Iowa State Board of Education

Executive Summary

March 30, 2017

Agenda Item: National Association of State Boards of Education Grant from the Foundation for Child Development

Iowa Goal(s): All PK-12 students will achieve at a high level.

State Board Role/Authority: Reducing Achievement Gaps and Improving Teacher and Leader Preparation are two of the State Board’s priorities.

Presenter(s): Dave Tilly, Deputy Director
Department of Education

Brooke Axiotis, State Board Member

Attachment(s): None

Recommendation: It is recommended that the State Board approve the board’s participation in the National Association of State Boards of Education network and accept the grant of $14,000.

Background: The National Association of State Boards of Education grant is from the Foundation for Child Development. The grant builds the capacities of state boards to support the early education workforce. Iowa is one of three states receiving this grant along with Michigan and New York. This is a two-year grant and it awards each state $7,000 per year.

The grant will allow the State Board to focus on addressing the needs of K-3 teachers by assisting them in delivering high-quality early literacy programming to students. The State Board intends to do this by developing a standard of care for K-3 teachers, which can be implemented in classrooms. After developing effective practices, the State Board will create policies to ensure teacher preparation programs produce teachers who are both knowledgeable and have the ability to implement good practice in their classrooms.
Recruiting Network States to Build A Strong Early Care and Education Workforce

Introduction

State Boards of Education (SBE) play a distinct role in developing a well-qualified early learning workforce, which depends on the governmental structure and authorities within each state. Generally, SBEs can support the early learning workforce by strengthening requirements for core competencies, improving professional development, and advancing workforce credentialing and preparation in cooperation with higher education systems.

NASBE received a 2-year grant from the Foundation for Child Development to build the capacity of SBEs to support the Early Care and Education (ECE) workforce by establishing a Network of 3 to 4 states to develop, revise, or adopt policies and share practices with other states.

Project Time

This project will end in May 2018.

Stipend Awards Available

Stipend Awards: $7,000 per year for two years for a total of $14,000

Number of Stipends: three to four states

Application Selection Criteria

Focus Areas: Applicant states must have a strong interest to work on the early childhood education (birth to age 8) workforce issues, focusing on at least two of the following areas identified in the National Academies’ report “Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation”:

1. Educator competencies and certification
2. Educator preparation programs
3. Educator professional development
4. Educator evaluation

Stakeholders: SBEs should include state and local level stakeholders in application as team members or partners. Per NASBE’s research, states may also consider participants from other states’ entities: department of education, department of health, department of family and child care; Head Start; ECE advisory councils; state educator leadership, licensure, and accreditation agencies; leaders and faculty from higher education; and other state and local stakeholders in child care and education.

Desired Deliverables
1. **Communication Plan**

SBEs will lead the conversation with stakeholders. NASBE will participate in convenings and provide a communication consultant as needed to help states develop a strategy for collaborating across sectors that should specify how often they meet and where, who hosts meetings, the best way to communicate outside meetings, and how to inform the public about their progress.

2. **States develop a multiyear, phased, multicomponent, coordinated improvement and alignment framework for the ECE workforce.**

NASBE will work with its Early Learning Advisory Group, consultants, and partner organizations to support these efforts. Although systemic change won’t happen overnight, SBEs will lead state stakeholders toward a structured, comprehensive framework for the birth through eight early learning system.

3. **States develop monitoring and evaluation plans to oversee implementation**

4. **States provide a final report on policy actions and initiatives**

**Desired Outcome**

A well-qualified workforce for children from birth to age eight; an improved, better aligned system to support education from birth to age eight; collaborative state stakeholders across agencies; and supportive state policy and leadership.

**NASBE Support**

NASBE is committed to facilitating the work of the Network States and will provide substantial state-specific support as follows:

- Technical support for the development of stipend applications as requested.
- Work with the state leadership team to devise a Memorandum of Understanding that will include a final budget designed to meet the specific needs of each Network State.
- Develop customized policy audit tool for Network states to conduct self-assessment and comprehensive audit of policies to assess their ECE workforce landscape and capacity. The audit findings will fuel strategic planning and establish a framework for effective decision making.
- Visit each Network State to assist the leadership team with the self-assessment process, policy audit, and work plan development.
- Convene the Network States at least once a year so that SBE members can share lessons learned within the network at the same time they are learning from experts.
- Facilitate webinars and connections with experts and participate in state policy workshops to provide guidance and coordination to state boards of education to improve the quality and effectiveness of work plans, evaluation strategies, and collaborative activities with other agencies and organizations.
- Support ongoing opportunities to foster networking, communication, and coordination, and serve as a conduit for information exchange, including fostering collaboration between
awardees that would not normally interact with each other or collaborate on education policy efforts.

