EARLY LITERACY EXPERT PANEL
FY17 and FY18 Report

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

December 2018

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 2012 legislation established an Early Literacy Expert Panel (Panel), comprised of nine members, which includes the Executive Office of Education (EOE) Secretary, 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, Professor of Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and a national expert on reading development. 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.

From July 2016 through July 2018, the Early Literacy Expert Panel continued its focus on the key policy determined at the end of FY16: developmental screening. This report summarizes the Panel's work on developmental screening over 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 collaboration with the Commissioners from each education department 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 2017 and FISCAL YEAR 2018

Overview of Key Activities
The panel met five times in FY17 and four times in FY18. Throughout this time, 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, the Department of Public Health, the Children's Trust, the United Way, Decoding Dyslexia, Stand for Children, and the Birth to Third Grade Advisory Group to inform them of the Panel's progress, seek their input, and identify opportunities for collaboration.

At the end of FY16, the Panel decided to focus their efforts in FY17 and FY18 to identify two different screening tools to recommend to the field in order to support the development of effective comprehensive assessment systems. One of these screening tools is a uniform pre-kindergarten developmental screener that includes language and vocabulary, which would identify and support children at-risk for later reading difficulties. The other is a literacy screener to identify and support kindergarten-aged children at-risk for later reading difficulties.

To arrive at more specific recommendations related to screening, much of the Panel's work in 2017 and 2018 related to reviewing developmental and literacy screening tools. The Panel also worked in partnership with DESE, EEC, and the Birth to Third Grade (B-3) Advisory Group to develop a communication plan that could be used to share the recommendations and implementation suggestions with key stakeholders.

Tool Selection Process and Criteria
The Panel, in partnership with the B-3 Advisory Group, developed a set of criteria to measure screeners. These criteria included components related to administration, cost, population served, and content, and were used throughout the screening tool review process. The recommended developmental screener is intended for use with children from infancy to age five and the recommended literacy screener is intended for use with children ages five and up. Accordingly, the Panel and the B-3 Advisory Group reviewed differing criteria and screeners. The Panel's criteria and list of evaluated screeners are described in more detail below. Following several meetings and discussions regarding the criteria and the review of comparable developmental screening tools, the Panel agreed unanimously to recommend the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) tool for children up to age five. After subsequent meetings specific to literacy screeners, the Panel agreed unanimously to recommend the Lexia RAPID tool for older children.

<u>Developmental Screener (for children ages 0-5)</u>

Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)
Brigance
Early Screening Inventory (ESI)
Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning (DIAL)
Preschool Language Scales 5 (PLS-5)

Effective Tool Criteria	ASQ	Brigance	ESI	DIAL	PLS-5
Is it appropriate for infants, toddlers, preschoolers and kindergartners?	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Is it cost effective for all types of early education and care settings?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Can it be administered in 20 minutes or less?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Is training available at low or no cost?	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

Is it available in multiple languages?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Is it reliable and valid?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Can it be used by a child's parent/guardian?	Yes	No	No	No	No

<u>Literacy Screener (for children ages 5+)</u>

Lexia RAPID
Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE)
Predictive Assessment of Reading (PAR)
Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)
Star Reading

Effective Tool Criteria	Lexia RAPID	GRADE	PAR	DIBELS	Star
Does it include code-based and meaning-based skills?	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Can it be administered more than once a year?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Can it be administered in twenty minutes or less?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Can it be administered digitally?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Is it research-based?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Is it reliable and valid based on population norms?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

FY 2017 Meetings

The Panel met five times in FY17, and several members of the Panel ensured each meeting would be guided by an action-oriented and outcome-driven agenda. A summary of each of these meetings follows:

1. **DATE: October 19, 2016**
   MEETING SUMMARY: Decoding Dyslexia presented to the Panel about their work, the importance of screening and adequate follow-up, and the necessary components of an effective screening tool. The Birth to Third Grade Advisory Group also presented the results of their screening use survey. This survey, administered to both public school districts and licensed early education providers, asked which screening tools were

currently administered and how the resulting data was being utilized. Of early education providers that responded, 38% used the Ages and Stages Questionnaire, more than any other screening tool. Of public school districts that responded, there was no consensus, and many districts reported that they used multiple screening tools. The Panel also discussed the connection of the Panel's work with ongoing agency/administration initiatives, and planned for upcoming meetings.

