

June 20, 2024

Dr. Melissa M. Weber-Mayrer
Ohio Department of Education and Workforce
25 South Front Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Dr. Weber-Mayrer:

I am pleased to express our support for the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce's submission of its Comprehensive Literacy State Development grant proposal. As the statewide association representing Ohio's 251 public library systems, the Ohio Library Council considers literacy a top priority for our state and the nation. With more than 7.7 million library cardholders, Ohio's public libraries have the highest usage per capita in the nation.

Grounded in the 2012 Third Grade Reading Guarantee, for over a decade Ohio has used federal grants to develop proving grounds for best practices in districts across the state and leveraged state policies and funding to support dissemination of the most impactful strategies. In 2023, this work resulted in Governor DeWine calling for a renewed focus on how Ohio schools teach reading. Ohio legislators agreed and passed an historic budget to help schools build stronger literacy teaching practices. This includes statewide implementation of high-quality English language arts instructional materials and free access to professional learning in evidence-based language and literacy practices for all teachers.

Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement, established in 2018 provides the roadmap for this work and supports districts and schools with a cohesive framework of evidence-based instructional practices and resources to guide literacy improvements from birth to grade 12. This grant offers an exceptional opportunity to build on a decade of growth and success in literacy programming in the state and to strategically advance literacy proficiency for Ohio's students. Through targeted supports and focused activities, Ohio schools will move toward full implementation of high-quality practices to advance literacy skills for all children, especially for children who are economically disadvantaged or living in poverty, English learners and students with disabilities.

Ohio's grant proposal will bring together key stakeholders in collaborative partnerships to provide high quality language and literacy instruction for Ohio's most disadvantaged students. Director Dackin and Department of Education and Workforce staff have been working diligently on the Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant proposal. We believe that this grant will allow Local Education Agencies and Early Learning Agencies to learn how to enhance implementation of literacy practices aligned to the State's plan.

This funding is a tremendous opportunity to invest in improving the literacy skills of Ohio's most disadvantaged children that will prepare them for success in the future. In closing, the Ohio Library Council is committed to supporting the Department's efforts to seek funding to improve the literacy skills of Ohio's children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle Francis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "M" and a long, sweeping underline.

Michelle Francis
Executive Director, Ohio Library Council