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MDE Grants Funding for Early Literacy Coaches

by Brandy Archer

A cohort of early literacy coaches will begin concerted efforts to support educators with early literacy in the 2016-17 school year. The State School Aid Act provided \$3,000,000 in both 2015-16 and 2016-17 for Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) to hire early literacy coaches. For eligible applicants, \$37,500 was awarded to use towards hiring each coach. ISDs are responsible for providing the remaining funds needed for the position. At this time, most Michigan ISDs have hired at least one coach. This is exciting news for early literacy efforts in Michigan.

In a recent issue of the *Michigan Reading Journal*, the entire document titled, “Grades K to 3 Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy” was published. This document, along with a Prekindergarten version, was released in Spring 2015. Grades 4-5 and 6-12 are currently being drafted. These documents outline 10 instructional practices that we would expect to see in every classroom, every day, regardless of the local literacy programming efforts. Each practice is supported by a strong body of scientific research. The ISD literacy coaches will be supporting the implementation of these practices in local districts. In preparation for this work, every ISD early literacy coach received four days of intense training on the 10 practices. These sessions were sponsored by a collaborative effort between the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA), MAISA General Education Leadership Network, Michigan Virtual University, the Michigan Department of Education, and Gogebic-Ontonagon ISD. The trainings took place in August and September and were professionally videotaped. The recordings will be incorporated in online trainings to support educators in the nuances and specifics of the practices.



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The “Essential Instructional Practices” document, and the initiative to make sure all early literacy educators in the state are supported in them, are innovative. States tend to adopt standards, create lists of approved curriculum, or insist on specific interventions. Michigan has chosen to invest in the specific knowledge, skills, and practices needed to provide the most effective and most current, research-driven practices needed to increase student literacy proficiency. Utilizing a network of coaches with common knowledge and training will be essential to sharing these practices with educators in the field.

Author Biography

Brandy Archer, Ed.D. is the Content Area Literacy Consultant for the Curriculum and Instruction unit in the Office of Education Improvement and Innovation at the Michigan Department of Education. Brandy’s current work includes Intentional Instructional Practice training for teachers in the African American Young Men of Promise Initiative and supporting MDE’s early literacy and mathematics initiative. For more information on the African American Young Men of Promise visit: <http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140--297206--RSS,00.html> or email Brandy at: archerb2@michigan.gov