educational methodologies, screenings, and what is available to support the work with children with dyslexia in North Carolina.

SECTION 4. Prior to the start of the 2017-2018 school year, local boards of education shall review the diagnostic tools and screening instruments used for dyslexia, dyscalculia, or other specific learning disabilities to ensure that they are age appropriate and effective and shall determine if additional diagnostic and screening tools are needed.

One of the author's of ISIP Early Reading (ISIP ER) was Joseph Torgesen, an Emeritus Professor of Psychology and Education at Florida State University. He is also the creator – along with Dr. Richard Wagner and Dr. Carol Rashotte – of two of the most widely used diagnostic tests for dyslexia, The Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processes and the Test of Word Reading Efficiency.

In the development of ISIP ER, several subtests were included that are often used to help in an initial screening for dyslexia. Data related to student performance in the areas that can be predictive red flags of dyslexia and difficulties in other areas of reading (e.g., phonemic awareness, letter sound-symbol recognition, letter knowledge) is provided by ISIP ER to identify student skill weaknesses, evaluate student intervention plans, discuss student performance with administrators, and plan for parent-teacher conferences.

8. M-Class fits well with the MTSS Procedures and $1000's (alone in our district) of support materials were purchased for the implementation of m-class. Now the I-Station program will not give us a guided reading level. (Net effect is the leveled readers are nearly useless). In addition it does not match up with I-Ready for grades 3-5 which TEACHERS love. We have worked through processes, scheduling and procedures to implement M-Class and now what we are guaranteeing is more screen time. With our current M-class we have a cohesive plan with I-Ready, interventions and lessons for teachers. With I-Station we have NONE of this.....

Schools may take advantage of materials purchased by NCDPI. Districts and schools may maintain book kits for their own purposes. These "kits" are sets of books with specific Lexile reading levels. Those books will remain in teachers' classrooms to be used as reading material for classrooms. They can be used in conjunction with any assessment that provides Lexile levels, including Istation.

Istation's blended-learning approach mixes teaching and technology to differentiate instruction. Formative assessments, adaptive curriculum, personalized data profiles, and flexible teacher resources measure growth and introduce new skills. Plus, educators get easy-to-understand feedback that is timely, specific, and constructive.

Besides pinpointing strengths and weaknesses, schools can implement innovative approaches with data that is not only actionable and informative, but predictive.

Istation prescribes explicit and direct lessons based on assessment results and progress monitoring, giving students targeted intervention and blended learning support. This helps educators identify their students' specific needs while allowing them to adjust to each student's abilities.

Please click this link to learn more about How Istation Maps to MTSS.

You can also check out Istation's eBook: From RTI to MTSS: Building Your Intervention Team

8. In addition, the ONLY research we can find on I-Station is proprietary research released by the company.

There are many studies on Istation that are written by third parties and found in published journals. As an example, please see this quasi-experimental research paper written by Dr. Putnam entitled, "Technology versus teachers in the early literacy classroom: an investigation of the effectiveness of the Istation integrated learning system". This study finds that Istation does make a measurable difference in the classroom.

9. Some districts on modified year-round schedules start back in a month, creating a difficult if not impossible scenario for teachers to be trained in time to administer the diagnostic.

Our K-3 Literacy team and Istation will work together to get each district an implementation plan and resources needed so that teachers and administrators are comfortable with this new tool by the time students return to the classroom. DPI will provide stipends to those leads who attend summer trainings.

10. Districts have invested heavily in the current diagnostic tool and now those materials are, for all intents and purposes, useless.

Schools may take advantage of materials purchased. Districts and schools may maintain book kits for their own purposes. These "kits" are sets of books with specific Lexile reading levels. Those books will remain in teachers' classrooms to be used as reading material for classrooms. They can be used in conjunction with any assessment that provides Lexile levels, including Istation.

11. Districts receive no funding from the state to support professional development. Outside of the leads who will receive a stipend from DPI, this amounts to yet another unfunded mandate from the state.

Our K-3 Literacy team and Istation will work together to get each district an implementation plan and resources needed so that teachers and administrators are comfortable with this new tool by the time students return to the classroom.

The implementation plan that we have seen needs more details. Specifically, we need to know at minimum these things:

12. How will we transition from the current tool to the new tool?

As you prepare for the 2019-2020 school year the following information is being shared to assist districts with the technical set up and implementation of Istation.

- NCDPI will utilize the current PowerSchool roles for Istation
- Istation will be accessed through SSO within NCEDCLOUD
- Istation will need to be installed on every computer on which students will be using Istation.
- Istation has an MSI that can help install Istation quickly on computers in your district.
- For technical assistance, quick tips, and more support, visit www.Istation.com/Support or call 1-866-883-7323 and select option 2.
- Istation will be integrated with PowerSchool; NCDPI will continue to provide daily roster updates from PowerSchool
- For more technical information go to https://www.istation.com/Support#technical

13. How will the previous mClass data be used?

Historical data should always be considered when planning appropriate instruction for students as they transition from one year to the next. mCLASS data will be used to support that transition and student learning trajectories in conjunction with the new data gained at the beginning of the year from Istation.

