

Committee of Practitioners Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, October 26, 2022
In Person and via Zoom

The October 2022 meeting of the Nebraska Committee of Practitioners was held in person at 1201 Infinity Court Lincoln, NE, 68512.

Tina Forté, Committee Chair, called the Committee of Practitioners meeting to order at 9:00 AM on Wednesday, October 26, 2022.

Members in Attendance

Hillary Bentley - zoom
Ann Caruso
Brent Cudly
Andy DeFreece - zoom
Scott English - zoom
Dave Erb
Tina Forté
Bill Heimann
Michele Hensley
Tara James
Kim Jonas
Ita Mendoza
Chris Nelson
Phillip Picquet
Kris Schneider - zoom
Kristin Schultz
Robert Ziegler - zoom

NDE Staff in Attendance

Ann Carmoney
Lane Carr
Jan Handa
Sue Henry
Dottie Heusman
Ken Howard
Anne Hubbell
Jim Kent
Kim Larson
Vicky Munoz
Kirk Russell
Shirley Vargas
Brian Welch
Beth Wooster
Rhonda Wredt
Benjamin Zink

Not in Attendance

Allyson DenBeste
Daniel Jaimes Diaz
Linda Hix
Melody Hobson
Stephanie Knust
Tina Rickett
Deb Ross

Welcome & Introductions:

This COP meeting was held In Person and Zoom on October 26, 2022. Tina Forté, Committee Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Kirk Russell, Assistant Administrator/Title I Director welcomed new members and noted some changes; Hillary Bentley, new position as Principal/Curriculum Director at Pleasanton PS; Daniel James Diaz Grand Island PS; Dave Erb, NE Juvenile Services; Kim Jonas ESU# 10; Chris Nelson, Omaha Arch Diocese; Phillip Piquet, Perkins County Schools; Tina Rickett, Winnebago Public Schools and Brian Welch NDE staff member for Family & Community Engagement.

Nebraska Open Meeting Acts (NOMA) Reminder:

Tina issued a general reminder about the NOMA. A copy of the Open Meetings Act was available.

Open for public comments:

Tina asked if there was any public comment. None was requested.

Approval of Minutes for March 31st meeting:

Bill Heimann made a motion to approve the March 31, 2022 minutes. Brent Cudly seconded the motion. Motion unanimously approved.

Election of Committee of Practitioners Chairperson for 2022-2023:

Kirk shared there were two nominations, Tina Forté, Omaha PS and Linda Hix, Lincoln PS. Linda regretfully declined. Bill Heimann moved to close nominations and re-elect Tina Forté, and Tara James seconded the motion. Motion unanimously approved.

NDE COP Process Rules – Emergency Declaration:

Beth shared we received the extension on Title IA Paraprofessional Qualification Flexibilities through July 30, 2023, which allowed the mentoring and paraprofessional development. However, during the USED monitoring, they stated we could not extend the Para Qualifications Flexibilities after July 30, 2023. According to the law it must be an assessment therefore NDE is looking into other options for assessments to add to the three we offer. Kirk asked committee members to send him, or Beth suggested certification assessments they know of, and they will follow up on those leads. If changes are to be made to the paraprofessional qualifications, they will need to be voted on through the COP committee in March 2023.

NDE COP Process Rule – Recruitment & Committees:

Kirk briefed the committee on the work of the Ad-Hoc committee. They continue to move forward on increasing the COP membership especially with school board members, teachers, paraprofessionals, and parents where the representation is lacking.

Coordinated School & District Support-Officer of Coordinated School & District Support:

Invited guests, Dr. Shirley Vargas, Lane Carr and Dr. Vicky Munoz from NDE's School and District Support team presented their slideshow on the [AQuESTT Updates](#). State & Federal Accountability takes several things into account; Status on assessments (ELA & Math 3-8 NSCAS and 11th ACT), Graduation Rates, Growth and Progress toward proficiency, English Learners, and School Quality and Success – Chronic Absenteeism. State Classifications are divided into four categories; excellent, great, good and needs support to improve. State and Federal Designations are tiered; 1. All Schools, 2. TSI/ATSI, 3. CSI, 4. Priority Schools.

The NDE is required to classify and designate all schools. There are messaging and resources related to state and federal accountability on the [AQuESTT webpage](#). The public release of information will come in mid-November and more information will be shared with identified schools once this is public. There are additional resources related to school improvement activities on the [Coordinated School & District Support webpage](#).

