

Committee of Practitioners Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 20, 2024
In Person and via Zoom

The March 20, 2024 meeting of the Nebraska Committee of Practitioners was held in person at Dinsdale Chevrolet Conference Room, 1708 S Webb Rd, Grand Island, NE 68803.

Bill Heimann, Committee Chair, called the Committee of Practitioners meeting to order at 9:00 AM on Wednesday, March 20, 2024.

Members in Attendance

Ann Caruso
Brent Cudly
Andy DeFreece (Zoom)
Tina Forte
Bill Heimann
Michele Hensley
Tara James (Zoom)
Kim Jonas
Anita Harkins-Mehsling
Ita Mendoza
Phillip Picquet
Hillary Rasmussen
Kris Schneider
Heather Stucky
Kamau Turner

NDE Staff in Attendance

Ann Carmoney
Dottie Heusman
Anne Hubbell
Jim Kent
Stephanie Knust
Derek Ippensen
Jessica Javorsky
Amanda Noonan
Julie Otero
Shirley Vargas (Zoom)
Brian Welch
Beth Wooster
Rhonda Wredt
Benjamin Zink

Not in Attendance

Daniel James Diaz
Scott English
Dave Erb
Jan Handa
Melody Hobson
Kim Larson
Marco Pedroza
Deb Ross (Retired)
Bob Ziegler

Guests

Angie Nasr

Welcome & Introductions: This COP meeting was held In Person and Zoom on March 20, 2024. Bill Heimann, Committee Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Nebraska Open Meeting Acts (NOMA) Reminder: Bill issued a general reminder about the NOMA. A copy of the Open Meetings Act was available.

Open for public comments: Bill asked if there was any public comment. None was requested.

Approval of Minutes for March 31st meeting: Phillip Picquet made a motion to approve the November 1, 2023 minutes. Brent Cudly seconded the motion. Motion unanimously approved.

NDE COP Process Rules: Ann Carmoney, NDE Homeless Liaison, outlined the updates to the Allowability of Title Expenses. These updates were due to the ARP HCY I & II Grants and are specific to the Homeless Children and Youth. There is a wide range of allowable uses in these grants not normally allowed by Federal funds. ARP HCY grants now allow use for prepaid gas cards and store cards for students and families experiencing homelessness. Districts will be required to have an assurance process to assure that the prepaid cards are being used for what they were intended for. The added sections to the Allowable Federal Title Expenses are: 1) §200.303_ Internal_ controls section. 2) *Expenditures for McKinney-Vento/ARP-HCY grant funds- Prepaid Store Cards for Homeless Children and Youth (HCY) section. 3) Tracking Usage of Prepaid Store Cards for Use of McKinney-Vento & ARP-HCY Funds section. ([here](#))

Tina Forte made a motion to approve the updates to the Allowable Federal Title Expenses and Michele Hensley seconded the motion. Bill asked and all committee members present were in favor.

Office of School and District Support Updates:

Dr. Derek Ippensen, Assistant Administrator & Director-Accountability, shared they are in the process of discussions to exploring possible changes to the state accountability system. These changes will not impact federal accountability. The amendment updating the federal accountability process was approved in late November, and it is currently reflected in the ESSA document discussed today.

Dr. Shirley Vargas, School Transformation Officer, and Amanda Noonan, School Improvement Coordinator shared NDE staff had conducted twelve support sessions in January and February across the state and engaged with nearly 200 leaders/educators from the 86 identified schools. School teams reviewed the designation process and individual school data in order to identify root causes and possible solutions. They provided the districts collaborative work time on the CSI and CSI-ATSI grant application. The funding was smaller than past years, two-thirds of the funds were allocated to the CSI schools and the remaining one-third went to the CSI-ATSI schools. Each level received a base amount and there was additional funding based on population, additional subgroups, and running a title program. Allocations and applications were due March 26, 2024.

Shirley reported there are schools that have not exited the original cohort prior to the pandemic. NDE partnered with TNTP to conduct Academic Diagnostics for 34 CSI schools to focus on instructional coaching giving the students consistent access to the four key resources that would support their success.

