

**Georgia Council on Literacy Meeting  
November 15, 2023**

**Minutes of Meeting**

**I. Welcome**

Miranda Williams, Georgia's Literacy Coach, Governor's Office of Student Achievement

Ms. Williams opened the meeting at 10:00 AM. She notified attendees that the meeting will be recorded, and the chat box may be utilized for public comment.

Ms. Williams introduced Chairman Scott Johnson.

**II. Chairman's Remarks**

Scott Johnson, Chair, Georgia Council on Literacy

Chairman Johnson welcomed everyone and thanked all for their diligent efforts. He spoke on the importance of the Council's work and praised its accomplishments so far. He reminded everyone of Senate Bill 211's requirement that the Council provide a report by November 30 each year that includes a review of work and Council recommendations.

The Chairman addressed a request for change to the October 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting minutes. There was a motion and a second to approve the minutes of the October 17<sup>th</sup> meeting. There was also a motion and a second to approve the November 15<sup>th</sup> meeting agenda.

**III. Goals and Objectives**

Miranda Williams

Ms. Williams talked through the structure of the meeting. She announced that a high-level overview of the report will be conducted before leaders of the Council working groups share their recommendations.

**IV. Report Overview**

Miranda Williams

Beginning with the Chairman's message at the beginning of the report, Ms. Williams shared an overview of the report, including the organizational and content components.

**V. Birth to 5 Years Old Working Group Recommendations**

Amy Jacobs, Commissioner, Department of Early Care and Learning

Commissioner Jacobs shared that the members of the group spent time discussing and developing these goals and recommendations. She shared that their goals are intended to guide the Council's work over the next three years and the recommendations are more concrete, actionable items to be addressed in the short term.

Commissioner Jacobs walked through the five goals of Birth to 5 Years Old Working Group.

- Increase access to high-quality childcare.
- Support families by strengthening high-quality, early literacy resources.
- Create compensation comparable to the K-12 system for early learning workforce.
- Increase evidence-based professional learning opportunities specific to literacy.
- Ensure culturally and linguistically appropriate language and literacy environments and instructional experiences.

She continued with the five recommendations of the Birth to 5 Years Old Working Group.

- Revise Georgia's Workforce Knowledge and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators (WKC).
- Review and update Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS).
- Explore family engagement models for supporting language and literacy development for birth-to-five.
- Create a public awareness campaign.
- Review child assessment tools.

Chairman Johnson opened the floor for council members to comment and discuss.

Council member, Bubba Longgear, Superintendent of Candler County Schools, asked Commissioner Jacobs about all who are included in the early learning workforce.

Commissioner Jacobs responded that teachers for children birth to age 5 who are usually in licensed childcare programs. These teachers are not funded by the state, so it is a long-term goal for policymakers to discuss.

Senator Billy Hickman asked Commissioner Jacobs to share the definition of the 2-Gen Framework.

Commissioner Jacobs responded that the 2-Gen framework is a whole-family approach that addresses the wellbeing of the entire family. It works to ensure that families have all the resources they need.

Chairman Johnson moved to approve the Goals and Recommendations of the Birth to 5 Years Old Working Group.

Council members approved.

## **VI. Kindergarten to 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Working Group Recommendations**

Amy Denty, Director of Literacy, Georgia Department of Education

Director Denty shared that the first meeting of the K-3 working group was organizational and that the second meeting focused on more targeted projects.

She shared the recommendations of the working group beginning with discussions around student retention at an early age (K-2).

Next, the K-3 working group recommended that the ELA Georgia Milestone Assessment is updated to align to Science and Social Studies content standards. Denty shared that she

learned the Milestone assessments are typically aligned. She encouraged further discussion on this recommendation.

Director Denty also shared that the K-3 working group has a subcommittee, led by Council member Ellen Wiley, on hearing and vision. Denty provided recommendations relating to screenings, diagnostic exams, and research.

On the topic of literacy coaching, the K-3 working group included a recommendation to implement a tiered model. Director Denty shared this is just the beginning of this work in Georgia.

Chairman Johnson asked for a motion to approve the recommendations of the K-3 working group before moving into discussion.

**Council Discussion:**

Council member Gary Bingham commented that looking at retention, without also looking at curriculum instruction and success in the K-3 space, is not the most comprehensive way to address the issue. He noted the possibility of looking at a multi-tiered system of support and the importance of looking at many approaches.

Director Denty responded that the working group has had only two meetings, so these recommendations reflect the research and discussions so far.

Council member Yancy Ford, of Effingham County, commented that there is nothing more important, aside from providing a good curriculum, than putting a good teacher in front of our students.

Council member Lindee Morgan recommended that, like the birth to 5-Year-old working group, the K-3 Group should have both goals and recommendations.

Senator Billy Hickman asked about the hearing and vision screenings for students in schools. Director Denty responded that Form 3300 is used for screening; many schools have several times to screen, but it is not consistent among all Georgia schools.

Council member Ellen Wiley, leader of the hearing and vision group, also noted that some screenings are not even completed. While in other areas, they have repeated screenings for children.

The goal is that we can extend these consistent screenings and follow up care to all students across the state of Georgia.