NDE is making long-term adjustments to federal accountability beyond 2022. An addendum has been submitted for the ESSA plan. NDE staff has been working with an AQuESTT Advisory Group that represented various stakeholder groups and sizes of districts to put information together to amend the ESSA plan. More information on the amendment will be shared with this group in the future.

COP Members provided feedback on the Readiness piece for high school students. A parent on the committee indicated that she believes having these options for students is excellent but how does the parent get informed about those opportunities. Comments regarding participation of students of color and overall student access and success are both critical pieces to accountability.

Other comments from committee members were labeling a school does not make a school better but there is a realization that this must occur. Lack of certain teachers in subject areas is an issue for opportunities for schools. Comments regarding level of attention to accountability results is mixed. In some places it is shared through large media channels and in others there is a lack of urgency to adjust. Comments were also made related to how the NDE and ESUs can work collaboratively to support schools.

Emergency Relief Grants:

Dottie Heusman reported the fiscal monitoring is occurring through the Office of Budget & Grants Management under the guidance of Tom Goeschel Director of Grants Compliance. This team is doing the reviews in conjunction with the other grant programs which include federal programs and IDEA/SPED. As needed guidance is given to help the districts make the necessary changes.

ESSER Programmatic Monitoring was piloted last spring. All districts that are monitored for ESSA this year will also be monitored for ESSER. This is done through a questionnaire that is completed prior to the monitoring review date and then discussed during the monitoring visit. USED has approved the monitoring that we are conducting with both the fiscal team and the federal team.

ESSER I Allocations: Districts were required to have all their CARES ESSER I funds obligated by September 30, 2022. All reimbursements are due to NDE by November 15, 2022. As of October 25, 2022, 98.77% of the total allocation to districts has been reimbursed. There is only 1.23% of funds left to be reimbursed. The Federal Programs Team is working with the ten districts to create the reimbursement requests by the required timeframe.

ESSER II Update: Funds for CRRSA ESSER II must be obligated by September 30, 2023. Districts continue to create amendments as actual expenses are incurred or if needs change. The Federal Programs Team has made these amendments priority to review. As of October 25, 2022, 42.57% of the total allocation to districts has been reimbursed.

ESSER III Update: Funds for ARP ESSER III must be obligated by September 30, 2024. The USED is looking at a possible late liquidation period for this grant as well as ESSER I & II. The State of Nebraska would have to apply for a waiver and then districts would apply to the State. Rationale for waivers would be due to supply chain demands for construction projects or other items. As we learn more about this we will share with districts.

EANS I & II Update: Jim Kent, Title Consultant/Nonpublic Ombudsman reported on the Nonpublic stimulus money. CARES ESSER included Nonpublic schools and during the program court cases nationally caused changes to how the money was allocated. EANS I ends September 30, 2023 and EANS II will end September 30, 2024. There were multiple grants running within those and NDE contracted with third party, FACTS, to assist with the grants. These include funds the Governor provided under GEER II which will end September 30, 2023 and includes Priority 1 funds for schools not served under ARP EANS; Priority 2 were remaining funds from Priority 1 and used to reimburse schools for COVID related expenses (this funding stream was amended to include services as well); and finally, GEER II GAP funds for schools who took PPP but received less than their EANS estimates. There is currently a three to four week turn around for reimbursements.

ARP-HCY I & II Update: Dr. Ken Howard, Title Consultant, shared the state-wide allocations for each of the two grants HCY I, a competitive grant and HCY II based upon a federally determined formula which totaled over \$2.6 million combined. Approximately \$1.9 million dollars was awarded to more than 50 districts. The districts are using the funds to provide more robust services and resources to their local homeless student populations, including transportation, school supplies, and additional staff assigned to support the needs of students in transition. With the 25% state set-aside, NDE, in collaboration, with SchoolHouse Connections and Pearl Strategies has provided districts with technical assistant and professional development. Funds are available through September 30, 2023. Funds not obligated and expended prior to the beginning of the fiscal year following the fiscal year for which funds were appropriated remain available for obligation and expenditure for an additional year. Accordingly, funds

appropriated under the ARP-HCY program will be available until September 30, 2024. The deadline for reimbursements of obligated funds is January 31, 2025. This applies to both awards of funds under the ARP-HCY programs.

Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BCSA's) Stronger Connections grant program:

Dottie informed the committee the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BCSA) was signed into law on June 25, 2022. Through this legislation Congress authorized \$1 billion in formula funding under Title IV, Part A, of ESEA to State Education Agencies (SEA's) to provide students with safer and healthier learning environments. There are three portions to this: 21st Century, Professional Mental Health Programs, and Stronger Connections Grant. Federal Programs will be managing the Stronger Connections Grant Program. This is a competitive grant and Nebraska received \$4.8 million in allocations. This portion of the grant is available until 9-30-2026, this does include the tydings year. More information will be sent out to the districts.

USED Monitoring of NDE Federal Programs & Required Action(s):

Beth reported Nebraska was selected as one of two states to participate in the ESSA Consolidated monitoring. The programs that were included in the review were Title I-A, Title I-C, Title II-A, Title III-A which includes EL & IE, Title IV-A, Title V-B and took place February 28th through March 4th. Nebraska was complimented by ED staff for doing very well with minimal requirements and actions to be completed. The required actions were due to USED by October 17th. The monitoring for the ESSER Grants, GEER and EANS I & II were monitored on June 7th. There were no corrective actions reported.

Federal Programs Information:

Beth shared the 2022-2023 Allocations are posted on the Federal Program webpage and Nebraska received an additional \$13,948 so these funds will be given to the districts as a reallocation next year rather than asking them to do an amendment to budget a small amount.

Waivers:

Nebraska received a fiscal waiver for the 2021-22 funds on September 15th. This allowed districts to carry over more than the 15% limitation in Title I and allowed an extra year on the Tydings Waiver which allows any unused 2020-21 funds and 2021-22 funds to have until September 30, 2023, before they have to be allocated. Superintendents were informed of the waiver and the importance to use the funds in 2022-23 as the extra year to spend the funds in the future will not be allowed. Any district that took advantage of carrying over more than the 15% limitation will not be able to receive another waiver for this for another three years.

2022-23 ESSA Consolidated Application:

The Consolidated Application opened on Wednesday, July 27, 2022. This allowed NDE to assist districts at Administrator Days in Kearney as well as offer online application support sessions. The grant was due on September 15, 2022. The plan for 2023 will be to open the grant again in July and close it on September 30, 2023, to allow more time for districts to finish it after budgets are due.

Multi-District Agreements for 2022-23:

Nothing to report currently. It will open again in March 2023 and due at the end of May.

Title II, Part A Grant Funds, Allowable Use of Class Size Reduction:

Jim Kent, Title Consultant/Nonpublic Ombudsman discussed the criteria for use of class size reduction funds. He clarified may be used in Needs Improvement schools, in grades K-3 or to create classrooms with under 18 class size.

Family and Community Engagement:

Brian Welch, new Family and Engagement Specialist, shared the current name change is being finalized and the School-Family Community Engagement framework has had positive feedback. They continue to support and focus on AQuESTT and provide a toolkit and resources for ESU and schools to use in the family, school & community engagements efforts. The goal is to have it finalized, published, and distributed around January 2023. The Statewide Family Engagement Centers grant is in its 5th year and is ran by the National Center Families of Learning. Two more districts, Hastings and Beatrice were added to this grant. Additionally, they continue with their Nebraska CAFÉ efforts. The Family Leadership Conference was held on Saturday, October 22nd with over 300 families who participated.

ESEA Program Updates**Title I-A: Educationally Disadvantaged:**

Kirk Russell, Title I Director shared that for those Schoolwide Buildings that will be “updating” their SWPlans will be notified and reminded to begin updating SW narratives and collecting artifacts using the new updated SWP Template. Updates to the SWPlans are to be completed on or before April 3, 2023 within the Federal Programs SharePoint landing page. Those districts who are PEER reviewing will complete their Self-Reviews and submit by May 1, 2023.

Beth added that the Comparability Reporting changed slightly which means staff can only be excluded now. There are thirty-two districts this will affect and will complete in the Portal.

Title I-A School Improvement Grant (SIG):

Dottie Heusman, SIG Coordinator reported these grants wrapped up during the 2021-2022 school year. No new funding is available.

Title I-A School Improvement (1003a) CSI/SFI:

Shirley Vargas, Officer of Coordinated School & District Support reported the application will open in January. NDE is collaborating with a contractor to provide direct support to these schools. There are two co-horts – those schools identified from the original cohort who did not exit, and any schools identified this year will be in the second cohort. The new schools identified will be eligible to exit next year and every year thereafter until year four. The application process will be similar between the two cohorts except the previous schools identified will be encouraged to engage in the opportunity scorecard for those districts to see what needs to be focused on in Teaching and Learning areas.

