

Committee of Practitioners Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 29, 2023
In Person and via Zoom

The March 29, 2023 meeting of the Nebraska Committee of Practitioners was held in person at Dinsdale Chevrolet Conference Room, 1708 S Webb Rd, Grand Island, NE 68803.

Tina Forté, Committee Chair, called the Committee of Practitioners meeting to order at 9:00 AM on Wednesday, March 29, 2023.

Members in Attendance

Brent Cudly
Scott English
Dave Erb - Zoom
Tina Forté
Bill Heimann
Linda Hix
Tara James
Kim Jonas
Lindsey Luly (Guest)
Angie Nasr (Guest)
Chris Nelson - Zoom
Phillip Picquet
Tina Rickett
Matt Rohlfson
Deb Ross
Kris Schneider

NDE Staff in Attendance

Ann Carmoney
Lane Carr
Trudy Clark (Zoom)
Jan Handa
Dottie Heusman
Ken Howard
Anne Hubbell
Jim Kent
Stephanie Knust
Kim Larson
Vicky Munoz
Kirk Russell
Shirley Vargas
Brian Welch
Beth Wooster
Rhonda Wredt
Benjamin Zink

Not in Attendance

Hillary Bentley
Ann Caruso
Allyson DenBeste
Andy DeFreece
Daniel Jaimes Diaz
Michele Hensley
Ita Mendoza
Kristin Schultz
Robert Ziegler

Welcome & Introductions:

This COP meeting was held In Person and Zoom on March 29, 2023. Tina Forté, Committee Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

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:

Kris Schneider made a motion to approve the October 26, 2022 minutes. Deb Ross seconded the motion. Motion unanimously approved.

NDE COP Process Rules – Emergency Declaration:

Kirk Russell, Assistant Administrator/Title I Director, thanked the sub-committee for reviewing the Totem-Para-Pro curriculum. The committee found that their seven instructional modules were lacking the federal requirement in the areas of reading and mathematics. Therefore, there will be no action taken to approve Totem. Federal guidance is clear that reading and mathematics instruction must be a part of curriculum and be assessed. Kirk requested the committee to email him other Paraprofessional certification programs for the sub-committee to research for the future.

ESSA Plan Amendment (Section 4: Accountability)

Invited guests, Dr. Vicky Munoz, Dr. Shirley Vargas, and Lane Carr from NDE's School and District Support team presented their [slideshow](#) and provided an update on the USED ESSA Plan Amendment on Section 4 Accountability and Support and Improvement for Schools. They compared the previous and current federal designation processes timeline, in which there was an interruption in data collection and assessing students due to Covid. In the fall of 2022, the Federal government awarded the states an addendum to allow NDE to rethink the accountability procedures. With that addendum there was a stipulation that any changes are formulized through an amendment, so pre-pandemic procedures are prohibited. She discussed the foundations of accountability including the ESSA and AQuESTT indicators. The committee was asked for their input on the School Quality and Student Success Measures in federal accountability. There was group discussion and feedback on identifying CSI/TSI/ATSI Schools and should Stage 2, academic progress of the filter be separated into two categories: growth and non-proficiency. The committee's feedback was there might be value in separating out the two categories. Further discussion included focusing on growth, logistics for students transferring schools, discouragement on how far the growth there is and not achieving it. Vicky shared information for the third stage on Student Quality and Student Success. There were three indicators in pre-pandemic 2018-19, chronic absenteeism, EBA, and science. EBA has been removed. Chronic Absenteeism metric remained in our accountability system and science did not, due to it being a new assessment and stakeholders' feedback. For the upcoming amendment, she said choices need to be made regarding chronic absenteeism and science. Vicky and Lane gave a summary on the four indicators up for discussion. There was small group discussion on chronic absenteeism. The committee's feedback questioned if the district is already low in status or proficiency will the district also be high in chronic absenteeism and is this double counting. Another concern for reducing the rate of chronic absenteeism by half in ten years may not be attainable perhaps shorten the time to three years in order to attain the goal in ten. One final discussion, the committee broke into small groups was to discuss if science proficiency should be included in Stage 3 (SQSS) of the NE Federal Accountability process.