Representative Becky Evans asked about possible funding recommendations for those conducting the research. On the topic of the literacy coach model, Representative Evans also commented that, to fully implement HB 538, recommendations do not exclude the topic of funding and how funding can help get all districts meet the requirements of the bill.

Director Denty responded that much of the professional learning requirement of HB 538 is already happening in schools across the state.

Council member Noris Price, Superintendent Baldwin County Schools, thanked Director Denty and the group for their great work. She expressed concerns about the speed at which the Council is moving. She noted the importance of looking at the plan of action for students who are retained and the effectiveness of their teachers, as that can play a big role in their need for retention.

Superintendent Price also called attention to the literacy coaching model. She noted that, in her RESA, there are six school districts and that it may be difficult for 13 coaches to effectively serve all six schools. She asked about the funding for this model and whether it would be the responsibility of the districts to provide funding.

Director Denty noted the tiered structure of the model and the hope that it would utilize existing employees. She also pointed out that this is a beginning step.

Additionally, in response to the discussion about retention, Director Denty commented that the recommendation surrounds the exploration of retention, rather than the implementation of it at this stage.

Superintendent Price expressed the need for conversations about funding.

Superintendent Longgear noted the content on Page 5 of the report as being a clarification for the Council's focus. He shared that he would not want any recommendations included in the report to be misunderstood and shared concern that there may not be enough information yet to include priority recommendations.

Council member Katie Seymour commented on Director Denty's point about the ongoing professional development for teachers across the state. She shared her concern that a lack of support will result in a lack of checks and balances for the work being done. She also noted the need for discussion about funding. About retention, she shared that the K-3 working group really focused on what is developmentally appropriate for the students.

Council member Blake Tillery, Senate Appropriations Chair, expressed a concern about the capacity of time. He noted that there will be no more time added to the school day, but implementation of these changes is still required.

Chairman Johnson recommended that a note be included in the report stating that all work and discussion reflected is only the beginning.

## **VII. Teacher Training and Professional Development Working Group Recommendations**

Ms. Williams went through the four recommendations of the teacher training and professional development working group.

Superintendent Price asked if *all* teachers will be required to be trained in the science of reading, including Music, Art, and PE teachers. She noted that change would need to occur at the college level and asked if those teachers should be trained.

Penney McRoy, Georgia Professional Standards Commission, responded that the new standards for educator preparation programs require that all teachers, in all subjects, be

prepared in the science of reading. This requirement is in HB 538. Some standards differ from those that prepare primary, reading teachers, though all teachers will be prepared in some way to understand the science of reading.

Director Denty noted that the Department of Education's "Aligning State Literacy Practices and Policies" document lays out all of this information. She shared that the Georgia Department of Education has partnered with the Rollins Center to use its K-3 structured literacy modules as Georgia's free professional learning. These modules are already available at Cox Campus.

Superintendent Price shared that her art, music, and PE teachers are struggling with the training courses and stated that it is something to think about moving forward.

#### VIII. **Community Engagement Working Group Recommendations**

Ms. Williams shared the four recommendations of the community engagement working group. She noted that these recommendations are exploratory in nature.

Jeanne Seaver asked if there are any outcome studies for the L4GA grants that have been dispersed.

Dr. Bingham shared that Georgia Tech conducted a study on how the community partnership framework was being implemented. He stated that the working group wanted to examine this data and consider how communities create strong partnerships to support literacy. He noted that there is a need for better data and that would help the Council understand what the communities are doing to engage in literacy improvement efforts.

#### IX. **Follow up Discussion**

Chairman Johnson stated that he heard all members' comments. He suggested that all the recommendations go back to their respective working groups and return them for the report on November 30, 2024, when the Council is better prepared to make solid recommendations.

Superintendent Longgrear commented that the recommendations seem to be indicative of ongoing work.

Senator Hickman noted that there is need for patience and that it will take a while for all this work to roll out.

Senator Tillery stated that a way to approach the recommendations might be prioritizing certain things while also sharing things that can be removed from the list of priorities.

Kelly McKay shared that she appreciated the Chairman's idea to slow down with the recommendations. She noted that a lot of the HB 538 requirements are still in the process of being figured out by the districts. Rather than finding new things to put out there as a

Council, she recommended that the Council focus on supporting the work that is already going on in schools.

Superintendent Longgrear asked how to identify the root causes of illiteracy and low literacy. He noted that the goal is not to slow the work of the Council, but we need to ensure that the recommendations being made are priority issues.

Chairman Johnson asked for any objections to revising the report and removing the working group recommendations from the 2023 report.

Dr. Morgan noted that it would be appropriate to show the topics covered in the working groups.

Director Denty asked that the group leaders revise their individual reports to reflect the work being done and discussed. She reiterated that the work being done is exploratory at this point because the Council is early in the process and that slowing down is a good idea.

The Council agreed to remove the Working Group recommendations from the November 2023 Report.

**X. Closing Comments**

Chairman Johnson asked that revisions be made to working group individual reports to be included in the larger report for November 30, 2023.

**XI. Adjournment**

Chairman Johnson adjourned the meeting at 11:58 AM.