

**SUMMARY MINUTES ARE DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED AT THE NEXT MEETING
ANTICIPATED TO TAKE PLACE IN THE WINTER OF 2022**



**KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Reading Diagnostic and Intervention Grant Steering Committee
SUMMARY**

VIRTUAL MEETING DATE: SEPT. 30, 2021

ATTENDANCE: Bobbie Barrier, Dawn Sexton, Sam Sams, Jessica Sparrow, Dreama Gentry, Lisa King, Neal Chethik, Tammie Sherry, Nancy Hulan, Penny Howell, George Hruby, Shannon Sampson, Qi Xiaoliang, Whitney Hamilton, Micki Ray, Sarah Peace

MEMBERS ABSENT: Susan Cantrell, President of the Council on Postsecondary Education

SUMMARY:

Agenda Item: Welcome

Presenter: Whitney Hamilton, RTA Grant Director, KDE Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL)

Summary of Discussion: On Sept. 30, 2021, the virtual Reading Diagnostic and Intervention Grant Steering Committee was called to order at 1 p.m. ET by Hamilton. A location for public viewing of the virtual meeting was provided in the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) Sower Building, Room 417.

Hamilton expressed appreciation to the members for their willingness to participate on the committee. Hamilton provided members with instructions related to the virtual platform and then introduced KDE representatives Micki Ray, chief academic officer, and Sarah Peace, policy advisor.

Hamilton called roll and reported that she is serving as the commissioner's designee. A quorum of voting members was present.

Agenda Item: Approval of the agenda

Presenter: Whitney Hamilton, RTA Grant Director, KDE Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL)

Summary of Discussion: Tammie Sherry moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Lisa King. A roll call was completed, and the motion carried. There was no further discussion.

Agenda Item: Policy overview

Presenter: Sarah Peace, Policy Advisor, KDE Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL)

Summary of Discussion: Peace provided a policy overview of relevant language as it pertains to the agenda. Peace provided the historical context of the grant, which originally was created in 1998 and amended in 2005, at which time the Read to Achieve (RTA) grant was established in its current form. Any public school that enrolls primary students, including the Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB) and the Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD) are eligible to apply.

Peace proceeded to provide an overview of each statute as it relates to the committee's role. [KRS 158.792](#), on the reading diagnostic and intervention fund, provides the information needed to understand the basis of the RTA grant, including its purpose, which states the reading diagnostic and intervention fund "is created to help teachers and library media specialists improve the reading skills of struggling readers in the primary program."

Peace continued with the overview by adding that KRS 158.792(2) further provides that "[t]he Kentucky Department of Education, upon the recommendation of the Reading Diagnostic Steering Committee, shall provide renewable, two (2) year grants to schools to support teachers in the implementation of reliable, replicable research-based reading intervention programs that use a balance of diagnostic tools and instructional strategies that emphasize the essential components of reading."

The committee also was provided with the essential components of reading as provided in KRS 158.792 under the definition of "comprehensive reading program." These components include phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension and connections between writing and reading acquisition and motivation to read. Additionally, the statute provides definitions for "reading diagnostic assessment," "reading intervention program" and "reliable, replicable research" upon which to base instructional strategies and programs to support the diverse learning needs of struggling readers. Matching funds also are a statutory requirement and shall be "allocated by the school council, or if none exists, the principal or the superintendent of schools." Under this statute, language is provided as to how KDE will support schools throughout the life of the grant.

Peace then transitioned to discuss [KRS 158.794](#), which provides language related to the purpose, composition and responsibilities of the committee. The composition (provided above) was reviewed before discussing the purpose of the Reading Diagnostic and Intervention Grant Steering Committee. Under KRS 158.794(1), the committee is "hereby created for the purpose of advising the Kentucky Board of Education and the Department of Education concerning the implementation and administration of the reading diagnostic and intervention fund created in KRS 158.792."

KRS 158.794(6) provides that as part of their responsibilities, the committee shall:

- (a) Identify needs, trends and issues in schools throughout the state regarding reading and literacy programs;
- (b) Make recommendations regarding the content of administrative regulations to be promulgated by the KBE under KRS 158.792;
- (c) Recommend approval of grant applications based upon the provisions of KRS 158.792 and administrative regulations promulgated by the KBE as required under KRS 158.792; and
- (d) Advise the KBE and KDE regarding costs and effectiveness of various reading intervention programs.

Peace continued with a brief description of [704 KAR 3:480](#), which provides guidance related to eligibility requirements, the grant application, criteria for selecting grant awardees and considerations for determining the award size or range of grants.

Lastly, Peace advised the committee as to the policy language related to the three action items listed on the agenda: election of committee chair and vice-chair, determination of award size or range of grants and approval of the RFA Notice.