Emergency Relief Grants:

ESSER State Set-Aside Funds & Best Practices Expenditures Update: Lane Carr gave a brief summary on the importance of the emergency relief funds. The committee reflected on their successful use of these funds and how they have been impactful to their district. Some of the committee members shared how they have used these emergency relief funds in their districts. Lane stressed the importance to share these impacts with the community, and all levels of the policy making boards.

Lane shared \$1.6 million statewide funds were used for fifteen awardees around the teacher shortage, approximately \$16 million for various mental health support, and a final piece was NDE partnering with Zearn on implementation of their online math platform. Lastly, \$11 million was used on expanded learning for before and after-school programming.

ESSER II & III Fiscal Monitoring/Programmatic Monitoring Update: Dottie Heusman reported all districts will be program monitored for ESSER I, II and III at the same time they are monitored for ESSA programs, in a three-year rotation starting this year. Fiscal Monitoring is also occurring through the Office of Budget and Grants Management.

CRRSA ACT ESSER II and III Funds: Dottie reported there was only \$131,829 of ESSER I that was not spent by the September 30, 2022 deadline. ESSER II allocations must be spent by September 30, 2023 and ESSER III allocations spent by September 30, 2024. It is recommended on a national level that districts spend down the money because there will not be an extension for spending these funds.

EANS I & II Update: Jim Kent shared EANS I expired September 30, 23 with about 80% invoiced to pay out to schools. Districts have invested in people and professional development. EANS II will expire September 30, 2024 and roughly 30% has been spent at this time.

ARP-HCY I & II Update: Dr. Ken Howard shared ARP-HCY I, a competitive grant and HCY II based upon a federally determined formula, allocated over \$2.6 million combined to 50 plus LEAs. Currently, most applications have been approved. NDE contracted with SchoolHouse Connections & Pearl Strategies to provide districts with Technical Assistance and Professional Development using a portion of the State Set Aside funds. With more than \$300,000 left in State Set Aside funds, NDE has surveyed LEAs from across the state to determine the district needs of additional PD and TA opportunities. Ken and Ann gave a summary on the results of the survey.

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 and is available through September 30, 2026. This is a competitive grant and Nebraska received \$4.8 million in allocations. This grant is for schools to use through the Title IV Safe and Healthy category with the federal government pushing districts to concentrate on mental health supports for students. NDE will post and ask for public comment on the definition of what our "High-Need LEA" is. LEA's will be required to describe in their application how they have engaged or plan to engage with their families, educators, and local community in determining use of funds.

Director of Assessment Dr. Trudy Clark – working lunch

Dr. Trudy Clark briefed the committee on the history and summary of the Nebraska Student-Centered Assessment System (NSCAS) Growth platform. This is a statewide assessment system that uses multiple measures throughout the year to provide educators and decision makers at all levels to support student learning. The platform was designed to provide proficiency data and to reduce the number of tests. The return of the data scores is within a 72-hour turnaround and meets accountability requirements. She briefed the committee on the work of the Teaching, Learning and Assessment team regarding the assessment practices. These are instructional practices that teachers use daily to determine if their students are understanding the material and engaging in it. Based on the feedback from these practices the teachers determine if they move forward or review the material again. One development for the Formative Assessment Supports Network (FASN) that TL&A team have instituted is a coaching network. The coaches are trained in making relationships and how to communicate with the teachers in the classroom besides being trained in assessment practices.

USED Consolidated Performance Review & Required Action(s):

Kirk reported Federal Programs team continues to work on the third round of Consolidated Performance Review corrective actions from the USED monitoring that took place in March 2022.

Unresolved Performance Review items still remaining are:

- Financial Management & Cross Cutting
 - *Internal Controls
 - *Local Applications and Plans
- Title I, Parts A & B
 - *Support for School Improvement
 - *State and Local Report Cards
 - *Other Title I
- Migrant Student Information Exchange
 - *MSIX Data Submission
 - *MSIX Data Quality

Federal Programs Information:

Beth shared the allocations for 2022-23 and the preliminary allocations for upcoming 2023-24 year. All programs will be getting increases. It is undecided how it will be split amongst districts, however each district will see an increase.

