

Senate Education Committee Meeting

**Official Minutes
151st General Assembly
First Session**

**Committee Meeting
Monday, March 22, 2021
3:00 p.m.
Virtual Zoom Meeting**

Meeting Attendance

Committee Members:

Present:

Senator Laura Sturgeon	Laura.Sturgeon@delaware.gov	302-744-4135
Senator Elizabeth Lockman	Elizabeth.Lockman@delaware.gov	302-744-4168
Senator Colin Bonini	Colin.Bonini@delaware.gov	302-744-4169
Senator David Sokola	David.Sokola@delaware.gov	302-744-4139
Senator Bryan Townsend	Bryan.Townsend@delaware.gov	302-744-4165

Absent:

Senator Ernesto Lopez	Ernesto.Lopez@delaware.gov	302-744-4136
-----------------------	--	--------------

Staff:

Anthony Bernadzikowski	Anthony.Bernadzikowski@delaware.gov	302-477-4629
------------------------	--	--------------

Attendees:

Organization:

Phone/Email:

Senator Sarah McBride	Senate Majority Caucus	Sarah.Mcbride@delaware.gov
Rep. Kimberly Williams	House Majority Caucus	Kim.Williams@delaware.gov
Rep. William Bush	House Majority Caucus	Wiliam.Bush@delaware.gov
Kelly Butler	Barksdale Reading Inst.	kbutler@msreads.org
Matt Weyer	ECS	mweyer@ecs.org
Laura Stewart	The Reading League	laura@thereadingleague.org
Amy Lobst-Zunino	Reading Assist	aizunino@msn.com

Angie Alfano	Parent	angieeighmey@comcast.net
Anna Clothier	Brandywine School District	anna.clothier@bsd.k12.de.us
Anne Hiller Clark	DE DHSS	anne.hillerclark@delaware.gov
Annie Norman	Division of Libraries	annie.norman@delaware.gov
Barbara Johnson	Delaware Readiness Teams	barbsjohnson711@gmail.com
Brandon Williams	House Majority Caucus	brandonf.williams@delaware.gov
Bruce Orr	DE SICC	brucel.orr@gmail.com
Candace Roseo	RS Artemide II Inc.	croseo226@gmail.com
Cara Shelton	Brandywine School District	cara.shelton@bsd.k12.de.us
Caroline O'Neal	Reading Assist	caroline.oneal@gmail.com
Carrie Antonelli	Decoding Dyslexia	cneli@comcast.net
Christine Eisenhauer	Relay GSE	ceisenhauer@relay.edu
Christy Gleason		mschrytygleason@gmail.com
Cynthia Shermeyer	Literacy Delaware	director@literacydelaware.org
Dawn Alexander	Colonial School District	dawn.alexander@colonial.k12.de.us
Deborah DeGrosky	Reading Assist	Debbie@readingassist.org
Deborah Ford	Colonial School District	Deborah.ford@colonial.k12.de.us
Deborah Gottschalk	Division of Research	Deborah.gottschalk@delaware.gov
Debra Whitby-Norman	Colonial School District	debbie.whitbynorman@colonial.k12.de.us
Diana Morello	UD Early Learning Center	dmorello@udel.edu
Dylan McDowell	Senate Majority Caucus	Dylan.mcdowell@delaware.gov
Elizabeth Emerson	Division of Libraries	Elizabeth.Emerson@delaware.gov
Elizabeth Merrick		Elizabeth.merrick@colonial/k12.de.us
Erin Brenner	United Way of Delaware	ebrenner@uwde.org
Gale Morrison	John Catt Education	g Morrison@johncatt.com
Gary Henry	CEHD	kmegee@udel.edu
James Spakola	Read Aloud Delaware	jspadola@readalouddelaware.org
Jamie Walko	J. Walko Ed. Services	jwalkodel@gmail.com
Jeffrey Taschner	DSEA	Jeff.Tashner@dsea.org
Jenna Ahner	State Board of Education	jenna.ahner@sbe.k12.de.us
Jessica Peace	UD ELC	jpeace@udel.edu
Jetta Sargent	Parent	jettar79@yahoo.com
Jim Lesko	Lesko EL Systems Consulting	Jjlesko1@gmail.com
Jim Price		jimmyp@udel.edu
Joe Irizarry	WDDE	jdriza@yahoo.com
Jori Edgington	Reading Assist	jori.edgington@gmail.com
Judith Graham Kane	Reading Assist	jkane@readingassist.org
Julia Mercier	Route 9 Library	Julia.mercier@newcastlede.gov
Julie Bristowe	Tower Hill School	jroca@towerhill.org
Justin Richards		jrichde@udel.edu
Kathryn Brown	Wilmington University	kathryn.m.brown@wilmu.edu
Kathy Kelly	DOE	Kathy.kelly@doe.k12.de.us
Kathy Seeman	The College School	kseeman@udel.edu
Katie Gutowski	Colonial School District	katie.gutowski@colonial.k12.de.us