Emergency Relief Grants:

ESSER State Set-Aside Funds & Best Practices Expenditures: Jessica Javorsky, Strategic Initiatives Grant Specialist, reported there was \$54 million in SSA funding with 10% restricted for each summer and after school investments which was nearly \$11 million. The ESSER III state plan identified the five priorities and recent re-allocations approved by the State Board of Education at the March 8, 2024 meeting.

1. \$11 million obligated with a focus on unfinished learning and supporting learning acceleration.
 - a. Foundational Literacy Professional Development including high-quality materials and a statewide literacy plan development.
 - b. CTE investments including a labor data dashboard and work-based learning platform.
2. \$5 million obligated to provide access to comprehensive mental health services.
 - a. Most recently adding early childhood video modules to support educators and providers.
3. \$3.5 million obligated for high-quality professional learning and bolstering the teacher pipeline.
 - a. Large scale science professional development.
 - b. Supporting cohorts of principals in their professional development.
4. \$3.5 million obligated to modernize information, data, technology, and process systems.
 - a. GMS improvements for both the users and admin, allowing for the management of ESSER funding.
5. \$3 million obligated to reimagine family and community engagement.
 - a. Most recently adding training for local interpreters.

In addition to these 5 priorities, \$13.5 million of ESSER III SSA was allowable as “Emergency Funds.” These have supported projects with NCECBVI, CEDARS Youth Services, and adding capacity at NDE to process teacher certifications.

Reimbursement of ESSER II & III Expenditures: Dottie Heusman, Assistant Administrator/Title I Director, reported all funds for the Administration and State Set-Aside was expended. All but \$10,048 of ESSER II aid funds to schools were expended in which that amount was returned to the USED. Federal

Programs staff were proactive rather than reactive by providing sessions, individual calls and traveling to districts for support. The goal for ESSER III will be to expend all funds with continued support.

ESSER I, II & III Fiscal Monitoring/Programmatic Monitoring: Dottie shared that ESSER monitoring was on a three-year cycle, 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25. All ESSER programmatic monitoring will be completed by the end of 2024-25 school year. Beth reminded the committee that with the fiscal monitoring if there is a finding, then those funds will need to be returned and not be able to use them on other items.

ARP HCY I and II Grants: Ann reported the monitoring for ARP-HCY grants is also on the same three-year cycle as ESSER monitoring. This year a third of ARP-HCY recipients will be monitored. There is a checklist with five main questions that districts complete. For those districts who have not implemented a plan yet, have requested to be monitored during the 2024-25 school year. The bill did not pass to extend the ARP-HCY obligation date. Ann has two upcoming meetings with USED to ensure funds get obligated and claimed by the due dates.

ESSA Revised State Plan: Dottie shared Lane Carr was absent due to a Washington D.C. trip this week. Dottie had the committee break out into assigned groups to review sections of the draft ESSA Revised State Plan ([here](#)) and provide the groups feedback on a spreadsheet. Dottie will take comments and suggestions back to Lane for revisions.

Family and Community Engagement (Working Lunch): Brian Welch, Family and Engagement Specialist, shared the purpose of the School, Family, and Community Engagement Framework ([here](#)) and the reason it was created was to expand on and support the AQuESTT tenant, Positive Partnerships, Relationships, and Success. There are six interrelated focus areas; Active Family Engagement; Safe and Welcoming schools; Student attendance; Community Partnerships & Support Services; Business and industry partnerships; Before-School, Afterschool, and Summer Programs. Each focus area has four sections including introduction and standards, actionable practices, research, and annotated bibliography. Brian asked the committee to work in groups or partners to review at least one of the focus areas and provide feedback so he can incorporate the input in the yearly revisions in June. A survey link was provided for their feedback. A Family School Framework version is being created for families and feedback sessions are being held. Additionally, they are creating a video training series that schools can use to support Family and School Engagement as well as a microlearning video series with micro credentials.