**Timeline**

Application deadline: February, 2017

**Contact Us**

Please feel free to contact NASBE ECE Project Manager, Winona Hao (winona.hao@nasbe.org) or Executive Vice President, Robert Hull (Robert.hull@nasbe.org) if you have any questions.

Please fill out the application on page 4-6 and send it back to Winona Hao (winona.hao@nasbe.org) and Robert Hull (Robert.hull@nasbe.org).
**Workforce through Effective State Policies**

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

<table>
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<th>State</th>
<th>Iowa</th>
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Signature of board chair or vice chair

Name, title, phone, and email of state liaison

Brooke Axiotis 515-664-6898  
Brooke.axiotis@gmail.com

Name, phone, and email of the lead State Board of Education member (if different from above)

Is your state board a member of NASBE?

- X Yes
- □ No

Have your state board agreed to join the Network and accept the stipend? *(We will be voting on this at our March 31 State Board meeting.)*

- □ Yes
- □ No

**Areas to Tackle:** states must tackle at least two of the following areas identified in the National Academies’ report *“Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation”* (Click to view the document) through this stipend. Which areas is your state planning to tackle? States should consider both teachers and leaders in the following categories.

- Educator competencies and certification
- Educator preparation programs
- Educator career pathways and **professional development**
- Educator evaluation

**Application Narrative**
1. **Statement of Interest and Commitment:** Describe the level of interest of your Board of Education in this stipend and the level of commitment shown from members. What you hope to achieve by joining the Network? How will you ensure the work progresses as outlined in the agreed-upon work plan? What processes are in place to monitor the progress of the work plan and make adjustments as necessary?

The Iowa State Board of Education has maintained a focus on early literacy for several years. Throughout this time early literacy has continued as one of our board priorities as a means of reducing the achievement gap and ensuring that all students are able to achieve at a high level. The Department of Education and the State Board have also been committed to ensuring that teachers have the necessary skills to ensure students are achieving at a high level.

The Department and the Board have already started working on addressing systemic issues in early literacy. The Department and Board believe that effective practice creates good policy. This grant will help further the work that is already being done. We will work with the Department to create a leadership team that will engage stakeholders. The lead Department staff will oversee the management of the Department's work and the stakeholders and the lead Board member and lead Department staff will report the progress to the Board at every meeting.

2. **Capacity and State Landscape:** Describe the state board's capacity to accomplish the activities in this proposal. Why do you believe your BOE has the capacity to undertake this initiative at this time? What is the current landscape of your state in terms of readiness for policy change? In addition to financial and human resources, consider state experience in related areas, knowledge and passion of state board members, public will and interest, and other stakeholder expertise and capacity.

In 2012, Iowa’s legislature passed a law requiring the State to implement a comprehensive early literacy initiative. Critical components include:

- An early warning system to screen all students in kindergarten through third grade and to identify students at risk for reading difficulties.
- Research-based intervention and monitoring of progress to get struggling readers back on track.
- Communication between schools and parents of children who are struggling.
- Intensive summer reading programs starting in May 2018 for struggling readers at the end of third grade.
- Possible retention at the end of third grade for a small number of students.

Work is ongoing on implementation of this law, but last school year, Iowa began reaping the positive benefits of systemic implementation. Analyses of 2015-16 school year data from the 398 public school districts and nonpublic schools using the early warning system show a 4.2 percentage-point increase in k-3 students at or above benchmark on screening assessments from the fall of 2015 to the spring of 2016. This means that 8,923 k-3 children went from missing to meeting or exceeding benchmarks during the school year. Of 398 public school districts and nonpublic schools using the early warning system, 60.8 percent (242) saw an increase in the percentage of students in kindergarten through third grade at or above benchmark from fall 2015 to spring 2016.

