

Connecticut State Department of Education

Reading Leadership Implementation Council Meeting

March 21, 2023

1:00 – 2:30 p.m.

Present:

- Dr. Maureen Brummett, Superintendent, Newington Public Schools
- Dr. Michael Coyne, Department Head Educational Psychology and Co-Director for the Center for Behavioral Education and Research (CBER), NEAG School of Education, UCONN
- Ms. Kim Healy, Wilton, CT
- Dr. Melissa Jenkins, Chief Academic Officer, Bridgeport Public Schools
- Ms. Lisa Thomas, Retired Educator
- Mr. Steven Hernandez Esq., Executive Director, Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity (CWCSEO)
- Dr. Stephanie Lockhart, Principal, Avon High School, Avon Public Schools

Absent:

- Ms. Christina Tietz, English Teacher, Waterbury Public Schools
- Ms. Cristina Kingsbury, Instructional Coach, Naugatuck Public Schools
- Dr. Margie Gillis, Founder and President, Literacy How, Inc.
- Ms. Frances Rabinowitz, Executive Director, Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS)

Facilitator:

Dr. Melissa K. Wlodarczyk Hickey, Director of the Center for Literacy Research & Reading Success (Center), Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)

Staff Present:

- Irene E. Parisi, Chief Academic Officer, Connecticut State Department of Education
- Leslie Navarrete, Education Staff Assistant, Connecticut State Department of Education

I. Welcome and Roll Call

The Council's facilitator Dr. Melissa K. Wlodarczyk Hickey, Director of Literacy Research & Reading Success, CSDE, convened the meeting at 1:03 p.m. and the Council's Clerk called attendance. Dr. Hickey welcomed the Council and reviewed the Council norms.

II. Acceptance of Minutes from January 17, 2023

The Council tabled the acceptance of the minutes from January 17, 2023. Ms. Lisa Thomas, Council member, submitted written comments and requested that they be included with March 21, 2023, minutes. The Council will discuss posting of comments at the next meeting (The Council agreed to post the written comments of Lisa Thomas, Council member, at the May 16, 2023, Council Meeting. Comments will be posted on the Council's webpage.)

III. CSDE Updates

A. Staffing:

Dr. Hickey gave an overview to the Council on the job openings that have been posted for the Center which consist of five associate consultants and one administrative assistant. She added that potential candidates are in the questionnaire process and the application process is closed.

B. Literacy Professional Learning and Supports:

Before discussing the agenda item: Literacy Professional Learning and Supports, Dr. Hickey gave an overview to the Council regarding the “Why, How, and What” of the Center, and the Council agreed with the “Why” being, “Every Connecticut student has the right to read at or above grade level by the end of third grade;” the “How” being, “By leading through change and bridging research to support Connecticut educators, families, policy leaders, and community members in increasing effectiveness of literacy teaching and learning;” and the “What” being, “Build comprehensive local and regional literacy educational systems based on culturally-responsive, evidence-based literacy teaching and learning practices, strategies, and structures.”

Dr. Hickey briefed the Council on the current literacy professional learning opportunities and supports that the CSDE and partners are offering to districts (including but not limited to: Connecticut’s Literacy Model Strategy with the University of Connecticut, Hill for Literacy, and Literacy How; ReadConn with Public Consulting Group; Region 2 Comprehensive Center WestEd Networked Improvement Community, and Science of Reading Masterclass with Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents). Thus far, this work continues to receive positive responses from participating districts.

Chief Academic Officer Irene Parisi shared with the Council that she is working with the CSDE Office of Finance and the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) on the development of the third cohort for the Science of Reading Masterclass (Materclass), starting September 2023. Participating school leaders are responding positively to this professional learning and more school leaders are requesting to participate. She highlighted that while such professional learning opportunity and support align with the leadership skills set that the legislation aimed to develop, the Commissioner of Education began such initiative before the legislation as she saw the need for literacy professional learning and support for school leaders.

