

TO: Members of the State Board of Education

FROM: Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D.

DATE: October 24, 2017

SUBJECT: Federal Striving Readers' Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) Grant Award

PURPOSE:

To inform the State Board of Maryland's Grant Award from the Federal Striving Readers' Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) Grant.

BACKGROUND/HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:

Maryland has been awarded \$45 million over three years. Of the 16 SRCL grants awarded by the US Department of Education in 2017, Maryland received the third highest award.

Maryland's award will advance literacy skills for all children from birth through grade 12. It will provide an alignment of state literacy plans from birth to age 5 with kindergarten through grade 12. Maryland's plan places special emphasis on disadvantaged children, including children living in poverty, English learners, and children with disabilities.

Through the development of local comprehensive literacy plans, based upon needs assessments, local school systems can strategically advance literacy achievement for all students aligned to student needs.

Maryland's application can be found at <https://app.box.com/s/jc5806rkd5hotgsnxs51qlh5p659izyw>
Additional information regarding the federal SRCL grant can be found at <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/strivingreaders-literacy/index.html>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Maryland has been awarded \$45 million over three years through the Federal Striving Readers' Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) Grant. This grant will advance literacy skills in the state from birth through grade 12.

ACTION:

Information regarding the award of the Federal Striving Readers' Comprehensive Literacy Grant.

The Maryland State Comprehensive Literacy Plan

Maryland is advancing state-student literacy achievement through a statewide Comprehensive Literacy Plan (CLP). The Maryland State Comprehensive Literacy Plan is based upon five keys:

- educational leadership;
- strategic professional learning;
- continuity of standards' based instruction;
- comprehensive series of assessments; and
- tiered instruction and intervention.

Key 1: Instructional Leadership

The leadership on every level from the state, to the local school systems, to the schools must recognize and tap into the needs, strengths, and concerns of the community; the cultural makeup of its citizens; and the equity issues which impact the state, school, and district. These driving forces to the Comprehensive Literacy Plan are reflected in the leadership, the instruction, and the training that is provided. Components of Instructional Leadership include identifying and encouraging teacher leaders; establishing leadership ladders; providing opportunities for regular literacy meetings, data dialogues, and joint planning; and monitoring and assessing progress.

Key 2: Strategic Professional Learning

Clear, systematic, needs-based professional learning is vital to impact student growth. Maryland's CLP embraces the whole child, from birth to Grade 12. This occurs through strong partnerships with families and guardians, early childhood educators, PreK-12 teachers, higher education staff members, other community stakeholders, and a high-quality and sustained system of professional development for educators. Together state and local teams will establish and disseminate needs-based professional learning in a variety of modalities to local school districts, K-12 Educators, Birth to 5 organizations, and local communities. The team will also establish a system for addressing the needs of individual students through data dialogue, peer coaching, and mentoring.

Key 3: Continuity of Standards-based Instruction

With the adoption of the MCCRS, educators have developed an understanding of the progression of standards from PreK-12th grade and across content areas. Working with local school systems, community-based programs, local Early Childhood Advisory Councils, public libraries, and institutions of higher education, Maryland will expand its vision of literacy to include the continuum of birth to adult education in order to engage all groups and to increase alignment. True equity of instruction cannot be achieved until all students receive instruction aligned to the standards and delivered with fidelity.

Key 4: Comprehensive System of Assessments

Assessments provide information on various forms of instruction, student knowledge, and achievement. A comprehensive system of assessments includes state, local, school, and teacher assessment data. This data is analyzed in collaborative teams through the use of data-dialogue, peer coaching, and mentoring in order to guide and refine instruction. A comprehensive assessment system allows for strategic data-informed decision making to meet the needs of the individual student.

Key 5: Tiered Instruction and Interventions

Maryland has adopted regulation for the inclusion of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in all classrooms. This approach provides choice and individualization for students which, in turn, allows teachers to provide tiered instruction. In addition, Maryland developed a structured Response to Intervention Framework in 2008 that was adopted state-wide. The state's tiered system of support will continue to be refined, will include all children, and will provide enrichment and intervention models in order to achieve comprehensive literacy for all.

Striving Readers' Comprehensive Literacy Grant

Maryland has been awarded \$45million over 3 years through the federal Striving Readers' Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) Grant. 95% of this award will be passed to local school systems through an application process. The SRCL places special emphasis on disadvantaged children, including those living in poverty, English learners, and children with disabilities. The State's plan targets evidence-based strategies and interventions, and alignment of State literacy plans between learning and literacy for birth to age 5 with kindergarten through grade 12.

The SRCL grant requires the state to develop a State Comprehensive Literacy Plan (CLP), which includes pre-literacy skills, reading, and writing. A first draft of the Maryland Comprehensive Literacy Plan was submitted with the state's application at the end of June. The content of the Maryland Draft CLP was developed from the following sources:

- A statewide needs assessment that was sent to all districts through the local assistant superintendents of instruction and local English/language arts supervisors. It was also sent to state childcare providers and preschools through the MSDE early childhood division.
- An examination of state-wide assessment data.
- Feedback from state literacy experts, including the University System of Maryland and Ready at Five.
- Research of other state's CLPs.

Maryland is currently convening a state-wide stakeholder workgroup that is examining the state draft CLP and offering feedback and recommendations for a final version, due to US Ed by January 15. The workgroup includes local school system central office staff, teachers, administrators, pre-school educators, literacy experts, early childhood providers, state public libraries' staff, USM professors, Ready at Five early literacy experts, and EL, GT, and Special Ed educators. This workgroup will continue to offer advice to the State on the implementation of the State CLP, as well as support and assistance to local school systems in developing their own district-level CLP.

Local school systems who apply for funding from the SRCL grant must have district comprehensive literacy plans aligned with the state literacy plan and based upon a local needs assessment, as well as birth to age 5 partners, such as childcare providers and pre-schools. If desired, local school systems may form a multi-district partnership to apply for a sub-grant and may also include other partners, such as outside agencies and higher education. Local school system sub-grants must be applied according to the following age bands:

- 15% to birth to age 5;
- 40% to K-grade 5; and
- 40% to middle and high, distributed equitably between middle and high

The goal of the State is that all local school systems will apply for and receive a sub-grant award from SRCL. To support and prepare local school systems to be able to apply for a sub-grant, MSDE intends to convene regional workshops to support and assist locals in drafting a local Comprehensive Literacy Plan aligned to the state's plan. The anticipated timeline for the release of applications to local school systems to apply for sub-grants is spring. This timeline should afford locals with adequate time to conduct a needs assessment and to craft a draft of a local CLP.