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Dr. Charlene Williams
Director of the Department of Education

TO: Co-Chair Sollman, Co-Chair Ruiz, & Members of the Joint Subcommittee On Ways and Means On Education

DATE: Feb 7, 2025

FROM: Kai Turner, Assistant Superintendent Office of Finance & Information Technology

RE: Questions posed on February 4th, 2025 regarding Early Literacy

Co-Chair Sollman, Co-Chair Ruiz, and Members of the Joint Subcommittee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Education,

Thank you so much for the opportunity to provide information on the Oregon Department of Education's efforts regarding Early Literacy. We are more than happy to continue providing information to you on our work and look forward to our continued partnership on behalf of all Oregon students. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you need further clarification.

With gratitude,
Kai Turner

Questions & Answers

Question #1: Under HB 3198 there was language regarding a match. Did that end up happening?

Response:

Yes. There were two match requirements associated with HB 3198: a 20% match for 4th/5th grade expenditures named in the statute, and a 25% overall match described in a budget summary. Both of these were required for the 23-25 biennium, though we believe this question is referring to the latter. Information about the 25% match was required as part of the 23-25 biennium application. For districts with an Average Daily Membership (ADMw) of less than 50, the 25% match requirement was waived.

Districts could use any funding source to fulfill the match. Among applicants, 61% identified state funding sources, such as the State School Fund and the Student Investment Account, for their matching

funds. Additionally, 37% cited federal funds, like Title Funds and ESSER Funds, and 2% referred to other sources, such as local grants.

In the grant application, grantees were also required to specify how those matching funds would be spent. While the matching funds could be applied broadly to support literacy programming from pre-kindergarten through 5th grade, grantees were highly encouraged to use matching funds for the same allowable uses as the grant (i.e., high-dosage tutoring, professional development, etc). [This figure](#) illustrates the number and percentage of grantees who planned to spend their matching funds across each allowable use and/or other early literacy efforts.

Question #2: I am concerned about the 25% match - Is it already existing funds that they were going to use? Is it in-kind?

Response:

Participating districts were required to provide a 25% cash match using any available funding source; therefore, an in-kind match did not qualify.

Question #3: In HB 3198 there was language about targeted efforts for schools that needed it the most. Under ODE ruling, it seems to have been taken away?

Response:

ODE asked districts to prioritize schools with the lowest rates of proficiency during the 23-25 biennium, as required by statute. This was not part of the application, however, as permanent rules were concurrently being established to better define and clarify prioritization requirements. In the 2025-2027 grant application, **districts will be required to prioritize schools** that have been identified to benefit most from early literacy funds and need to indicate this prioritization in their application. OAR [581-017-0808](#) defines the prioritization requirements for districts receiving funding for schools that:

- have the lowest rates of proficiency in literacy of elementary schools in the district;
- identified for comprehensive support and improvement or for targeted support and improvement based in part on literacy score;
- have literacy proficiency rates that have not recovered to pre-pandemic levels; or
- have a higher portion of student groups that have historically experienced academic disparities compared to other elementary schools in the district.

Question #4: What is the timeframe we are looking at here [to get teachers trained in the science of reading]? [I am] really trying to figure out how long it would take to equip teachers with the resources and training they need to be teaching science of reading to kids.

Response:

Districts first had access to the early literacy funds in March 2024, less than a year ago. Many districts indicated they would use funds to provide professional development and coaching to current teachers. We have approximately 7,000 K-5 teachers in Oregon who teach early literacy, and it will take time to train them all, a timeframe that would be difficult to predict based on several factors (e.g. teacher retention rates, how districts choose to use early lit funds across all five allowable uses, determining a definition of what counts as adequate “training,” etc.) We also expect an increase in the number of new teachers who graduate from Educator Preparation Programs already trained in the science of reading as a result of the Governor’s EPP Council work last year to align the teaching standards to the science of reading. We recommend additional questions regarding the EPP standards implementation timeline be directed to TSPC.

Question #5: It was mentioned that some schools are meeting their literacy expectations. If we’re looking to move early literacy, please provide more information on how grants are distributed to ensure students that need services get them without potentially overfunding those that may not need as much.

Should we not be focusing and looking at how we can target the schools that are not meeting the mark versus spreading the pieces among all districts? Should all schools have access to these grants? Should we not be investing the dollars into the schools that need it more?

Response:

The current approach outlined in statute and rule provides funding to every district who serves grades PreK-3, while still ensuring prioritization within each district to meet the needs of students farther from proficiency across the state.

The statute states that the Early Literacy School District grants are to be non-competitive for any district that serves elementary grades. ODE, based on the statutory language and rules passed by the State Board of Education, distributes these funds using a formula that uses Weighted Average Daily Membership (or ADMw), which takes into consideration demographics of students, including, for example, multilingual students and students with disabilities. This results in a distribution of funds that accounts for, generally, the variation of need across districts, while still meeting the requirements of the statute.

However, statute and rule require that districts prioritize schools based on additional factors. Specifically, beginning in 2025-2027, districts must prioritize funds based on schools that:

- have the lowest rates of proficiency in literacy of elementary schools in the district;
- identified for comprehensive support and improvement or for targeted support and improvement based in part on literacy score;
- have literacy proficiency rates that have not recovered to pre-pandemic levels; or

- have a higher portion of student groups that have historically experienced academic disparities compared to other elementary schools in the district.

Prioritization by school was required in the 23-25 biennium, but with less specificity, as explained further in question #3.

Last, ODE was recently awarded the federal Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) grant, which represents about \$57 million over 5 years to strengthen and expand the state-funded efforts across the birth-12th grade continuum. Notably, this federal grant is competitive and requires ODE to prioritize districts serving “high-needs schools”, which uses various data including state summative assessment proficiency. ODE anticipates about 20-40 recipient districts.