Agenda Item: Election of Committee Chair and Committee Vice Chair

Presenter: Whitney Hamilton, RTA Grant Director, KDE Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL)

Summary of Discussion:

The committee proceeded to the first action item provided on the agenda. Peace reviewed KRS 158.794(4) related to the election of the committee chair and the responsibilities of the role. Per KRS 158.794(4) “The committee shall elect, by majority vote, a chair, who shall be the presiding officer of the committee, preside at all meetings, and coordinate the functions and activities of the committee. The chair shall be elected or re-elected each calendar year.”

Hamilton called for a volunteer to serve as the committee chair before proceeding to a motion. Dreama Gentry volunteered to serve as the Committee Chair. A motion was made by Neal Chethik who moved to approve Dreama Gentry as the Reading Diagnostic and Grant Steering Committee Chair, seconded by Sam Sams. A roll call was completed, and the motion carried unanimously. There was no further discussion.

Hamilton called for a volunteer to serve as the committee vice-chair before proceeding to a motion. Sams volunteered to serve as the committee vice-chair. A motion was made by Dawn Sexton. Jessica Sparrow seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item: Presentation of the RTA Program Evaluation Yearly Report for 2019-2020 and 2020-2021

Presenter: Shannon Sampson, Ph.D., faculty, University of Kentucky, Educational Policy Studies and Director, College of Education Evaluation Center

Summary of Discussion:

Sampson provided a summary of the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 RTA evaluations, which included data for program implementation, demographics of students, student achievement, summary of MAP findings, impactful literacy practices and recommendations.

Sampson shared the following takeaways from the 2019-2020 RTA Evaluation Report:

- Interventions primarily happen daily or three to four times/week for 30 minutes.
- Most programs can’t serve all students who need to be served.
- Nearly all schools provide supplement funding.
- RTA teachers have several years of experience.
- Most RTA teams hold professional developments and family literacy nights.

In 2019-2020, the team conducted a study of RTA “outlier schools.” Outlier schools were identified by novice reduction rates, high performance on the MAP assessment and better than

the targeted novice reduction on K-PREP scores. Sampson indicated that of the 27 schools identified as outlier schools, five of these schools volunteered to participate in the study, and seven interviews were conducted. The study occurred near the start of the escalation of the COVID-19 pandemic, likely causing participation numbers to be low.

Qualitative data findings for outlier schools revealed that outlier schools generally have more experienced and more confident teachers who are motivated life-long learners. Additionally, outlier schools are more likely to use diverse financial resources and invest in other resources and capacity-building activities like external partnerships to support RTA efforts. Furthermore, outlier school administrators are invested in literacy growth and the goals related to literacy were shared across the school.

Sampson continued her presentation by addressing impactful practices that outlier schools perceived as influencing their students' high or higher-than-expected achievement based upon survey results from classroom teachers, RTA teachers, Plus One teachers and principals to determine a ranking of the most impactful practices. The survey results revealed that "reserving time to help students" and "adjusting instruction based on achievement data" ranked highest.

"Making sure literacy instruction from instructors builds off each other/is consistent for students" was the third most impactful practice. "[U]tilizing or building online resources" and "partnering with/seeking external support" rated lowest relative to the other practices in the list. RTA teachers and administrators rated "discussing data school-wide" as significantly higher in the impactful list than other groups (classroom teachers, Plus One teachers and "others").

In terms of practices that were viewed as difficult, Sampson shared that "seeking external funding (beyond RTA)" was seen as most difficult for stakeholder groups, followed by "creating partnerships with external groups." Administrators found that "hiring additional instructors" and "seeking out additional financial support" as the hardest practices. Instructors (classroom and interventionists) felt "reserving class time to teach revision" was the most difficult. "Collaboratively reviewing data to make literacy decisions" was easy, but "leading a schoolwide review" was hard.

Sampson indicated that pursuing grant funding is done least frequently by all groups. Collaborating with non-classroom teachers (including librarians) is not done as frequently as other activities. Most groups frequently participate in school-wide reviews of student data. Lastly, the least implemented practice for instructional staff is discussing literacy-related pedagogy with the school principal.

Sampson concluded by stating that next year will be the final year of the grant cycle, and a longitudinal study will be completed to analyze student data. Consideration also will be given as to how teachers perceive the impact of the RTA grant program and review and plan for the next evaluation cycle.

Feedback:

Committee member Nancy Hulan voiced concerns related to the low number of students served as indicated in the findings. She noted that teachers are working with a small number of students and asked how more students might be reached by an RTA teacher. Sampson said there is not a cutoff point for students to qualify for support from the RTA teacher, and the number served is a local decision.

Committee member Lisa King asked if there is a correlation between the number of students selected for support and the program utilized by the school. Sampson explained this can vary between schools depending upon how the program is implemented.

