

Pennsylvania Department of Education Reading Leadership Council Meeting

Meeting Notes

June 11, 2026

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Reading Leadership Council Meeting

Meeting Date and Time

The Reading Leadership Council met on June 11, 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
 - Amanda Nabors, Research Associate, Literacy
 - Robin Sayers, Research Associate, Literacy
 - Elizabeth Zagata, Program Manager, Literacy
 - Julie Colton, Program Coordinator

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 the implementation of **Pennsylvania Act 135 of 2024, Structured Literacy: Literacy Achievement** for All Pennsylvanians, and **Act 47 of 2025**.

Together, these Acts aim to expand access to Structured Literacy and strengthen literacy outcomes statewide. Act 135 focuses on increasing access to high-quality Structured Literacy practices across Pennsylvania schools, while Act 47 codifies the state's commitment by requiring evidence-based reading curriculum, comprehensive teacher training, early literacy screening, and targeted support for students with reading deficiencies. WestEd provided an overview of the legislation, highlighting PDE's responsibility to publish approved lists of professional development programs, universal screeners, core reading curricula, and intervention approaches, with guidance from the Reading Leadership Council.

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)

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

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) shared several updates related to the implementation of structured literacy initiatives across the Commonwealth. PDE recently published an annual review cycle for the Structured Literacy Lists, which is now available on the Structured Literacy landing page. The review cycle establishes a predictable schedule for updates, helping schools, educators, and vendors understand when revised lists will be released. The first list was published in December, with the next update scheduled for August. Moving forward, reviews will occur three times annually and will incorporate both updates from relevant clearinghouses and PDE internal processes.

PDE also reported that it is reviewing the Universal Screener List and associated technical documentation to develop a formal evaluation process, with the goal of publishing an approved screener list in October. In conjunction with this work, PDE continues to develop resources and supports to assist schools in implementing and effectively using literacy screening tools.

Additionally, PDE is establishing a process through which Intermediate Unit (IU)-developed trainings may count toward the professional development requirements outlined in Act 47. PDE also invited Reading Leadership Council members to submit proposals for the Department's SAS Institute in December.

The Structured Literacy landing page continues to expand, with additional Act 47 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and implementation resources being added regularly to support educators and school systems as they implement legislative requirements. PDE emphasized its ongoing commitment to providing clear guidance, resources, and professional learning opportunities to support successful implementation statewide.

Reading Universal Screeners: Legislative Context

A WestEd facilitator provided an overview of the requirements for universal reading screeners outlined in Act 135. The facilitator explained that approved 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 are intended to be administered to all students in the early elementary grades to identify students who may be at risk for reading difficulties and in need of further diagnostic assessment and targeted intervention. The facilitator also noted that screeners are intended to be used within a tiered system of support, such as a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), and should measure student performance against national norms.

The facilitator reviewed several factors identified in Act 135 for consideration when selecting universal screeners. These included the amount of instructional time required for administration, the timeliness of reporting results to educators, administrators, and families, and the availability of data that can inform diagnostic assessment and targeted intervention planning.

Additional considerations from the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment were also shared. These included the technical quality of assessments; administration formats, such as individual, group, or computer-based administration; the potential impact of human scoring variability; the types of scores and reports provided; evidence of reliability and validity; and the methods used to establish benchmarks, risk classifications, and cut scores. These considerations were presented to support the development of a comprehensive framework for evaluating high-quality universal reading screeners.

Council Input Themes From April 9 RLC Meeting

A WestEd facilitator reviewed feedback provided by Council members during the previous meeting regarding criteria and considerations for selecting high-quality universal reading screeners. The discussion focused on key areas commonly used to evaluate screening tools,

including alignment with evidence-based reading instruction, implementation supports, data reporting and use, technical quality, and responsiveness to diverse student populations.

Council feedback highlighted the importance of selecting screeners that support instructional decision-making, provide meaningful and timely information to educators and families, and demonstrate strong technical evidence. Members also emphasized the need for implementation supports that promote consistent administration and effective use of screening data.

Council Input on Themes

Council members were invited to reflect on the feedback themes presented and provide additional input to inform further the development of guidance and evaluation criteria for universal reading screeners. The discussion provided an opportunity for members to affirm key considerations, identify areas for further exploration, and contribute perspectives to support the ongoing work of the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

Moving Beyond Selecting and Implementing a Screener

A WestEd facilitator provided an overview of how states support the implementation of universal reading screeners beyond the initial selection process. The facilitator noted that while Pennsylvania's current guidance focuses on selecting high-quality screeners and understanding their technical characteristics, other states have developed additional resources to support educators in interpreting screening results and using data to inform instruction and intervention. Council members were provided time to review examples of implementation guidance from other states and consider how similar resources might support Pennsylvania educators.

Council Input

Council members were asked to provide input using the following guiding questions:

- What guidance in these documents would be most valuable for Pennsylvania LEAs?
- What gaps in Pennsylvania's current guidance do these documents help address?

Public Comment

No one from the public provided comment.

Next Steps and Closure

Future meetings are planned as follows:

- August 13, 2026
- October 14, 2026
- December 10, 2026

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