An early warning system only works if the information gained is used to help improve teaching and learning. The Iowa Department of Education, in collaboration with the area education agencies and the Iowa Reading Research Center, is proposing a three-year, $3.5 million-a-year project to build a sustainable professional learning system to support about 7,000 Iowa teachers of kindergarten through third grade in early literacy education. The statewide system will continue to help raise reading achievement by ensuring Iowa children are taught using evidence-based instructional strategies.

It is critically important that the same evidence-based instructional strategies provided to all k-3 inservice teachers in Iowa also are available and implemented in preservice training programs in Iowa. Here is where the State Board of Education’s authority and policy making ability intersects with professional development planned in Iowa. All 32 preservice teacher training programs are accredited by the Iowa State Board of Education. It is the intent of this project for the State Board of Education to be involved with the development of the in-service reading coaching project, to ensure meaningful participation from Iowa’s colleges and universities and then for the State Board to work with teacher training programs to revise accreditation requirements for elementary teachers to include training in these high quality evidence-based instructional strategies.
work? What entities will you include in the planning and execution of the work plan? What relationship exists with other political entities impacted by this work—legislature, governor’s office, local districts, etc.? How will you communicate regularly with various stakeholders throughout the two-year cycle of the stipend?

The Iowa State Board of Education enters this initiative with well-established and strong relationships with all of the partners necessary for this initiative to be a success. Iowa’s Board has a board goal to improve student reading by the end of third grade and to diminish the achievement gaps for historically at risk students. The board has a strong relationship with the Governor’s office and the state legislature, who also have supported early literacy legislation and priorities within their work over the past 5 years. Moreover, the Board has strong relationships with leadership from all preservice teacher training programs and has oversight of these programs through the accrediting process. The Iowa Department of Education also has strong strategic goals related to early literacy and has worked closely with the State Board throughout the past 5 years to align our education system to implement a single, comprehensive early literacy throughout Iowa. The State Board and the Iowa Department of Education work very closely to coordinate policy and practice in Iowa. Additional partners in our statewide initiative include the statewide system of Area Education Agencies that the state board accredits, the Iowa Reading Research Center at the University of Iowa and all of our 333 public school districts who the Department of Education accredits. In sum, Iowa has worked diligently and thoughtfully throughout the past 5 years to build partnerships and strong relationships all coordinated and focused on the goal of ensuring high levels of literacy for k-3 students.

4. **Goals and Objectives:** Please share the general goals you wish to accomplish by joining the Network and list some specific objectives that you will include in your work plan. Please note that a final Memorandum of Understanding will be agreed-upon that will include specific goals and objectives developed jointly by NASBE and your leadership team during the initial state visit.

   1. To collaboratively define a standard of care (see attached brief) that Iowa expects to be implemented in every k-3 classroom

   2. To collaboratively deliver professional learning (both knowledge and skill-based professional learning) to ensure every k-3 teacher in Iowa has the skills to deliver these competencies

   3. To collaboratively develop policy changes (administrative rules and procedures) related to elementary education program standards (and accreditation) that will ensure preservice k-3 teachers will be taught the knowledge and skills necessary to implement the same “standard of care” in their classrooms once they graduate, as every other k-3 teacher in Iowa.

5. **Please List Your Project Deliverables** (you will need to submit a detailed work plan once NASBE approves your application, NASBE will provide the work plan template):

   - Collaboratively developed framework describing Iowa’s early literacy standard of care (based on the 5 pillars of early literacy—phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension)—to include explicitly defined knowledge and pedagogical competencies
   - Collaboratively developed professional development materials, processes, and products
   - Data on the number and percent of in-service k-3 teachers who complete and implement Iowa’s early literacy standard of care.
- Proposed revision to Iowa Administrative rules for accrediting elementary education programs that include specific requirements that preservice programs teach their pre-service teachers the Iowa Standard of Care.

6. **Budget Narrative**: Please share your general proposal for how the stipend funds ($14,000) will be spent over the two-year stipend cycle. General categories are fine, as a specific budget will be jointly constructed by NASBE and your leadership team as part of the Memorandum of Understanding development during the initial state visit.

**Proposed budget based upon $14,000 stipend award (as outlined in the budget narrative)**

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