Kirk shared the two districts, Crete Public School and Wakefield Community Schools were nationally recognized at the 2022 NAESPA conference. He also congratulated Beth as the Vice President this year for NAESPA and will lead the group as President next year.

2023-24 ESSA Consolidated Application:

Beth reported the application will open on Tuesday, July 25, 2023 and close on September 28, 2023. The Federal Programs team will offer office hours to support the completion of the grants as well as have a designated room at Administrator's Days to support district personnel. It is anticipated there will be few changes to the application this coming year.

Multi-District Agreements for 2022-23:

The ESU's are reporting if they will offer consortia for Title II, III or IV. One has been completed and returned to the Federal Programs office. The deadline is May 15, 2023. ESU #6 is considering a consortium this year.

Family and Community Engagement:

Brian Welch, Family and Engagement Specialist, shared the publication deadline for the updated Family & Community Engagement Framework has been moved to the end of this school year. There were ESU and district feedback discussions, and the extra time has been beneficial to finalize the framework. The SFEC five-year grant is ending, and they are proposing to partner with National Center for Families and Learning to try to Plant the Future. They are holding a conference in October. The [Nebraska CAFÉ](#) has been adjusted since last fall to reach a larger audience. The focus is to include the district personnel, ESU personnel, teachers, and professionals in the nonprofit space.

ESEA Program Updates

Title I-A: Educationally Disadvantaged:

Kirk Russell, Title I Director updated the committee that 2022-2023 Schoolwide Plans are due April 1st through the Microsoft SharePoint landing page for approximately 115 buildings in this cycle. The Peer Reviews will be held the second and third week of April across the state at ESU locations.

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

Dottie Heusman, School Improvement Coordinator and Shirley Vargas, Officer of Coordinated School & District Support reported SFI applications for CSI Schools are due on April 26, 2023 with five already submitted and thirty-five more coming in which will be reviewed prior to May. State Board of Education will receive the allocation amounts during the April and May board meetings for approval and grants will be returned once those allocations are determined so districts can do their amendments. Some of the schools completing the application are finding they have some inexperienced teachers serving the buildings that are on the CSI list. There will be more discussions to assure that this does not occur in these highest needs buildings. This is a competitive grant and was important to make sure the activities tie to the overall needs of the district's buildings.

Title I-C: Migrant:

Benjamin Zink, Migrant Coordinator reported the Nebraska's preliminary allocation for 2023-24 is \$6,865,172.00. These allocations are determined by the number of migratory students identified in the state and served during summer and intersession periods. He shared two of Migrant's goals: To identify

every migratory student in Nebraska with the help of each school district. A letter will be sent to Superintendents in August to gather data that they collect from students. It is Migrant's obligation to collect this data as part of accepting the federal funds. In return, the districts will be provided supplemental instructional and support services to identified migrant students. The second goal is to expand the quantity and quality of instructional services in which the first goal addressed.

Title I-D: Neglected At-Risk Delinquent:

Ann Carmony, Title I, Part D Specialist shared ED/NCTAC has hired Longevity to take over monthly meetings with a lot of positive feedback. She will be attending the National Conference in May which is hosted by Longevity. The Title I, Part D – Program Information section of ESSA grant application as well as the Title I-D subpart 1 grant will be getting a facelift this summer. She informed the committee that the Self-Assessment/Self Survey will also be changing for the 2023-2024 school year.

Title II-A: Improving Teacher Quality & Nonpublic:

Jim Kent, Title Consultant/Nonpublic Ombudsman shared the Westat survey will be sent out in the spring. Federal Programs provides Westat with the districts contact information and allocation we have on record. The survey then is sent out to approximately a third of the districts asking them what their allocations are, what they are doing with it and some demographic questions.