Kelly Harkins	Red Clay School District	loveykel@yahoo.com
Kelsey Mensch	Rodel	kmensch@rodelde.org
Ken Livingston	United Way of Delaware	klivingston@uwde.org
Kim Gomes	ByrdGomes	kim.gomes@byrdgomes.com
Kimberly Phillips	Retired Educator	phillipskimberley@rocketmail.com
Kirsten Olson	children & Families First	Kirsten.olson@cffde.org
Kris Deponte	Wilmington Friends	krisnnate@comccast.net
Kristen Thornton	Parent	thrashkristen@gmail.com
Kristin Dwyer	DSEA	Kristin.dwyer@gmail.com
Kristina Horton	Delaware B-3 EIP	Kristina.horton@delaware.gov
Kristina Najera	University of Delaware	knajera@udel.edu
Kristine Mera	Smyrna Public Library	Kristine.mera@lib.de.us
Laura Axtell	Decoding Dyslexia, IDA	laura.actell3@gmail.com
Lauren Fox	Colonial School District	lauren.fox@colonail.k12.de.us
Lauren Freemire	ECS	lfreemire@ecs.org
Leann Wallett	Rodel	lwallett@rodelde.org
Leigh Fairley	Reading Assist	lfairley@readingassist.org
Linda Zankowsky	University of Delaware	lzankow@udel.edu
Linnea Bradshaw	Professional Standards Board	linnea.bradshaw@pbs.k12.de.us
Lisa Beamer	Newark Free Library	lisa.beamer@newcastlede.gov
Lisa Lawson	Brandywine School District	lisa.lawson1@bsd.k12.de.us
Lori Davis	Pod	ladeffa57@gmail.com
Luana Spalluto	DTCC	lsallut@dtcc.edu
Madeleine Bayard	Rodel	mbayard@rodelde.org
Malinda Caddle	Reading Assist	malinda_1998@yahoo.com
Marissa Parker	Route 9 Library	marissa.parker@newcastlede.gov
Mary Griffin	DDDE	oceandr51@gmail.com
Matthew Denn	DLA Piper	matthew.denn@dlapiper.com
Meedra Surratte	PIC DE	msurratte@gmail.com
Melanie Obitz-Bukartek	Unhindered Writing	admin@unhinderedwriting.com
Melissa Ford	Ford Family Literacy Init.	melissacriley@gmail.com
Michael Pillsbury	DDSA	luckbags@gmail.com
Michelle Fillioe	Red Clay School District	michelle.fillioe@gmail.com
Monica Grant	DOE	monica.grant@doe.k12.de.us
Nan Stidham	Smart Summer	nan@cabsummer.org
Nancy Jordan	University of Delaware	njordan@udel.edu
Pam Alfaro	DDOE	pamala.alfaro@doe.k12.de.us
Patty Langley	Division of Libraries	patty.langley@delaware.gov
Pia Stokes	Delaware State University	pzstokes@desu.edu
Rachel Autman	Colonial School District	Rachel.autman@colonial.k12.de.us
Rachel Karchmer-Klein	University of Delaware	karchmer@udel.edu
Rachel West	NCC Libraries	Rachel.west@newcastlede.gov
Rebecca Calvello	Delaware State Senate	Rebecca.calvello@delaware.gov
Renate Cumming	Bear Library	renate.comming@newcastle.gov

Renee Schienner	Parent	Schiennfam4@verizon.net
Robert Overmiller	RDO Refrigeration	rdo1979@verizon.net
Roberta Golinkoff	University of Delaware	roverta@udel.edu
Ruth Jones	Office of the Cont. General	Rutha.jones@delaware.gov
Sarah Beth Theaker		sbt320@gmail.com
Sarah Stowens	Rodel	sstowens@rodelde.org
Scott Businsky	New Castle County Libraries	scott.businsky@newcastlede.gov
Sharon Sanders	Reading Assist	nkmom14@gmail.com
Shawn Rohe	DSA	shawn.rohe@delaware.gov
Sheri Brown	Division of Libraries	sherri.brown@delaware.gov
Sherri Brooks	Red Clay School District	sherri.brooks@redclay.k12.de.us
Stephany Pachowka	Hockessin Book Shelf	spachowka@gmail.com
Steve Amendum	University of Delaware	amendum@udel.edu
Sue Sprague	Brandywine School District	samesprague@aol.com
Susan Cordie	Dover Public Library	susan.cordie@lib.de.us
Susan Day	Reading Assist Institute	craigbyday@comcast.net
Susan Montney	Newark Free Library	susan.montney@newcastlede.gov
Tammy Croce	DASA	ticroce@edasa.org
Valerie Hall	Red Clay School District	Valerie.hall@redclay.k12.de.us
Valerie McCartan	Delaware Senate Majority	valerie.mccartan@delaware.gov
Wendy Marvil	Reading Assist	wmarvil@hotmail.com