2. **DATE: December 7, 2016**
   MEETING SUMMARY: The Panel discussed criteria to use for evaluating universal developmental screening tools, and identified an initial list for characteristics of a screening tool:
   - Easy to use
   - Takes no more than 20-30 minutes to administer
   - Developmentally appropriate
   - Normed
   - Allows for linguistic diversity
   - Focused on screening for progress

   The Panel identified an initial list of tools to review based on their knowledge of commonly used developmental screeners and the preliminary criteria (ASQ, PLS-5, DIAL, ESI, BDI).

3. **DATE: April 19, 2017**
   MEETING SUMMARY: The Panel discussed a more in-depth review of each tool. The Panel discussed next steps towards making a recommendation, the development of a communication plan, and the importance of professional development to support the successful implementation of any recommended screener.

4. **DATE: May 17, 2017**
   MEETING SUMMARY: The Panel decided to recommend ASQ as a developmental screener. The Panel also discussed next steps for both a communication strategy and professional development supports for its implementation. The Panel discussed current ASQ usage and data collection, and identified other agencies that would be involved in implementing universal developmental screening. The Panel also discussed options for reviewing and choosing a recommended kindergarten literacy screener. The group determined a timeline for this work, and discussed possible alignment with current home visiting and parental education programs.

5. **DATE: June 21, 2017**
   MEETING SUMMARY: The Panel further discussed which criteria to weigh when choosing a kindergarten screener, reviewing an initial list of tools based on Panel discussion and feedback from the B-3 Advisory Group as well as a variety of criteria related to ages covered, time, cost and method of administration, the availability and cost of training, reliability, validity and specific literacy skills addressed. The Panel also finalized the communication plan for the developmental screener (ASQ). The Panel also finalized next steps and meeting dates for early FY18.

Fiscal Year 2017 Summary of Activities and Timetable

Panel Activity	Timeframe	Progress
Communication to and with education stakeholders	*Ongoing*	*Initial communications informed stakeholders of meeting dates and content.*
Panel Meeting	*October 19, 2016*	*Decoding Dyslexia presented their work and screener recommendations to the Panel. The B-3 Advisory Group presented the results of their screening use survey.*
Panel Meeting	*December 7, 2016*	*The Panel compiled screening considerations to weigh when selecting a recommended screener.*
Panel Meeting	*April 19, 2017*	*The Panel discussed the in-depth review of the tools and reviewed a communication plan for presenting the recommendations.*
Panel Meeting	*May 17, 2017*	*The Panel chose a developmental screener and further discussed developing a communication/professional development plan.*
Panel Meeting	*June 21, 2017*	*The Panel continued to discuss necessary materials for the ASQ recommendation. The Panel solidified their timeline and process for recommending a kindergarten screener.*

FY 2018 Meetings

The Panel met four times in FY18, and several members of the Panel ensured each meeting would be guided by an action-oriented and outcome-driven agenda. A summary of each of these meetings follows:

1. **DATE: September 22, 2017**
   MEETING SUMMARY: The Panel discussed the status of the screening recommendations and related communication plan and materials, and started to develop a list of frequently asked questions (FAQ) related to the screening recommendations. The Panel also reviewed the next iteration of the list of kindergarten screeners by the criteria determined in previous meetings, and considered which criteria should be prioritized in the next round of review in order to narrow down the list of screeners.

