



# NEBRASKA

## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

### PROPOSED AGENDA ITEM RATIONALE

**TO:** Matthew L. Blomstedt, Ph.D.  
Commissioner of Education

**FROM:** Amy Rhone and Rhea Hochstein

**PROPOSED AGENDA ITEM:** Grant the Commissioner the authority to fund the Practice-Based Professional Development for Reading Project through the University of Nebraska - Lincoln

#### **RATIONALE/BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

The Nebraska Reading Improvement Act is in effect (2019-2020), and many schools and teachers may be underprepared to implement and interpret the reading assessments and instruction necessary. To help prepare teachers, the Nebraska Department of Education has launched the Nebraska Reads initiative, which focuses on high quality literacy instruction for all students, as well as early identification of students who may need extra support in kindergarten through grade 3. To support this initiative, NDE is developing multiple resources for schools and districts, including: a list of approved reading assessments, guidance documents for developing Individualized Reading Improvement Plans, resources for identifying evidence-based practices (e.g., documents from the Regional Educational Laboratory), developing a Nebraska Literacy Plan, and revising their Technical Assistance Document for Dyslexia.

Many in-service teachers throughout Nebraska are still becoming familiar with the new initiatives and recommended practices. They may not have received training in these practices in their college coursework or professional development. In some cases, teachers and schools have reached out to the University of Nebraska—Lincoln (UNL) or other universities for such training. For example, UNL developed and implemented a code-based reading course in the summer of 2019. However, the instruction was entirely based on Lincoln, which limited access to teachers in more rural areas. At present, there is not an option for these teachers to take this course at UNL, and it is not possible to offer the course at a distance in its current form, as there is an in-person teaching component requiring one-on-one instruction with a child and in-person supervision. Thus, there is a need to develop a professional development workshop series that can be used throughout Nebraska that can help teachers access NDE resources, learn to interpret reading assessments, and implement high-quality reading instruction for all students.

**ESTIMATED COST:** \$157,300

**FUNDING SOURCE:** IDEA Part B