Senator Sturgeon convened the meeting at 3:05 p.m. and conducted roll call.

Senator Sokola motioned to approve the previous meeting minutes and **Senator Lockman** seconded the motion.

The Committee approved the minutes from the previous meeting (03/10/2021).

Senator Sturgeon thanked everyone for attending the meeting. There is no better way to provide children a strong foundation than with early literacy. Decades of research have shown there is a science to teaching children reading, which is the key to academic success in high school and beyond. Delaware wants to ensure this science is implemented in schools and Delaware teacher preparation programs. As a high school teacher, Senator Sturgeon witnessed students who did not have the foundation and struggled in every subject. Our children deserve literacy education taught by teachers who know the science. Further, Senator Sturgeon is passionate about ensuring teaching is a respected profession. Delaware wants to attract the best and brightest, hold them to high standards that our students deserve, and give them the support they deserve. Teaching reading in a way that gets all children on level by second grade is achievable. If we teach our children how to read the right way, we will be one step closer to educational equity, narrowing learning gaps between high and low-income students, and between students of privilege and those at risk. Teaching reading the right way means fewer interventions and remediation. Teaching the right way means empowering children from all

backgrounds, taking away a source of shame, and a cause for acting out or giving up. Teaching reading the right way will mean fewer young people in Delaware prisons. The number of incarcerated offenders who are illiterate or well below the reading level by age in schools is staggering. There is a direct line between lack of reading skills and lack of opportunity and ending up in the criminal justice system. The science of reading allows students to be prepared to succeed from the start. Now that we are addressing trauma and mental health as it relates to academic outcomes, let us add this additional piece of the puzzle. Good readers make good, successful classroom readers, neighbors, workers, and eventually job creators. Senator Sturgeon recognized the co-host Representative Williams.

Representative Williams, Chair of the House Education Committee, thanked the Senate Education Committee for hosting the meeting. Reading and early intervention is the key to building a strong literacy foundation. Representative Williams is happy to be working with Senator Sturgeon and Senator McBride. Literacy is linked with high school graduation, better health outcomes, and engagement with the criminal justice system. In Delaware, only 29% of the prisoner population has a GED or high school degree and many are not literate at a high school level. Prioritizing our literacy is fundamental to the success of Delaware children. Representative Williams recognized Senator McBride.

Senator McBride, Chair of the Senate Health and Social Services Committee, thanked both Senator Sturgeon and Representative Williams. Delaware has rightfully grappled with and sought a path forward for early literacy efforts. Early literacy is not just the foundation for educational success, rather it's the foundation to pursuing dreams and being active participants in a society that is better and more inclusive. Senator Sturgeon has extensive knowledge on this topic and has talked with Senator McBride about the transformative impact that science-based reading instruction can have. For Delaware to reach its full potential, the state needs an all of the above approach to facilitating reading comprehension and reading skills among students. The heart of empowering Delaware students in reading is empowering educators with the full knowledge and science of evidence behind the reading curriculum. This transformative approach is present in states that have adopted policies that empower educators with that information. For example, Mississippi reports the highest reading levels among students since it adopted policies that empower educators with science and evidence-based instruction.

Senator Sturgeon introduced Laura Steward the National Director of the Reading League. The Reading League is a national not-for-profit that promotes literacy education rooted in science. Laura Steward has over 30 years of experience at Highlights for Children, a children's magazine, and the Roland Reading Foundation. Laura Steward served as a classroom teacher, building and district administrator, professor, author, and is a national expert on the science of reading.

