

**SUMMARY MINUTES ARE DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED at the
Reading Diagnostic and Intervention Grant Steering Committee Meeting**



**Reading Diagnostic and Intervention Grant Steering Committee
SUMMARY**

Jan. 27, 2023

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bobbie Barrier, Amy Ritter and Dominique Pleasant-Moore, primary program teachers; Sam Sams, elementary school principal; Jessica Sparrow, librarian or certified media specialist; Mary Bell, private sector member with Reading Intervention Experience; Janice Almasi, post-secondary faculty, Molly Boyd, elementary school parent, Dawn Sexton, elementary reading intervention teacher.

GUESTS: Shannon Sampson, director, University of Kentucky (UK) College of Education Evaluation Center, and Josh Parsons, research staff, UK College of Education Evaluation Center.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Paula Pleasant, Amy Hatzel, Ashley Tackett

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (KDE) REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT: Micki Ray, chief academic officer; Christie Biggerstaff, director of Early Literacy and commissioner's designee; Sarah Peace, policy advisor; Danielle Ward, Read to Achieve (RTA) grant director; Megan Osborn, digital media director

Upon meeting quorum, the meeting was called to order at 10:08 a.m.

Agenda Item: Welcome, introductions and approval of the agenda

Presenter: Christie Biggerstaff, Director of Early Literacy and Commissioner's Designee

Summary of Discussion: The meeting was brought to order following the roll call and review of the meeting agenda. Biggerstaff requested a motion to approve the agenda.

Jessica Sparrow made a motion to approve the agenda. Sam Sams seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item: Purpose, Roles and Responsibilities

Presenter: Sarah Peace, Policy Advisor

Summary of Discussion: Peace discussed the purpose, roles and responsibilities of the Reading Diagnostic and Intervention Grant Steering Committee as provided under KRS 158.794. Per statute, the purpose of the committee is to advise on the implementation and administration of universal screeners, reading diagnostic assessments and a statewide professional development program for early literacy.

The composition of the committee includes a total of 14 members, each appointed by the governor, in addition to the commissioner's designee (Christie Biggerstaff). The statutory responsibilities of the committee include the identification of needs, trends and issues regarding reading and literacy programs, recommendations regarding the Read to Achieve Grant and advisement on the costs and effectiveness of various reading intervention programs.

As part of these advisory responsibilities, the committee will suggest universal screeners for reading and criteria for reading diagnostic assessments for K-3 in addition to suggestions for the KDE on a statewide professional development program for early literacy skills instruction and student engagement.

Feedback: No feedback was offered by the committee.

Agenda Item: Chair and Vice Chair Responsibilities and Election

Presenter: Sarah Peace, Policy Advisor, and Christie Biggerstaff, Director of Early Literacy and Commissioner's Designee

Summary of Discussion: Peace briefly explained that KRS 158.794(4) requires the election of a committee chair. Biggerstaff called for a volunteer to serve as the committee chair before proceeding to a motion. Sam Sams volunteered to serve as the committee chair. A motion was made by Jessica Sparrow. Molly Boyd seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

A call was made for a volunteer to serve as the committee vice chair before proceeding to a motion. Bobbie Barrier volunteered to serve as the vice committee chair. A motion was made by Sams. Amy Ritter seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Feedback: No feedback was offered by the committee.

Agenda Item: Read to Achieve Diagnostic and Intervention Grant 2021-2022 Report

Presenter: Shannon Sampson, Director of University of Kentucky Evaluation Center and Joshua Parsons, University of Kentucky Evaluation Center

Summary of Discussion: Sampson led a presentation on the 2021-2022 Read to Achieve (RTA) Evaluation Report. As this represents data from the final year of the grant cycle, the evaluation report focused on the academic performance across the grant cycle, including the impact of the +1 initiative. The presentation also discussed the impact different programs have on student achievement.

The committee heard information on a number of topics, including snapshot findings, student achievement data and costs for implementation.

Specifically, the presentation focused on the following:

- Description of programs implemented by RTA grantees
- Review of the school's literacy capacity
- Perceived high impact practices of RTA teachers (via survey)
- Student achievement data
- Comparison on program effectiveness within the RTA program
- Cost analyses of programs

Upon conclusion of the presentation, recommendations for future grant cycles were shared with the committee. Considerations include professional learning that promotes consistency in instruction, flexibility in instructional methods and data literacy for informed decision-making.

Feedback: A committee member inquired about the cost analyses and how it was presented in the presentation. The committee member recommended the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) to review cost effectiveness in order to broaden the availability of data for legislators and funding agencies. The member further added that a deeper analysis of cost effectiveness can be done with the appropriate resources.

Josh Parson, UK College of Education Evaluation Center researcher, added that preparing administrators before beginning interventions in order to gather more detailed information can be challenging.

Another committee member commented that only two years of data were discussed in the presentation. As the parent representative, the committee member shared a personal perspective on how COVID impacted the students' developmental ability to read.

Sampson indicated that the impact of students who obtained literacy instruction during COVID is unable to reveal the true impact of COVID on early literacy. Parsons added that the programs could not be implemented, "as designed," during COVID, which led to challenges in implementation and measurement.

Another committee member shared that increasing the literacy capacity of students impacted by COVID cannot be limited to professional development. The committee member suggested that future data analysis consider pre-COVID years in order to represent gains accurately. This information is important in understanding the full growth and effectiveness of the program in the years to come.

Sampson recommended that future data analysis compare schools that received the RTA grant award with schools that did not receive (or apply) for the grant. This can also provide another data point for consideration.