The Council requested access to the content material of the Masterclass, and while the content material is only privy to participants due to contractual reasoning, Dr. Hickey and Ms. Parisi agreed to inquire about providing the Council access.

Dr. Hickey informed the Council that the contract for ReadConn: K-3 Reading Skills Professional Development Series is being finalized for registration to open and plans for the communication to superintendents to circulate in the spring for fall 2023 cohort.

Ms. Parisi went on to provide an overview regarding the status and development process of the legislated deliverables, including the Center’s progress in achieving those deliverables on schedule with which the Connecticut legislature charged the Center. Both Dr. Hickey and Ms. Parisi reported to the Council that the Center is on track to complete the legislated deliverables on time and in the timeline mandated by the reading legislation.

A discussion concerning the Center’s capacity to achieve the legislated deliverables on schedule and the Center’s capacity to provided impactful technical support and wraparound services to Connecticut school districts occurred. Ms. Parisi added that the CSDE is in the process of hiring

five associate consultants who would provide the technical assistance to Connecticut school districts. Dr. Hickey and Ms. Parisi affirmed that the CSDE is implementing the reading legislation's deliverables with fidelity, and discussions and planning around ensuring the Center's capacity to provide impactful, statewide technical support and wraparound services are already taking place. They will keep the Council apprised on the progress. Ms. Parisi added that the CSDE is hopeful that through the school district submissions of the 2022 Application Requesting a Waiver of the Connecticut Approved K–3 Reading Curriculum Model or Program, both the CSDE and school districts gain further insight on the technical support and wraparound services needed to ensure Connecticut school districts can develop a reading curriculum that teaches students to read by the end of third grade.

Ms. Parisi also informed the Council that the CSDE is in the process of developing the English language arts (ELA) model curricula. The development process is guided by the CSDE's *K-12 Universal Curricula Design Principals Handbook*. The ELA model curricula are not to replace targeted resources, and the CSDE's deployment of the new curricula will be intentional. The CSDE plans to release Grades 3-5 of the ELA model curricula first. Moreover, in the discussion it was noted that many districts do not have a reading curriculum and often pull from various resources to create instruction. Currently, the CSDE is carrying out the legislative deliverables of the reading legislation while also developing and deploying comprehensive K-8 model curricula, aligned to the CSDE's *K-12 Universal Curricula Design Principals Handbook* and the CSDE standards.

Dr. Wlodarczyk Hickey reported to the Council that the CSDE Academic Office and Talent Office have been working with higher education institutions to better prepare and support future teachers in the teaching field. They had a meeting in January 2023 and plan to meet again in the near future. Ms. Parisi noted that legislation ultimately charges higher education to develop a course sequence that will better prepare future teachers in the teaching field.

Dr. Lockhart inquired about the CSDE's recruiting efforts of educators who have been participating in the professional learning opportunities the CSDE provides to voluntarily support districts. She mentioned the Masterclass. Ms. Parisi explained that the Masterclass intentionally has participating superintendents strategically building the district's literacy team who then is responsible for scaling the work of the professional development for the district. It is important that a district builds its capacity and builds sustainable support systems. She added that the CSDE calculated that by year 2027 all of Connecticut school districts would have participated in the Masterclass. Dr. Hickey brought to the Council's attention the memo she forwarded to them regarding evidence-based, scientifically based, culturally responsive literacy curriculum models, programs, and professional learning.

Dr. Wlodarczyk Hickey asked Dr. Melissa Jenkins to share the progress of the strategic literacy work of the Bridgeport Public Schools with fiscal constraints in mind. Dr. Jenkins highlighted the importance of a school district creating and maintaining a comprehensive multi-tiered support system to meet every student's needs and build educator capacity.

C. Right to Read Grant

The Council agreed to discuss at a later meeting.

IV. 2023-24 Goals Planning Process

The Council agreed to discuss at a later meeting.

V. Closing/Meeting Adjourned

Meeting was adjourned at 2:34 p.m.