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Interim State Superintendent of Schools

TO: Members of the State Board of Education
FROM: Carey M. Wright, Ed.D., Interim State Superintendent of Schools 
DATE: November 9, 2023
SUBJECT: Statewide Elementary Literacy Expert Instructional Support Team Proposal

Purpose

The State Board will receive an overview of a proposal to launch a statewide Literacy Expert Instructional Support Team and consider approval of the concept. As a joint proposal, the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) must also consider and approve what is being presented to the State Board.

Executive Summary

Over the last few years, the State Board and Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) have provided local education agencies with increasing levels of support through regulations and various initiatives aimed to promote and support LEAs in shifting instructional practices in literacy. This includes initiatives such as Maryland Leads, professional learning labs in literacy, and the State Board of Education and MSDE's Strategic Plan.

Leadership from the State Board, MSDE, and AIB have met consistently over the course of this year to collaborate regarding ongoing effective strategies for implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Improving literacy rates has consistently been identified as a core goal of all three entities. As an additional strategy alongside the work already underway, MSDE and AIB worked to develop a proposal that took an additional step towards meeting that goal.

The goal of the proposal before the State Board is to improve instructional effectiveness leading to improved student outcomes that will prepare more students to read proficiently by 3rd grade and be on the path toward college and career readiness.

Within this proposal, approximately 10 literacy experts from across the State will be identified to work in teams of 2 to visit and evaluate each LEA, including early education literacy plans (Pre-K-3 or 5), teacher training, instructional materials, use/training of coaches, data analysis, school observations (approximately 10% of elementary schools), focus groups (e.g. elementary principals, teachers, coaches) and provide a report with recommendations to MSDE and AIB on additional actions and support needed to improve literacy instruction and student outcomes.

Action

To review and approve a joint proposal from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) to launch a statewide Literacy Expert Instructional Support Team composed of literacy experts to assess instructional plans and practices in early literacy, including coaches, at the district and individual school levels, and provide direct assistance and supports as appropriate based on the team's recommendations.

Attachment

Literacy Expert Instructional Support Team Proposal

Statewide Elementary Literacy Expert Instructional Support Team Proposal

Summary

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) seek to launch a statewide Literacy Expert Instructional Support Team composed of literacy experts to assess instructional plans and practices in early literacy, including coaches, at the district and individual school levels, and provide direct assistance and supports as appropriate based on the team's recommendations. The goal is to improve instructional effectiveness leading to improved student outcomes that will prepare more students to read proficiently by 3rd grade and be on the path toward college and career readiness. The outcomes of this initiative will be used to determine if the same process should be implemented for elementary math in School Year 2024-25.

Specifically, the literacy experts will work on site and side by side with teachers and district and school leaders to:

- Assess and diagnose efficacy of district systems and structures supporting the effective implementation of high-quality instructional practices and materials in early literacy, including a review and assessment of the district's literacy plan and literacy outcomes (disaggregated) in grades K-3;
- Evaluate the implementation of literacy plans and instructional practices at elementary schools in the district selected based on a review of data including site visits and classroom observations;
- Ensure consistent and effective implementation of instructional practices aligned to the science of reading;
- Coach and support individual teachers, school leaders, and district leaders to identify and overcome challenges impacting instructional effectiveness in literacy; and
- Build the capacity of LEA staff to implement, scale, and sustain effective intensive high-quality teacher training and coaching and support resulting in increased teacher effectiveness and improved student outcomes.

Program and Funding

Approximately 10 literacy experts from across the State will be identified to work in teams of 2 to visit and evaluate each LEA, including early education literacy plans (Pre-K-3 or 5), teacher training, instructional materials, use/training of coaches, data analysis, school observations (approximately 10% of elementary schools), focus groups (e.g. elementary principals, teachers, coaches) and provide a report with recommendations to MSDE and AIB on additional actions and support needed to improve literacy instruction and student outcomes. The goal is to visit all 24 LEAs in SY 23-24 and provide support at both the LEA and school level as recommended. MSDE and its partners will build capacity at the LEA level by facilitating a community of practice for LEA literacy coaches across the State.

The annual appropriation for the Expert Review Teams (ERT) is \$1,330,153. Of that, MSDE will utilize about \$700,000 to visit 50 schools for School Year 2023-2024. That leaves the balance of the remaining appropriation, approximately \$630,000 to cover the cost of the Literacy Expert Instructional Support Team. Additional funds may be necessary as MSDE and AIB continue to finalize the implementation plan for the ERT and Literacy Expert Instructional Support plan.