Title I-C: Migrant:

Sue Henry, Migrant Coordinator reported Title I-C Migrant Education Program received an allocation of \$5.8 million for the 2022-23 year. MEP suballocates to fourteen LEA/LOA's and the project provides supplemental instruction and support services for eligible migratory students. Although there was a decrease in the number of identified eligible migrant children in the past due to natural causes there has been an increase in numbers this school year. A goal for the MEP is to increase partnerships with school districts to provide awareness of the MEP and the supplemental services available to support the student's academic success. The Title I-C grant opened October 25th.

Title I-D: Neglected At-Risk Delinquent:

Ann Carmony, Federal Programs Title I, Part D Specialist shared the grant is open and closes November 30th for our two facilities, Dept. of Corrections and Health & Human Services.

Title II-A: Improving Teacher Quality & Nonpublic:

Jim Kent, Title Consultant/Nonpublic Ombudsman reported updates due to the federal monitoring visit. Nonpublic: If Nebraska schools have enrollment of more than 40% of Native American and another group who takes a Title VII grant from the federal government then the district will do a consultation with the tribes on use of funds. The districts will attach the required documentation to their ESSA application. There are currently 6 schools impacted by this and they have been individually contacted. He reminded nonpublic memberships are due November 1st.

Title II-A: Another update from the monitoring visit is the definition from the federal level of what constitutes professional development which is “Sustained (not stand-alone, 1-day, or short-term workshops), intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven and classroom focused”. Districts need to keep this in mind when they are doing professional development with Title II funds.

Title III: Language Acquisition:

Anne Hubbell, Title III Specialist shared the NPD Grant (Project Assets) provides a rigorous program of study over the course of 18 months that leads to a micro credential for 320 educators and training in family engagement and literacy for four hundred parents/caregivers or ELS. Educator Cohort 1 of 4 began in June of 2022 with thirty participants and Cohort 2 is scheduled to begin in June of 2023. The Family Leadership Institute is a component of the grant with the first cohort of family leaders meeting virtually in August with one hundred participants and a ceremony in Omaha followed. The next cohort will begin in January 2023.

The Alt ELPA summative field test will be given to English Learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities this year. These students will take it in lieu of the general ELPA21 summative and will receive individual score reports. Anne summed up with the number of English Learners in Nebraska has grown from 22,175 in 2018-19 to 24,392 in 2021-22 for the ELPA 21 Summative participants.

Title IV-A: Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE):

Dottie Heusman, Title IV-A Coordinator shared many school districts have completed their ESSA applications. It has been steady regarding whether they transfer their funds or keep them in Title IV. We will be changing our reporting period for federal reports. It will now coincide with the school year; September 1st to August 31st.

Title IV-B: 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC):

Jan Handa, 21st CCLC Coordinator briefed the committee on who they served for the 2021-22 school year and this year they are celebrating twenty years with the program. The program is building back up from the pandemic by reestablishing relationships with those partners to increase the number of students attending. Programs have been affected by staff shortages which is creating a waiting list for students to enter them. The next competition’s deadline is February 1st, 2023 with Nebraska’s allocations at 6.2 million annually. Nebraska will need larger allocations to add more facilities. Lane added ARP ESSER state set aside funds of \$11 million are for summer school and after-school programs.

Title V: REAP – Rural Education Achievement Program:

Ann Carmoney reported REAP Title IV is expanding their allowable uses with their funds. This has been added to the monitoring list when schools are monitored. The grant application is now digital.

Title VII-B: Education of Homeless Children and Youth:

The annual McKinney-Vento competitive grant applications have been submitted, reviewed, and FY23 allocations were approved for twelve school districts. The districts were awarded a portion of the \$335,447 allocated for state-wide distribution in amounts varying from \$2,500 to \$126,447. The funds will be used to provide students in transition with services and resources ranging from transportation to school supplies and liaison staff.

Head Start/Early Childhood:

Kirk stated Stephanie Knust could not attend due to a national conference and encouraged ESU's/Schools to reach out to her for assistance on collaborative actions. Both federal programs team and Early Child Head Start State office will continue to assist School Districts with monitoring in meeting the requirement for having an agreement in place when serving Head Start Early Child students.

Other:

Beth announced the [National ESEA Conference](#) is in Indianapolis on January 31-February 4, 2023.

Next Meetings:

Kirk will send a survey link out to try and determine a standardized annual meeting date for our March/October 2023 meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:04 pm.