Laura Steward presented an introduction to the science of reading. The science of reading is a vast, interdisciplinary body of scientifically-based research about reading and issues related to reading and writing. This research has been conducted over the last five decades across the world, and it is derived from thousands of studies conducted in multiple languages. The science of reading has culminated in a preponderance of evidence to inform how proficient reading and

writing develop; why some have difficulty; and how we can most effectively assess and teach, and improve student outcomes through prevention and intervention of reading difficulties. Many teachers were not provided the knowledge to enact evidence-aligned reading instruction in their preparation programs. Reading is not a natural process, so instruction is essential. Laura Steward addressed concepts such as simple view of reading, Scarborough's Rope Model, and fMRI studies on areas of the brain dedicated to reading. Understanding the process of learning to read and the instruction on how to read can yield success for students. There is a convergence of evidence on the process of reading and on what works in reading instruction. The main components of the science of reading are phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. We can deliver on the promise of literacy for all.

Representative Williams introduced Matthew Weyer, Senior Policy Analyst at the Education Commission of the States. Matthew has experience in early childhood literacy at the National Conference of State Legislatures and was also a kindergarten teacher in a bilingual school in Colorado.

Matthew Weyer presented a state policy analysis on K-3 literacy preparation and professional development. The Education Commission of the States is a national policy organization focused on nonpartisan research on education for all 50 states. New K-3 reading data found that literacy losses due to COVID-19 concentrated in grades K and 1. This is having a disproportionate effect on Black and Hispanic students. The Education Commission of the States completed a 50 state comparison of K-3 policies. From the data points on the pre-service qualifications for literacy for grades K-3, Matthew highlighted coursework/competency, passing an assessment, and dyslexia efforts. From the data points on the professional development for in-service educators for literacy for grades K-3, Matthew highlighted providing professional development, coaching and mentoring, and dyslexia efforts. The policy landscape in Delaware includes coursework/competency and mentioned the science of reading, but there is no requirement for passing an assessment or dyslexia. Delaware does include providing professional development in the Delaware Literacy Plan but does not address coaching and mentoring or dyslexia.

Senator McBride introduced Kelly Butler from the Barksdale Reading Institute. Kelly Butler has experience as a teacher and with non-profits and can speak on the state's implementation of reading policies. Kelly will share the transformative impact in other states that have implemented the science and policies mentioned in this meeting and lessons learned from those states.

Kelly Butler presented Mississippi's efforts with the science of reading and teacher preparation. The science of reading starts with teacher preparation. Mississippi introduced teacher preparation through professional development into the K-3 system through the Literacy-Based Promotion Act and addressed it at the higher education level. Kelly Butler provided an overview of Barksdale Reading Institute's efforts since its creation in 2000 to the present. There are many ways educators are teaching reading, but Dr. Dehaene argues the brain processes language in the same way and should make reading instruction more standardized. The Barksdale Reading

Institute is attempting to address if the pre-service curriculum reflects a scientifically supported approach to reading instruction, are there opportunities for connecting knowledge to practice, and do faculty possess this knowledge of content and pedagogy. Kelly Butler provided an overview of the deep dive into Mississippi's Educator Preparation Program Study. They found that the structure and content of early literacy courses were inconsistent across the state, established research principles of early literacy instruction were largely unapplied in preparation and practice, and opportunities to observe instruction were insufficient for developing entry-level skills. The Institute created a professional growth model for early literacy faculty that includes four components: high-quality professional development in the science of reading, community of practice on pedagogy, modeling and coaching on-site, and curriculum organized around the conceptual models. The Path Forward is a multi-state initiative to accelerate change in teacher preparation and licensure for early literacy instruction.

Senator Sturgeon recognized Senator Bonini.

Senator Bonini thanked the speakers.

Senator Sturgeon recognized Senator Lockman.

Senator Lockman thanked the speakers and asked what is needed in Delaware to get on the right track similar to Mississippi and other states who are finding success in this initiative?

Senator Sturgeon stated three areas of legislation that are currently in discussion include making sure Delaware's higher education institutions are teaching special education and elementary school education correctly, professional development in the field, and an assessment for out of state teachers that will demonstrate whether they know how to teach reading according to the science. Senator Sturgeon requested additional comments from the speakers.

Kelly Butler stated it is smart to first address the landscape analysis.

Matthew Weyer added that teachers account for a quarter of student achievement. Addressing teachers as the essential driver of change is a good strategy.

Senator Sturgeon recognized Senator Lockman.

Senator Lockman asked if there is data on if coaching is an effective approach that Delaware should be incorporating?

Kelly Butler stated yes there is. Mississippi included professional development and a coaching component. When it is solely professional development that positively affects the classroom by 25%, but by adding coaching it increases to 95%. Some states have suffered for solely implementing the professional development and not including coaching. Alabama is a perfect

example of using coaching, but they then ended it and the NEAP scores decreased in the subsequent years. They are introducing coaching again for that reason.