Federal Programs Information:

2024-2025 Allocations: Beth Wooster, ESEA Administrator shared the 2024-25 preliminary allocations has not been released from USDE. They are running on continuing resolution until March 22, 2024 until that time they are shut down. Once we receive the preliminary allocations Beth will share with the COP committee the overall dollars. Allocations will be shared July 1st.

2023 ESEA Distinguished Schools: Beth shared two Nebraska Schools, Ralston Seymour Elementary and Wisner Pilger Elementary Schools were nationally recognized at the 2023 NAESPA Conference in Portland Oregon.

2024-25 ESSA Consolidated Application: Beth reported major changes were not expected for this year. The application will open Monday, July 15, 2024 to September 30, 2024. The Federal Programs team will offer support sessions at Administrator Days, at ESU's, and during zoom office hours to support district personnel.

Nonpublic Carryover: Beth and Jim shared there will be changes to the grant in nonpublic carryover. After discussion with USED, the changes are with Title II, III and IV nonpublic carryovers which have three scenarios: 1) the nonpublic uses all their funds 2) the nonpublic releases their funds and it goes back to the public 3) the nonpublic didn't use all their funds but their needs were met. Then the remaining funds go back into the pool which is divided proportionately between the public and nonpublic. If the nonpublic was not able to use their funds due to the public not following through, then all of the carryover funds would go back to the nonpublic. Jim provided information on the needs assessment for nonpublics to complete. No change to Title I nonpublic carryover. Title I funds need to be used within the year then they are allocated unless there are extenuating circumstances, then the funds will rollover to the public the following year.

ESEA Program Updates

Title I-A: Educationally Disadvantaged: Beth discussed the changes to the Title I-A Schoolwide Program that the committee voted on last fall. The forms were revised and updated on the Title I-A Schoolwide Program and Resources ([here](#)). The most significant change was eliminating PEER Reviews in April. The procedure for the schools who are new to the schoolwide program will be to complete the SW Intent Form and submit it to the ESEA office by December 1st. Once approved, they will receive an email with instructions to complete the SW Plan template and upload their supporting documentation in SharePoint by April 1st. The new procedure for those districts with existing plans will be to complete the SW Self Review template each spring and retain in the district's records to be reviewed during monitoring. If there are any changes in the red boxed areas on the first page, they must make those changes on the SW Plan Cover Page and submit to the ESEA office by May 1st. If there are changes to the Title I-A Schoolwide plan itself, then the district will complete the Updating SW Plan Template form and submit to the ESEA office by May 1st.

Title I-A School Improvement (1003a) CSI/SFI: See section Office of School and District Support Updates for the report.

Title I-C: Migrant: Benjamin Zink, Migrant Director, shared the program identified 4,502 migratory students in Nebraska during the 2022-23 school year and provided summer services to 2,032 students. They are in the process of developing a State Identification & Recruitment plan and increasing coordination and training of staff responsible for recruiting migratory students. Plans are in the works to increase the number of students served for the summer of 2024, including the first State sponsored leadership camps for secondary students. April 6, 2024, the State Parental Advisory Council will be hosting their annual Family and Student Conference via Zoom. Participants will hear from local and national experts and five scholarships will be awarded to graduating seniors. Last year the program implemented a process to identify migratory children who would qualify for McKinney-Vento support. The 2024-25 program year changes are; Madison Public Schools will be served through ESU 7 and Grand Island Public Schools has decided to not participate and will be served by ESU 9. Funded projects for 2024-25 are five district projects: Alliance, Crete, Fremont, Lexington, Lincoln and seven regional projects: ESU 1, ESU 7, ESU 9, ESU 13, ESU 15, Head Start in Hastings, Greater Omaha.

Title I-D: Neglected At-Risk Delinquent: Ann Carmoney, on the national level the NDTAC is working to collaborate more with Migrant programs, Homeless programs, and the Bureau of Indian Education. Ann attended a webinar that discussed the number of students who are incarcerated or are in facilities and it is a disproportional rate of students who are native or indigenous. They are working on providing more professional development support. The funding should be close to the same as last year.

Title II-A: Improving Teacher Quality & Nonpublic: Jim Kent, Title II Consultant/Nonpublic Ombudsman said there were no updates to report.