Agenda Item: Action items related to the RFA for the 2022-2024 grant cycle

Presenter: Whitney Hamilton, RTA Grant Director, KDE Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL)

Summary of Discussion:

Hamilton presented an overview of the draft RTA grant - Request for Application (RFA) before calling a vote on the two remaining action items on the agenda, which included the award size and range of grant as well as approval of the RFA notice. Hamilton shared the grant currently is in an extension year of the 2017-2021 grant cycle, and the current grant cycle will not end until June 30, 2022.

Hamilton revisited the statutory language shared previously in the policy overview regarding KDE's role in providing support to schools as stated in KRS 158.792(5). As to align to the requirements named below in KRS 158.792(5), Hamilton indicated the draft RFA has been designed to support teachers so they may support student learning. This statute requires that the support provided by KDE to schools shall include:

- (a) Information concerning successful, research-based comprehensive reading programs, diagnostic tools for pre- and post-assessment and intervention programs from the Collaborative Center for Literacy Development, created under KRS 164.0207;
- (b) Strategies for successfully implementing early reading programs, including professional development support and the identification of funding sources; and
- (c) A list of professional development providers offering teacher training related to reading that emphasizes the essential components for successful reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension and connections between writing and reading acquisition and motivation to read.

Furthermore, Hamilton shared the draft RFA is based upon the findings from previous RTA evaluation reports, including the findings shared by Sampson. Previous evaluation reports and subsequent data revealed the Plus One initiative is seen as having a positive impact on building literacy capacity. The RFA reflects the benefits of the Plus One initiative by expanding the availability of professional learning to build greater literacy capacity.

However, RTA programs in the current cycle often struggle to provide the support needed for the volume of students who need to be served. The draft RFA aims to address this need by providing students with increased access to high-quality instruction from highly trained teachers. Hamilton explained that students who are not served by the RTA teacher will receive their support from classroom teachers, other interventionists and/or non-certified instructional staff. Hamilton indicated the draft RFA aims to support stakeholders in professional learning to better serve all struggling readers in need of support.

Hamilton explained that approximately 50% of third graders perform below proficiency on state

standardized reading tests. Findings demonstrate a strong need for more students to receive high-quality instruction from highly qualified teachers. Last year, the RTA annual evaluation report indicated that 128 RTA teachers reported serving 26-50 students per year, 97 teachers reported serving between 11-25 students per year and others reported serving even fewer. The draft RFA increases the number of students able to be served.

Survey results indicated that teachers do not feel students are receiving consistent literacy instruction. Therefore, based on this information, Hamilton said all K-3 teachers and reading support staff would benefit from being trained on the essential components of literacy and high-quality professional learning (HQPL) to support implementation of the intervention and comprehensive reading programs. Hamilton added that 99% of RTA teachers are women and 98% are white. This information is important when considering how to best meet the diverse needs of students who require accelerated learning in reading.

Summer learning loss also appears to be more severe for students who qualify for interventions, as shared in Sampson's presentation. Hamilton added this need is compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hamilton said outlier schools reported a number of components perceived as having a positive impact on student performance. The draft RFA addresses the takeaways reported by Sampson for outlier schools. Hamilton shared that based on these findings, the RFA aims to include the selection and implementation of high-quality intervention and comprehensive reading programs, high-quality professional learning to support implementation and assessment in four key areas: building knowledge in the science of reading; implementation of the essential components of reading, including instruction in phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension; implementation of high-quality, grade-level instruction and assignments aligned to the *KAS for Reading and Writing* and evidence-based instructional practices to support the reading and writing connection; and lastly, school literacy team support in data, assessments and family engagement.

Agenda Item: Action item - award size and range of grants

Presenter: Whitney Hamilton, RTA Grant Director, KDE Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL)

Summary of Discussion:

Hamilton led the committee in their second action item, the approval by vote of the award size and range of grants. Hamilton re-shared the regulation policy language specific to this responsibility of the committee. Per 704 KAR 3:480 Section 2, "The award size or range of grants shall be determined by the Reading Diagnostic and Intervention Grant Steering Committee." Hamilton provided a summary of regulatory considerations for determining the award size and range of grants, which include the cost to implement and support activities related to the program(s) selected by schools, direct costs required to implement the program(s), and monitoring of fiscal reports, program evaluations and documentation of the impact of the program on students served, including student progress on reading assessments (704 KAR 3:480(2)).

Based on the cost to implement the key components of the grant, Hamilton recommended the award amount increase from the previous award amount of \$47,000 to \$62,000, and the number of schools receiving the RTA grant decrease from approximately 300 schools to 225 schools in order to adequately provide flexibility to schools in how they reach more students. Micki Ray

elaborated upon provider research that took place to determine adequate funding for professional learning to support more teachers in meeting the needs of students.