Senator Sturgeon recognized Senator Townsend.

Senator Townsend thanked the presenters and asked how this can and should fit with the additional resources started by the educational law suite settlement? There is a host of things we wish to do in the schools, but there is an opportunity to have higher efficacy in how we are delivering education services and reading ability. How might that merge with the immediate discussions on increasing funding?

Senator Sturgeon stated Representative Williams has upcoming legislation that will provide funds to K-3 basic special education. The K-3 education is important for phonemic awareness and exposure to the language. Senator Sturgeon recognized Representative Williams.

Representative Williams stated the legislation will lower the class sizes and increase educators. There was language added by Senator Poore and Representative Longhurst regarding dyslexia. There is \$500,000 at DOE to help students who are not reading on grade level.

Senator Sturgeon recognized Senator Lockman.

Senator Lockman stated that most of the requests from districts on how to spend the first leg of the opportunity fund were on mental health services. HB 100 could alleviate pressure from that funding and provide more room for districts to use those funds for those purposes.

Senator Sturgeon mentioned Senator Lockman's efforts with the Redding Consortium recommendations that focus on the earliest learners.

Senator Lockman added and whole-school professional development.

Senator Sturgeon opened to public comment.

Susan Sherk, Board Chair for St. Michael's School and Nursery, provided a question in advance. St. Michael works with Nemours on an early reading readiness program and participates in the Dolly Parton Books program. The best investment in education lies with the investment in early education reading programs including reading readiness. Susan Sherk hopes Delaware General Assembly will ensure adequate support for early childhood programs that prepare children for kindergarten and beyond. Can the panel comment on the work necessary before kindergarten?

Kelly Butler stated the Institute is developing a campaign for early caregivers so all adult caregivers are aware that reading and talking to children not only develop their brain but prepares them to learn to read. If children do not have a lot of languages it will be more difficult to read. Kelly Butler echoes the importance of quality early childhood education. Part of the suite of policies enacted included early learning collaborative for universal PreK in Mississippi.

The kindergarten readiness assessment is used at the end of PreK to gauge what is happening with the PreK programs.

Senator Sturgeon stated Delaware would love to have universal PreK as well. Susan Sherk is a constituent and a huge proponent of early childhood learning. There are two components the phonemic awareness, decoding, and knowing what the words mean. We have prepared children to understand meaning way before their reading. Children are prepared by hearing language.

Ida Wasterstein provided a question in advance and asked what is being done to filter this good research down to the PreK and daycare providers. PreK and daycare need more funding.

Senator Sturgeon agrees PreK and daycare need more funding. Ida Wasterstein is a book author, attorney, and Delaware judge who is a great person to hear from.

Kelly Butler stated there is professional development that goes all the way down. It is a seamless set of modules that are recommended for early childhood providers.

Senator Sturgeon recognized Michael Pillsbury.

Michael Pillsbury stated he needed intensive intervention for learning to read as a child. Michael Pillsbury thanked the efforts.

Senator Sturgeon recognized Rachel Karchmer-Klein.

Rachel Karchmer-Klein, Associate Professor of Literacy Education at the University of Delaware, asked how to assess higher education faculty's knowledge of the science of reading and how Mississippi approached that?

Kelly Butler stated, first, they looked at the curriculum to see how faculty designed it. The curriculum explains a bit about the knowledge base and expectations of early literacy instruction. There have also been several teacher knowledge surveys administered that help assess faculty knowledge. This was done through interviews of faculty, observing their instruction, and looking at the kinds of assessments given to preservice candidates. It is a deep dive into the program and the center is if the faculty is prepared to deliver that instruction. It is important to do this in a safe and confidential environment. Pre-service faculty have been criticized a lot and it is important to understand what is going on before implementing change.

Senator Sturgeon recognized James Spadola.

James Spadola, Executive Director for Read Aloud Delaware, thanked the presenters and hosts. Since the pandemic, Read Aloud Delaware has implemented a program LEANA Start which incorporates wearable technology to track and improve the language environment in the home. Have you had any experience with LEANA Start, which is based out of Colorado? What are your

thoughts and do you know any other programs that are used to improve the language environment at home?

Kelly Butler stated they have not used the program in Mississippi but modeled their START campaign around the LEANA Start program. It is a great program and applauds James Spadola for using it.

Senator Sturgeon thanked the presenters for their time.

Senator Townsend motioned to adjourn the meeting and **Senator Sokola** seconded that motion.

Senator Sturgeon adjourned the meeting at 4:25 p.m.