

Pennsylvania Department of Education Reading Leadership Council Meeting

Meeting Notes

August 13, 2026

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Reading Leadership Council Meeting

Meeting Date and Time

The Reading Leadership Council met on August 13, 2026, from 12 to 2 p.m.

Attendees

- Stacey Cherny, Special Assistant to the Secretary of Education, Pennsylvania Department of Education
- Kate Bacher, Structured Literacy Advisor, Pennsylvania Department of Education
- Jennifer Wicht, English Language Arts Education Advisor, Pennsylvania Department of Education
- Council members, liaisons, and invited guests
- WestEd staff
 - Amaal Awadalla, Program Manager, Literacy
 - Katie Grogan, Senior Research Manager, Literacy
 - Robin Sayers, Research Associate, Literacy
 - Julie Colton, Program Coordinator

Welcome, Purpose Setting, and the Sunshine Act

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) facilitated a meeting of the Reading Leadership Council focused on the implementation of Act 135 of 2024 and Act 47 of 2025 and their role in strengthening literacy instruction across the Commonwealth.

PDE provided an overview of the Reading Leadership Council and its purpose under Act 135, including Section 1205.8 of the School Code, which increases access to high-quality reading instruction by requiring Pennsylvania educators to be trained in Structured Literacy practices. PDE also reviewed Article XV-N, which codifies Pennsylvania's commitment to Structured Literacy through requirements related to evidence-based reading curriculum, educator training, early literacy screening, and targeted assistance for students with reading deficiencies.

PDE emphasized the Council's advisory role in supporting the translation of Pennsylvania's literacy legislation into practice. Council members provide perspectives and share implementation experiences to inform PDE's efforts to meet legislative requirements and support effective implementation across the Commonwealth. WestEd supported PDE in the planning of the meeting and the Council's advisory process. Liaisons, guests, and members of the public were welcomed.

Liaisons represented the following groups:

- Pennsylvania Department of Education
- Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN)
- Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL)
- Evidence Resource Center (ERC)
- National Center on Improving Literacy (NCIL)
- Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA)

The meeting addressed Pennsylvania's Sunshine Act, highlighting that public attendees are observers and that public comment periods are not intended for discussion with the Council or PDE representatives.

PDE Updates

Structured Literacy Roadmap

PDE provided an overview of its Structured Literacy Roadmap, which outlines a coherent statewide approach for implementing Pennsylvania's literacy legislation and improving reading outcomes for all students. The roadmap is grounded in legislative requirements, evidence-based reading practices, and effective implementation, with the goal of ensuring that every

student learns to read and write and every educator has the knowledge and tools to support them. PDE described the roadmap as progressing through four phases: Exploration and Installation, Initial Implementation, Full Implementation, and Sustaining. Current efforts focus on building the foundation for implementation by establishing a shared vision, assessing LEA needs and readiness, strengthening alignment across systems, and collaborating with PaTTAN and Intermediate Unit literacy consultants.

As implementation progresses, PDE will focus on supporting LEAs with resource alignment and the selection and implementation of high-quality instructional materials, universal screeners, and professional development. Future work will also include developing implementation resources, strengthening MTSS literacy systems and coaching support, and creating coherent reporting processes. The sustaining phase will emphasize continuous improvement by using implementation and student-level data to identify strengths, areas for refinement, and opportunities to scale effective practices statewide.

Universal Screener Updates

PDE also provided an update on the development of the Universal Screener Review Tool, building on criteria the Reading Leadership Council discussed at its previous meeting. PDE shared that the review process will occur in two phases. Phase 1 will focus on reviewing universal screeners commonly used across Pennsylvania. Phase 2 will include an application process for vendors to submit additional universal screeners for review.

Professional Development Overview and Considerations

PDE introduced the Council's next focus area: professional development aligned with Pennsylvania's Structured Literacy requirements. PDE is reviewing and updating Pennsylvania-specific professional development courses to ensure alignment with current legislative requirements and to consider additional professional development options offered through Pennsylvania's Intermediate Units (IUs) and PaTTAN.

PDE reviewed the professional development requirements outlined in Article XV-N of the School Code, including requirements for LEAs to select an approved professional development program from the PDE list and demonstrate educator progress toward completion within the timelines established in the legislation. PDE also reviewed the current professional development list and clarified that the Council's discussion would focus specifically on the Pennsylvania-specific components of professional development offerings.

PDE presented five categories of considerations for evaluating professional development and invited Council members to consider what elements should be considered essential criteria and what might be missing. Council members reviewed each category and identified potential additions and areas for further refinement. Council members also revisited the previously

developed draft professional development guidance and provided input on additional considerations to include and whether any existing considerations should be elevated to criteria for evaluating professional development.

Council Input on Professional Development Criteria

The Council was invited to provide input on potential criteria for reviewing and approving Structured Literacy professional development offered through Pennsylvania's state system of support. PDE asked members to reflect on the previously reviewed categories and consider which elements should be essential criteria for approval, which may be better positioned as guidance or considerations, and whether additional criteria should be considered.

PDE emphasized that the purpose of the discussion was not to finalize the criteria, but to gather the Council's expertise and perspectives to inform the continued development and refinement of the professional development review process.

Public Comment

No one from the public provided comment.

Next Steps and Closure

Future meetings are planned as follows:

- October 14, 2026
- December 10, 2026

PDE closed the meeting by previewing the Council's upcoming work, which will focus on reviewing and identifying resources to inform the development of a Structured Literacy implementation toolkit. This work will begin over the next two Council meetings and will support PDE's broader vision for strengthening Structured Literacy implementation across Pennsylvania. PDE thanked Council members for their thoughtful contributions and continued engagement.