Follow-up Required: A member of the committee requested a copy of the RTA Evaluation Report presented by Sampson. KDE offered to provide both the full report as well as the presentation slides discussed by Sampson.

Agenda Item: Early Learning Initiatives Update

Presenter: Christie Biggerstaff, Director of Early Literacy and Commissioner's Designee

Summary of Discussion: Biggerstaff provided committee members with an update on the early learning initiatives and priorities for early literacy. This is a priority for students in Kentucky especially as Kentucky Performance Rating for Educational Progress (K-PREP) and Kentucky Summative Assessment (KSA) results between 2015-2021 revealed that approximately 50% of students in grade 3 are not proficient readers. The importance of grade 3 proficiency was specifically discussed due to its long-term impact on student success.

Committee members also heard a review of Senate Bill (SB) 9 (2022), also known as the *Read to Succeed Act*, and the comprehensive actions to improve early literacy outcomes provided in the legislation .

Specifically, these actions include:

- Full funding for the Read to Achieve grant
- State professional learning support strategies
- Early intervention and instruction
- Student reading improvement plans
- Family and community engagement
- Teacher certification

The presentation shared details related to early literacy screeners and diagnostics assessments as required in SB 9 (2022). Per the law, the role of KDE is to support schools and districts by providing an approved list of valid and reliable universal screeners and diagnostic assessments for grades K-3. The approved lists were shared with the committee.

An overview of the Kentucky Reading Academies and its purpose is to increase reading outcomes for elementary students through high-quality, job-embedded professional learning on how students learn to read, free of cost. This opportunity removes financial barriers to equitable access to high-quality literacy instruction by investing in teachers and those with a direct impact on students.

To meet this need, KDE has used \$10 million in American Rescue Plan (ARP)/Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding to provide professional learning on the Language Essentials for Reading and Spelling (LETRS), for all K-5 educators at no cost. LETRS is offered via the Kentucky Reading Academies and provides comprehensive evidence on proactive and sustainable literacy instruction that can be aligned to the district's local curriculum. Teachers who have completed Phase 1 of LETRS have already reported positive feedback on the impact of the training on classroom instruction.

Feedback: A committee member inquired about their role and responsibilities in advising KDE as discussed by the policy advisor during the review of KRS 158.794(6)(d). Specifically, the member asked how KDE was able to develop an approved list for both universal screeners and the criteria for reading diagnostic assessments in advance of the first convening of the Reading Diagnostic and Intervention Grant Steering Committee.

Ray explained that due to challenges in meeting quorum, the convening of the committee could not take place earlier. However, in order to support superintendents in selecting universal screeners and reading diagnostic assessments by the Jan. 1, 2023, deadline (required under SB 9 (2022)), the approved lists needed to be available. KDE generated the approved lists based on specific selection criteria published on the KDE website, and committee members are encouraged to provide recommendations and feedback on what has been posted.

Follow-up Required: Biggerstaff offered to share a copy of the presentation with the committee following the conclusion of the meeting.

Agenda Item: Questions and Additional Feedback

Presenter: Christie Biggerstaff, Director of Early Literacy and Commissioner's Designee

Summary of Discussion: At the conclusion of the presentation committee members were offered opportunities to ask questions and provide feedback.

Feedback: One committee member inquired about the research underlying the LETRS training. Another member affirmed this request in order to review the evidence basis above and beyond individual case studies.

Ray reported that a rich evidence basis was analyzed prior to implementation as this is a federal requirement for using ARP/ESSER funds. At this time, KDE is in process of developing a request for proposals (RFP) for a third-party evaluator in order to promote transparency. This RFP was posted as of Feb. 1, 2023.

Another committee member inquired about the pre- and post-test data available for implementation. The member expressed concern around the post-test results, specifically in Mississippi, due to participants answering approximately 50% of the post-test assessment correctly. As a university professor, the member indicated that this would be considered a failing grade. The member added that while the Mississippi LETRS training produced gains, there is still a concern in ensuring that the 50-70% of young readers receive the growth needed in order to improve state-wide literacy needs.

Biggerstaff shared that the LETRS platform gives numerous pre- and post-assessments to monitor participant growth and understanding. Positive gains have been reported for those who are actively participating in the training at this time. With the addition of a third-party vendor, the training can be evaluated for its effectiveness in supporting students in reaching proficiency.

Ray also added that LETRS is not the singular focus on improving literacy skills. The LETRS evidence basis offers a first step for teachers who wish to learn more about how students learn
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to read and why they might struggle. KDE will regularly reevaluate the impact of the training on both teacher efficacy and student outcomes. In this work, they will advise KDE as next steps are considered.

Lastly, a committee member inquired about the unused RTA grant funds and how they might be utilized, such as the distribution of mini grants. Additionally, the member asked if the committee will be involved in the request for application (RFA) process.

Ray responded that the RTA grant director, Danielle Ward, is in the process of developing a RFA with the assistance of the Office of Finance and Operations that would allow for mini grants using the unexpended funds.

Follow-up Required: Ray offered to provide the committee with the evidence-basis and research available on LETRS so that committee members may provide feedback prior to its release to the public.

Agenda Item: Adjournment

Presenter: Christie Biggerstaff, Director of Early Literacy and Commissioner's Designee

Summary of Discussion: The next convening of the Reading Diagnostic and Intervention Grant Steering Committee is tentatively scheduled for fall 2023.

Biggerstaff asked for a motion to adjourn. A motion was made by Sam Sams to adjourn the meeting. Bobbie Barrier seconded the motion. Motion carried.
Meeting Adjourned at: 11:42 a.m. ET.

Feedback: No feedback was provided by the committee.