

Reading Leadership Implementation Council Meeting
December 17, 2024
Meeting Minutes

Connecticut Department of Education

Reading Leadership Implementation Council Virtual Meeting

450 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford, CT

December 17, 2024

2:00 – 3:30 p.m.

Present:

- Dr. Matthew Conway, Superintendent Derby Public Schools
- Dr. Michael Coyne, Professor, Neag School of Education the University of Connecticut
- Dr. Margie Gillis, Founder and President, Literacy How, Inc.
- Kim Healy, Selectwoman, Wilton, CT
- Dr. Melissa K. Wlodarczyk Hickey, Director of the Center for Literacy Research & Reading Success (Center), Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)
- Gary Highsmith, Superintendent, Hamden Public Schools
- Yasmin Ithier-Vicenty, Teacher, Hartford Public Schools
- Dr. Tamu Lucero, Superintendent, Stamford Public Schools
- Dr. Ashley Oldham, Assistant Professor of Education, Department of Special Education, University of Saint Joseph
- Shandra Scott-Brown, Principal CREC Museum Academy
- Dr. James Zavodjancik, Chief Academy Officer, Fairfield Public Schools

Facilitator:

Dr. Ellen Stoltz, Educational Leadership Consultant, ImproveYourSchools

I. Welcome and Roll Call

Dr. Stoltz convened the meeting at 2:00 p.m.

II. Robert's Rules to Accept Minutes from October 15, 2024

Dr. Stoltz opened the floor and made a motion for approval of October 15, 2024, minutes. Discussion ensued Dr. M. Gillis approved the motion and S. Hernandez seconded. Discussion ensued. All Council members were in favor of approving minutes by way of raising their hands.

III. Council Member Comments and Insights

Dr. Hickey shared legislative updates with Council members, information on legislative proposal was shared with Council members via email. Dr. Hickey asked for feedback from Council on how the Center can best support all districts in getting to full implementation by

July 1, 2025. Discussion ensued. S. Hernandez shared that Connecticut is in a state of emergency when it comes to early literacy acquisition. He referenced local lawsuits and lawsuit trends in our sister states. He added our districts are on notice that if they are not in compliance they are in legal peril. Dr. Gillis agreed with S. Hernandez stating we are in crisis as Connecticut has one of the largest achievement gaps. She added many districts are saying they are going to teach evidence and research-based practices, but they are going to continue to do what they have been doing. She asked, “How do we get them to acknowledge they have to change?” Y. Ithier-Vicenty shared the importance of supporting teachers in prioritizing time to learn new curriculum and collaborate with each other. K. Healy agreed with most of what Council members shared. She stated from her experience the biggest challenge that many districts do not appreciate the mandate, adding they were told to pick from the list without data supporting student outcomes will be any better. K. Healy referenced New York and the consideration of expanding the list. Additionally, K. Healy shared her submission of a speaker request form. Dr. Stoltz informed the Council on the process of submitting a speaker request form.

IV. Director’s Updates Regarding *The K-3 Literacy Plan for the Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success*

Dr. Hickey shared updates with the Council regarding the K-3 Literacy Strategy.

V. Draft 2024-26 Goals of the Council

Dr. Stoltz asked Council members for feedback or comments on goals. Discussion ensued. S. Hernandez shared importance of holding state accountable in getting children to read from third grade and beyond. Dr. Conway shared how Council should model what is being asked from districts. G. Highsmith asked if it was intentional for the goals to be input based and not about student outcomes and what students are able to do as a result of instructions.

VI. Expand Connecticut’s K-3 Literacy Strategy to include Grades 4-12

The Council broke out into groups and discussed the following:

1. Which of the current K-3 critical conditions and specific actions in [Connecticut's K-3 Literacy Strategy](#) (pp. 1-4), can be **reworked or refined** to expand Connecticut’s K-3 Literacy Strategy to include grades 4-12?
2. What evidence-based strategies, conditions, and specific actions need to be **added** to the [Connecticut's K-3 Literacy Strategy](#) (pp. 1-4) to be relevant to the literacy skills expected to be mastered by students in upper elementary, middle school, and high school?

VII. Meeting Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 3:33 p.m.

The next Council meeting will be held virtually on February 25, 2025, from 2:00 p.m.-3:30 p.m.