

Pennsylvania Department of Education Reading Leadership Council Meeting

Meeting Notes

February 12, 2026

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Reading Leadership Council Meeting

Meeting Date and Time

The Reading Leadership Council met on February 12, 2025, from 12 to 2 p.m.

Attendees

- 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
 - Julie Colton, Program Coordinator
 - Katie Grogan, Senior Research Manager, Literacy
 - Amanda Nabors, Research Associate, Literacy
 - Robin Sayers, Research Associate, Literacy
 - Matt Brunetti, Senior Program Associate
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Welcome, Purpose Setting, and the Sunshine Act

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) and WestEd facilitated a meeting of the Reading Leadership Council to discuss implementation of **Act 135: Structured Literacy—Literacy Achievement for All Pennsylvanians**. The Act aims to expand access to Structured Literacy and improve literacy outcomes statewide. WestEd provided an overview of the Act, which requires PDE to publish lists of professional development training programs, reading universal screeners, reading instruction curriculum materials, and literacy intervention materials and approaches with the advisement of a Reading Leadership Council.

Liaisons, guests, and members of the public were also welcomed. Liaisons represent 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)

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

PDE shared several updates related to the Council, including revised lists and guidance documents, LEA webinars that were hosted, the LEA survey, the Train-the-Trainer module, and responses to Questions from the Field. In January, PDE hosted four webinars for LEAs, engaging more than 1,000 participants to support compliance with the requirements of Acts 135 and 47. The Structured Literacy webpage has evolved into a central resource hub for the state. PDE also announced that an LEA survey will be conducted in accordance with statute to provide a statewide snapshot of literacy implementation. Additionally, the Train-the-Trainer module designed to support the implementation of evidence-based reading instruction curricula is nearing completion. PDE continues to receive numerous questions from the field regarding structured literacy and Act 47 and is working daily to provide clear guidance and timely responses.

Structured Literacy Glossary

The council was asked to scan the glossary and identify 1-2 terms that may be unclear or interpreted differently across districts and note what would improve clarity for practitioners, using the following prompts:

- This term could be interpreted differently because...
- Clarity would improve if the definition...

The council was then asked to consider the following questions:

- What is a strategy that would help this glossary be used in practice not just posted on a website?
- What would help educators and leaders refer to and use this glossary in their work?

Act 135 and 47 Requirements for Reading Universal Screeners

The WestEd facilitator reminded the group that under Act 135, universal screeners must align with the essential components of evidence-based reading instruction—including phonemic awareness, the alphabetic principle, decoding, encoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Screeners must be administered to all early elementary students to identify those at risk for reading difficulties, used within a tiered support system such as MTSS, and measure performance against national norms. Additional Act 135 considerations include minimizing instructional time, ensuring timely reporting to educators and families, and providing diagnostic data to inform targeted intervention. Considerations from the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment include technical quality, administration mode (individual, group, computer-based), scoring variability, types of scores provided (e.g., composites, risk indicators), reliability and validity, and benchmark and cut score definitions. The council was reminded that Act 47 of 2025 requires LEAs to screen all K–3 students for reading competency three times per year using a PDE-approved universal screener, beginning in the 2027–28 school year.

Effective Practices of Assessment Systems

A WestEd facilitator, an assessment expert, provided an overview of effective practices of assessment systems intended to ground the Council in shared ideas. As Council members listened, they were invited to consider what schools or districts would need added, clarified, or emphasized in the guidance document to use it confidently and consistently.

Council Input: Guidance Document

WestEd facilitator asked the Council to review the Reading Universal Screener guidance document again, considering what schools or districts would need added, clarified, or emphasized to apply the guidance in practice.

Public Comment

One member of the public provided comment.

Next Steps and Closure

Future meetings are planned as follows:

- April 9, 2026
- June 11, 2026
- August 13, 2026
- October 15, 2026
- December 10, 2026

PDE staff thanked the WestEd facilitators and Council members for their work and attendance today and closed the meeting.