Title III: Language Acquisition: Julie Otero, Title III Director and Anne Hubbell, Title III Specialist, gave an update on the NPD Grant (Project Assets) which provides a rigorous program of study over the course of 18 months that leads to a micro credential for 320 educators (four cohorts of 80 each) and training in family engagement and literacy for 400 parents/caregivers or ELs. Cohort 1 has graduated; Cohort 2 has 30 from Nebraska currently participating; and Cohort 3 will begin in June of 2024. The Family Leadership Institute is a component of the grant.

The ELPA21 Summative and Alt ELPA Assessment window was February 5 – March 15, 2024. There was a 10% increase from 2022-23 and a 32% increase since 2018-19. ELPA 21 Screener Participants were up 39% since 2018-19. Alt ELPA participants appears to be lower this year, due to it being new last year and some of the students who qualified last year passed out of the ELPA. Alt ELPA screener will be coming August 2024.

The NDE EL Collaboration groups can be found on Title III webpage ([here](#)) and these groups can support the districts.

Title IV-A: Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE): Dottie shared Title IV will be holding the first annual conference in Washington, DC for program directors at the end of April. This will be a day and half session organized by the T4PA Center. Then the next day and a half will be information about the Stronger Connections Grant.

Title IV-B: 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC): No report

Title VI: REAP – Rural Education Achievement Program: Ann Carmoney, Reap Coordinator, the REAP RLIS master eligibility sheet was completed by all districts who qualified. A new system G6 was implemented from G5 for reimbursement requests. The emails were sent out for any districts who have not drawn down their 2020-2022 funds which is a 27-month grant and is expiring.

The RLIS support usually has about six schools qualify and this year we have an additional nineteen schools that will be eligible based on their poverty numbers. The preliminary allocations will be coming in April. The RLIS grant is now in GMS and will be easier to track reimbursements. Ann followed up with USED and confirmed nonpublics are not eligible for Title VI.

Title VII-B: Education of Homeless Children and Youth: Ann reported the McKinney Vento grant will get one update this summer to include a needs assessment. Districts who have identified twenty or more students experiencing homelessness are eligible. They are working on professional development for identification during the summer, as well as for the Native American schools.

Head Start State Collaboration Office: Stephanie Knust, Head Start State Collaboration Specialist shared the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking ([NPRM](#)) was released in November 2023 for changes to the federal Head Start Program Performance Standards and public comment ended in January 2024. They are expecting a new Final Rule in the summer of 2024. The majority of proposed changes are centered around staff benefits/wages and early childhood mental health consultations/services in programs. She included the Fiscal Year 2024 Head Start Monitoring protocols ([here](#)) and how the programs are monitored at the federal level. A small amount of expansion money was released mid-March nationwide ([here](#)).

She shared information on a \$100M competitive grants that are due in May 2024. This is a funding formula based on designated federal regions, with approximately \$3.6M of it will be available for programs in Region VII (Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska). The federal Office of Head Start

released an updated [FAQ's](#) for serving families experiencing homelessness. This is to support the national goal of increasing the number of students enrolled in Early Head Start and Head Start children who meet the McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness. Lastly, she shared information from Melody Hobson on the Nebraska's NAESP PreK-3 Leadership Academy cohort 5 applications were due March 25, 2024.

Other:

Dottie requested any committee members interested in serving on the Ad hoc committee to review the membership representation contact her. It would involve a couple zoom sessions. She welcomed recommendations for members to suggest people to consider.

Beth announced the National ESEA Conference, Focus on Improvement, will be held in Austin, Texas February 19-21, 2025.

Jim Kent announced he will be moving to the Accreditation, Certification, & Approval Office as Director of Educator Program Approval beginning April 8th. Resignations were accepted for Amanda Noonan, Title I Education Specialist and Becky Heavican, ESEA Office Associate for Title III and Migrant.

Next Meetings:

Beth shared the tentative fall COP meeting dates will be Wednesday, October 30th or Wednesday, November 6th.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:55 pm.