Feedback:

Sam Sams asked about the flexibility for schools in how funds are utilized, as it pertains to requirements for a reading intervention teacher. Hamilton clarified that schools are not required to have a dedicated reading intervention teacher but have the flexibility to do so.

Dawn Sexton asked for clarification on whether schools receiving the grant would need to hire a dedicated interventionist. Sarah Peace referred back to KRS 158.792 and clarified that schools are not required to have one. Ray added that this would be a decision made at the local level. Ray continued by stating that the increased funding allows schools to provide professional learning to more teachers so students may receive high-quality instruction from a highly qualified teacher. Whitney Hamilton added that many students in need of support are not necessarily receiving intervention from a dedicated RTA teacher due to the volume of students in need of accelerated learning.

Sams asked if schools would search for their own professional learning opportunities or KDE would provide professional learning. Ray clarified that schools will have parameters in which they are able to offer professional learning. The statutory language related to KRS 158.792(5) was provided again for the committee, and Ray added that there will be a process available to schools should they wish to request professional development outside of the provided list. Sams asked for additional clarification for how the delivery of professional learning will take place. Further clarification was provided by Ray, who indicated that the delivery mechanism is specific to the school and the program utilized.

Lisa King expressed concern in moving away from a trained interventionist. Ray reiterated that while there is no requirement to hire a dedicated interventionist, a school could choose to use some of their grant funds toward the salary of an interventionist. Students, by law, are guaranteed access to the tiered delivery system, including Tier 2 and 3 supports. Additional grant funds could be utilized to train teachers in all tiers of literacy instruction so that all students may receive literacy support. This is especially important as schools have not received state funding for professional learning for many years. King asked if the funding may be used for a coach. Hamilton said the intent is to focus on equipping all teachers with professional learning for meeting the needs of struggling readers.

A motion was made by Neal Chethik to approve the award size and range of grants as \$62,000 for 225 schools, and the motion was seconded by Dawn Sexton. The motion was carried by a 7-2 vote.

Agenda Item: Action item - Approval of the content of the RFA notice

Presenter: Whitney Hamilton, RTA Grant Director, KDE Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL)

Summary of Discussion:

Hamilton moved to the next agenda item, the approval of the contents of the RFA notice as required in regulation. Hamilton shared the draft RFA notice she had prepared for the committee's feedback.

The committee requested to revise the following sentence: "The Kentucky Department of

Education (KDE) anticipates funding approximately 225 schools at an estimated \$62,000 per year to support professional learning regarding the science of reading, the implementation of the essential components of reading, and the teacher implementation of a reliable, replicable research-based reading intervention program to address the diverse learning needs of those students reading at low levels in the primary grades (K-3).” The committee requested that the RFA notice more accurately state the intent to *support teachers*.

The RFA notice was revised to reflect the committee’s recommendations. The final revision of the sentence was updated to read as follows: “The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) anticipates funding approximately 225 schools at an estimated \$62,000 per year to support teachers in providing reading diagnostics and intervention through professional learning in the essential components of reading and the teacher implementation of a reliable, replicable research-based reading intervention program to address the diverse learning needs of those students reading at low levels in the primary grades (K-3).

Feedback:

Dreama Gentry asked if this committee would approve the RFA or if that would be another group. She continued by stating that the RFA is the important piece. Sarah Peace stated that the regulation calls for the committee to approve the RFA notice, not the RFA. Micki Ray added that anyone participating in the meeting might gain an unfair advantage by seeing the RFA before it is released to all schools. To stay in alignment with policy, and to honor the competitive grant process with fidelity, the actual RFA cannot be reviewed until it is released to all schools.

A motion was made by Sam Sams to approve the contents of the RFA notice and Tammie Sherry seconded. The motion was carried by unanimous vote.

Agenda Item: Next steps

Presenter: Whitney Hamilton, RTA Grant Director, KDE Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL), and Micki Ray, Chief Academic Officer, KDE Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL)

Summary of Discussion:

Hamilton announced the committee would reconvene again during the winter of 2022 because of the committee’s responsibility to recommend approval of grant applications. The meeting will take place after schools have submitted their grant applications, but before the awards are announced. Ray also reviewed the timeline and provided a brief explanation of the next steps in the RTA grant process.

Follow-up Required:

Reconvening of the Reading Diagnostic and Grant Steering Committee in winter 2022.

Agenda Item: Adjournment

Presenter: Whitney Hamilton, RTA Grant Director, KDE Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL)

Summary of Discussion:

Hamilton asked for a motion to adjourn. Sam Sams made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dawn Sexton seconded. Motion carried.

DRAFT