14. What will happen to the mClass data?

Schools and districts will have access to student historical data after the data rollback is complete following reading camps.

15. It is our understanding that iStation will not assign a reading level to the child. What is your recommendation for dealing with that, if indeed that statement is accurate.

Istation's Indicators of Progress (ISIP) Early Reading assessment does provide Lexile levels for each student. More than 100 million books, articles, and websites have received Lexile text measures. Istation provides a link for each student that recommends different books and reading materials based on their individual reading level.

16. What will be the support structures that DPI will out in place for the districts? What will these look like in day 30? Day 60? Day 90?

Istation supports will come through both in-person and digital structures. They will include:

- Live Getting Started Webinars (provided at first stages of implementation)
- Live Ongoing Webinars (provided at strategic times of the school year)
- Live In-Person Trainings (provided in a Train the Trainer format)
- On-Demand Virtual Modules: These will serve as a 24-7 virtual academy for all North Carolina educators throughout the school year and, again, follow the natural progression of the implementation across the school year. A quiz will be generated after completion of each module. Upon mastery of content, a certificate will be generated for each educator to print or download for their own records. Tentative topics for these virtual modules include:
    - Istation 101
    - So Now You've Assessed
    - Basic Reporting
    - Beyond the Basics
    - Effective Small Grouping
    - Data Discussions
    - Goal Setting
    - Teacher Tools
    - Skill Growth Tracking
    - End of Year Wrap

17. Will the professional development for the new tool be tiered and personalized? In other words, the training for principals should not be the same as the training for the teachers. The training for district leaders and coaches should also look different.

Yes, Istation's professional development is both tiered and personalized.

There will be multiple rounds of professional development throughout the school year, to bring the right level of support to educators at the right time. The summer trainings will differ from the fall trainings, which will differ from the spring trainings; with each session geared towards the most relevant content given the context of the school year.

The initial trainings will be "Train the Trainer" modules. In these four-hour sessions, a significant amount of time will be invested in how to bring impactful training back to the district and school environment, while differentiating training materials and context by role.

In addition, Istation will host multiple webinars geared for different audiences, and on-demand virtual learning centers will be created and tailored towards specific roles.

18. What are the implementation targets we are working towards to determine success at mid-year and at end-of-year?

To be discussed at the superintendents' quarterly meeting.

19. Who will be the project manager?

Dr. Tara Galloway, K-3 Literacy Director

Other Questions:

Question 1 - Testing and Accountability

On December 6, 2013, the then Asst. State Superintendent, along with the current Director of Accountability Tammy Howard, were involved in the decision to set the Reading Cut schools for the New Read to Achieve State Reading Assessments. At that time, it was stated that the accountability section along with the Asst. State Superintendent cause the cut scores for the reading assessment to be set at a higher level so "no children fell through the cracks". While altruistic, the net effect was more children failing the reading assessment than should have across grade levels. These cut scores are still in effect and cost children, schools, and districts emotional stress, time, money, and reputation. With students expected to score above 70% correct to be "proficient" on a normed reading assessment, I am very concerned about the transparency or lack thereof of how the math cut scores will be set. Did you know about the setting of the reading cut scores? What do you intend to do about that?

What measures are you willing to take to assure the transparency of the setting of the math scores.

Did you know that students across the state could score 70% proficient on the same grade level reading assessment and both of them not necessarily score proficient? How can that be? (Except that the assessments are equated across forms).

The setting of the reading goal should be immediately revisited and real grass roots oversight of the setting of the math assessment cut scores should be deemed of utmost importance.

Let's include a local superintendent(s) as a representative(s) to observe the process. The panelists for the standard setting process are teachers and other content experts; however, there is a need for clearer information of the process. The workshops are being held July 8-11 at the Crabtree Marriott.

DPI Accountability staff could also provide a review of the recommended achievement levels for the superintendents. This could occur after the standard setting workshop but before the August SBE meeting where the actual approval will take place.

Question 2 - There is no correlation between the NC Check-Ins and the End-of-Grade tests. What is the purpose of the check ins if they are not aligned to the NC Standard Course of Study and the state/General Assembly's assessment of whether we are teaching it and whether students have mastered it? Because of the lack of alignment, it appears to be a waste of the department's resources to support schools. Barring some connection between the two, we will be abandoning their use this coming school year.

The NC Check-Ins are aligned to the same content standards as measured on the EOGs. These are the content standards adopted by the State Board of Education. The NC Check-Ins do not provide a statistical prediction of performance on the EOGs, but the design was not intended to do that. If a school is not finding the NC Check-Ins useful to improving instruction, then we would agree that it is best to discontinue use.

Question 3 - What has been the cost of sending the various flyers home with students this year? Do you plan on continuing this process for 2019 - 2020?

Printed engagements cost approximately $0.02 per piece. Yes, we will continue parental engagements in 2019-2020 focused on school safety, opioid addiction prevention, nutrition, literacy, career pathways, computer science, etc. This will be accompanied by emails to parents and educators about these subjects as well. Engaging parents in important issues such as these is a critical for student success.