Title III: Language Acquisition:

Ann Hubbell, Title III Specialist gave an update on the NPD Grant (Project Assets) which provides participants with knowledge and strategies to support multilingual learners. The Educator Cohort 2 begins in June 2023 and a \$500 stipend from Title II-A State Set Aside funds plus a \$300 stipend available through the project will be given to participants who complete all required activities. The Family Leadership Institute is a component of the grant and has completed two cohorts of family members with a total of 230 participants.

The Alt ELPA summative field test was administered this year to 47 English learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities. These students took it in lieu of the general ELPA21 summative and will receive Individual Score Reports that include proficiency determinations in September. The delay will provide time to establish cut scores for this new assessment and beginning in 2024, score reports will be available in early May, the same timeframe as the ELPA21 summative. Ann summed up with the number of English Learners in Nebraska has grown to over 26,000 for the ELPA 21 Summative participants.

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

Nothing to report.

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

Jan Handa, 21st CCLC Coordinator shared that the external review for the recent competition for 21st CCLC Continuation Grants was completed in March and the State Board will vote on the slate of recommendations at the April 14th meeting. A competition for supplemental funding provided by the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSA) to 21st CCLCs serving middle or high school sites is open now. Approximately \$230,000 is available for these supplemental funds. Program demographics from the 2021-22 school year were also shared. Kim Larson reported that the 30-minute [StayConnected](#) webinars are held monthly the first and third Thursday at 12:00 pm CT. Topics are relevant to afterschool program staff and leaders. The 2023 [GetConnected Afterschool Conference](#) is September 22nd at the Omaha CHI Conference Center. Workshop RFP and Walk & Talk display table applications are now available on the website.

Title V: REAP – Rural Education Achievement Program:

Ann Carmoney, REAP Coordinator reported Nebraska was awarded \$290,000 in the 2022 fiscal year. There were 175 districts who qualified for SRSA (Small Rural School Achievement Program) and 105 who applied. There were 15 districts who qualified for RLIS, and three schools took the grant because of more funds.

USED increased their REAP team by three members which allowed for some positive changes such as the REAP/RLIS website, additional resources, and state contacts. Eligibility requirements and a yearly calendar were also added. The next national REAP meeting is in May. Emails were sent to all eligible LEAs for the FY 2023 REAP applications deadline which closes on April 14th, 2023. The REAP team has been updating primary and secondary contacts for districts.

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

Ken Howard shared the annual McKinney Vento competitive grant applications were approved and FY23 allocations were appropriated to twelve school districts. This was the first year that districts had to have 20 or more homeless students to be able to apply. 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 are now being used to provide students in transition with services and resources ranging from transportation to school supplies and liaison staff.

Head Start State Collaboration Office:

Stephanie Knust, Head Start State Collaboration Specialist, shared her [slideshow](#). The current priorities for all programs in the country are Advancing Equity, Supporting Programs' Pandemic Response and Recovery, investing in the Workforce, and lastly Reaching children and families in need. There are two federally required eligibility categories for Early Head start in our state, Income and Age. The Early Head Start serves birth to three as well as pregnant women and the Head Start program serves 3- to 4-year-olds. The income criteria are at or below the 100% of the poverty level, eligible for public assistance, and most recent SNAP eligibility which was added in March 2022. Children experiencing homelessness or are in foster care are automatically eligible.

The last federal appropriations bill passed included an increase in Head Start funding broken into three categories: Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) to all staff within programs, a small Quality Improvement Funding (QIF) set-aside to use for workforce or adjustments to staff salaries and benefits, additional money for a tribal college and universities program that takes place at the Federal level, and an RFP for competitive expansion for the programs.

A brief Covid update included Head Start had their own state set-aside which is allocated and spent by March 31, 2023. The public emergency at the federal level is ending in May. Office of Head Start has lifted the masking mandate in February.

Other:

The National ESEA Conference was held January 31-February 4, 2023 in Indianapolis. Next year's conference will be in Portland, Oregon February 7-10, 2024. The theme is Create the Possibilities.

Kirk announced his retirement on September 29, 2023.

Next Meetings:

Beth shared October 25th or November 1st, 2023 will be the tentative fall COP meeting dates.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 pm.