

**EARLY LITERACY EXPERT PANEL  
FY19 Report**

**EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF EDUCATION**

**November 2019**

## **A. PURPOSE & CONTEXT**

This report is filed pursuant to Chapter 287 of the Acts of 2012, *An Act relative to third grade reading proficiency*. The *Act* established an Early Literacy Expert Panel (Panel), composed of nine members, which includes the Secretary of the Executive Office of Education (EOE), or a designee, and eight persons appointed by the Secretary, in collaboration with the commissioners of the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), and Department of Higher Education (DHE).

The Panel is co-chaired by Undersecretary of Education Ann Reale, as the designee of Secretary of Education James Peyser, and Nonie Lesaux, a national expert on reading development, who is Chair of the Board of Early Education and Care and Academic Dean at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. The Panel's members represent deep professional expertise in a range of domains related to children's reading proficiency, including education, medicine, public policy, and community and family engagement. See Attachment A for a list of all Panel members.

The Panel is charged with providing recommendations to state education agencies on the alignment, coordination, implementation and improvement of all existing efforts that bear on children's literacy outcomes, guided by the goal of improving third grade reading outcomes in the Commonwealth. The Panel's work addresses the important educational benchmark of literacy, which strongly correlates with children's future success in school and beyond.

To meet this charge, the Panel was directed to convene regularly, no less than four times annually, from 2013 through 2016. At the end of this period, the Panel co-chairs determined that the Panel should continue to meet regularly in order to finalize its recommendations and continued to meet through early Fiscal Year (FY) 2019.

From July 2018 through June 2019, the Early Literacy Expert Panel focused its efforts on communicating the Panel's recommendations and developing implementation opportunities in consultation with the education agencies. This report summarizes the Panel's work during that period of time.

## **B. SUPPORTING THE PANEL**

The Executive Office of Education (EOE) worked with Panel members to (i) schedule and support the Panel's meetings; (ii) further collaborate with the Commissioners from the education agencies and other departments relative to the Panel's work; (iii) communicate progress to the Legislature; (iv) share information with and from the field; and (v) inform the general public of this important work as required and requested throughout the year.

## **C. PROGRESS IN FISCAL YEAR 2019**

### **Overview of Key Activities**

The Panel spent most of FY 2019 finalizing and implementing the communication plan to share the recommendations that they had developed in FY 2018. The Panel met once formally on August 2018 to review and finalize the communication plan and implementation strategies for the screening recommendations, and discuss the close-out of, and opportunities for outgrowth

of, the Panel's formal work going forward. The Panel continued to work closely with the three education departments (EEC, DESE, and DHE) as well as the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), the Department of Public Health, the Children's Trust, the United Way, Decoding Dyslexia and Stand for Children seeking their input and identifying opportunities for collaboration.

In the fall of 2018, the Panel Co-Chairs built on this work by meeting with multiple stakeholders to brief them on the Panel's recommendations, including meeting with:

- Co-Chairs of the Joint Committee on Education;
- American Federation of Teachers;
- Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents; and
- Massachusetts Association of School Administrators

The Panel co-chairs shared briefing materials with additional organizations, including the Massachusetts Teachers Association.

The Executive Office of Education, on behalf of the Panel, also met with multiple staff members at DESE and EEC to discuss potential policy, professional development and funding alignment that could be a part of agency-level implementation plans in support of the Panel's screening recommendations.

Building on the Panel's recommendations, EOE, in partnership with EOHHS, EEC, DESE, DPH and Children's Trust, successfully applied for the federal Pre-School Development Birth to Five (PDG B-5) Grant, with a focus that includes improving how state agencies purchase, conduct, and analyze the results of developmental screening through the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) tool, which is the developmental screener for children under age five recommended by ELEM. EOE applied for the award on November 5, 2018, and received the award on December 30, 2018, to be administered through calendar year 2019. EOE, EOHHS and the partner agencies facilitated a kick-off meeting with Secretariat and agency heads in February 2019 and continued to work towards project deliverables through June.

Finally, in late 2018, the Legislature enacted S. 2607, *An Act relative to students with dyslexia*, which added a member to the Panel and put a stronger statewide focus on screening and literacy. As a result, Secretary Peyser appointed Nancy Duggan, Co-Founder and Executive Director of Decoding Dyslexia MA, to the ELEM Panel on February 12, 2019. DESE has also been constructing a plan for developing and issuing to "guidelines to assist districts in developing screening procedures or protocols for students that demonstrate 1 or more potential indicators of a neurological learning disability including, but not limited to, dyslexia", as required by the Act. DESE posted a request for responses (RFR) for a vendor to assist them in developing the guidelines, awarding the contract to Pivot Learning in July 2019.

#### **D. STATE FUNDING FOR EARLY LITERACY**

The Commonwealth continued to appropriate dedicated funding for early literacy and English acquisition through line-item 7010-0033.

In FY 2019, DESE awarded \$889,790 for grants to districts to improve early literacy practices in kindergarten through third grade through this line-item. Forty-six schools received grant funds to allow teachers, administrators, coaches, reading specialists and additional educators to

participate in statewide literacy institutes and regional network meetings. In addition, seventeen schools received support from an early grades literacy consultant and data specialist.

## **E. NEXT STEPS**

In FY 2020, the Co-Chairs of the Panel will continue to support efforts to implement the Panel's recommendations at the Secretariat- and agency-level through the PDG B-5 grant and other efforts. The Executive Office of Education, on behalf of the Panel, will also collaborate with DESE regarding the development of guidelines for screening for dyslexia and other neurological disabilities. DESE will work with Pivot Learning to develop those guidelines throughout Fiscal FY20.

**Attachment A**  
**Early Literacy Panel Members**  
**Fiscal Year 2019**

- **Ann Reale**, Designee of Secretary of Education Jim Peyser and Co-Chair  
Undersecretary and Chief Operating Officer, Massachusetts Executive Office of  
Education
- **Nonie Lesaux**, Co-Chair  
Chair, Board of Early Education and Care  
Academic Dean, Harvard Graduate School of Education
- **Lisa Antonelli**  
Early Childhood Educator, Everett Public Schools
- **Maryellen Brunelle**  
Superintendent, Auburn Public Schools
- **Joan Kagan**  
President and Chief Executive Officer, Square One, Springfield
- **Mariela M. Páez**  
Associate Professor of Education, Boston College
- **Amy O’Leary**  
Early Education for All Campaign Director, Strategies for Children
- **Jessica R. Roth**  
Pediatrician, Children’s Hospital Boston and the Martha Eliot Health Center
- **Wayne Ysaguirre**  
Former President and CEO, Nurtury, Boston
- **Nancy Duggan**, *beginning February 2019*  
Co-Founder and Executive Director, Decoding Dyslexia MA