2. **DATE: November 16, 2017**
   MEETING SUMMARY: The Panel did a walk-through of the draft PowerPoint presentation developed by the co-chairs for messaging screening recommendations. This presentation

included overall information on developmental screening and content about the importance of effective, comprehensive assessment systems in the early childhood space. The Panel also reviewed the kindergarten screener list that been updated by Co-Chair Lesaux and her team after feedback from the previous meeting. The Panel, with input from members of the public, finalized criteria to prioritize for the selection of a literacy screener for kindergarten students and developed a short-list of literacy screeners to further review (Lexia RAPID, PAR, GRADE, STAR, DIBELS). The criteria includes:
- Ability to administer more than once a year
- Ability to administer digitally
- Low cost, reliable and valid (research-based)
- Offers meaning and code based tasks
- Ability to be administered in twenty minutes or less

3. **DATE: December 14, 2017**
   MEETING SUMMARY: The Panel reviewed the short-list of screeners and discussed the in-depth reviews of each tool. The Panel preliminarily decided to recommend Lexia RAPID, pending a presentation and Q&A session with the Lexia RAPID product team. The Panel members all agreed on this course of action.

4. **DATE: January 31, 2018**
   MEETING SUMMARY: Lexia RAPID staff provided a presentation and demonstration to the Panel and members of the public. The Panel also discussed next steps regarding communication of their recommendations to the state education agencies and external stakeholders.

Following the January meeting, EOE, on behalf of the Panel, met with staff at DESE and EEC several times to solicit their feedback on the screening recommendations, and ensure those recommendations could eventually be implemented in the context of existing agency, state and federal requirements and initiatives. Concurrent with this review process, EOE, acting on behalf of the Panel's goal of making actionable recommendations refined the PowerPoint presentation and communication plan to reflect DESE and EEC feedback, as well as ensure the Panel's recommendations were messaged in the context of state early education efforts. EOE, DESE and EEC also preliminary discussed 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.

Fiscal Year 2018 Summary of Activities and Timetable

Panel Activity	Timeframe	Progress
Communication to and with education stakeholders	Ongoing	Initial communications have informed stakeholders of meeting dates and content
Panel Meeting	September 22, 2017	The Panel discussed the status of the screening recommendations and related communication plan and materials, including an initial list of kindergarten screeners.

Panel Meeting	*November 16, 2017*	*The Panel did a walk-through of a PowerPoint presentation describing their efforts. The Panel developed criteria and a short-list of literacy screeners for review.*
Panel Meeting	*December 14, 2017*	*The Panel reviewed the short-list of screeners based on previously agreed upon criteria, discussed the in-depth reviews of each tool, and unanimously decided to recommend Lexia Rapid, pending a demonstration of the tool.*
Panel Meeting	*January 31, 2018*	*Lexia RAPID staff presented to the Panel. The Panel discussed next steps on communicating the screening recommendations.*

D. STATE FUNDING FOR EARLY LITERACY

The Commonwealth appropriated dedicated funding for early literacy through line-item 7010-0033.

In FY17, the final state appropriation included $1,059,159 for grants to improve early literacy practices. The grants funded five education collaboratives and ten school districts, which impacted 370 teachers in 42 schools. A grant was also made to Reading Recovery to provide direct support to teachers.

In FY18, the state appropriated $1,396,907 for grants to districts improve early literacy practices in kindergarten through third grade. Twenty-two school districts, encompassing 48 schools, received grant funds to allow 240 teachers, administrators, coaches, reading specialists and additional educators to participate in statewide literacy institutes and regional network meetings. In addition, 14 schools with 75 participating educators received additional support from an early grades literacy consultant and data specialist.

E. NEXT STEPS

In FY19, the Panel will continue to support the communication and implementation plans to effectively implement developmental screening while meeting existing screening requirements.

Attachment A
Early Literacy Panel Members
Fiscal Years 2017 and 2018

- **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
  Professor of Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education

- **Lisa Antonelli**
  Kindergarten 1 Teacher, John Eliot Innovation K-8 School, Boston

- **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**, *beginning May 2016*
  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