



College of Education
University of Nevada, Reno

January 26, 2012

To: Colin Usher, Project Manager, SRCL

From: Christine Cheney, Dean

Re: Providing Professional Development via the Striving Readers Grant

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The College of Education of the University of Nevada, Reno seeks to become a partner with local education agencies and the Nevada Department of Education to provide continuing professional development to teachers in the area of literacy.

Description of the College of Education and its services

The College of Education at the University of Nevada, Reno provides innovative and high-quality graduate and undergraduate educator preparation programs. We are nationally accredited by NCATE, and are known for high-quality literacy training.

Our orientation to educator development is to help professionals develop the habits of mind needed to be effective with all students. Our goal is for educators to be critical thinkers around student learning and instruction; to see nuances and make informed decisions. Developing an understanding of the scholarship of literacy and evidence-based practices are integral to what we do. Within our capacity, we seek to develop on-going relationships with partners, as opposed to isolated presentations. We believe that growth and transformation of instruction take time, trust, and commitment.

The higher education system is built on credit hour production, so our partnerships would include professionals enrolled in credit-bearing courses. These courses could be delivered in a variety of formats including face-to-face, online instruction, and in-school meetings. The number of credits would be dependent on the content and time frame.

Specific areas of expertise within the college include the following:

- We have nationally-recognized faculty in literacy instruction who specialize in word study, balanced literacy, integration of children's literature, vocabulary development, assessment of reading difficulties, and teacher growth and transformation of literacy

practices through in-depth collaboration and professional learning. Literacy faculty's expertise ranges from primary through secondary grades. Faculty also work with selected doctoral students with both experience and scholarship in literacy. Talented doctoral students could be involved in partnerships with districts.

- An attachment to this document describes the particular services that could be provided through the E.L. Cord Foundation Center for Learning and Literacy.
- We have early childhood faculty members with specific expertise in child development from birth to age 8 and support to families of young children. They have been heavily involved in PK-3 movements with schools. Our Early Head Start and other early childhood centers provide award-winning demonstration opportunities with a child-centered perspective on the development of language and literacy.
- We have faculty with expertise in Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and assistive technology and English language learners.

Alignment to the State Literacy Plan

The College of Education at UNR is comprehensive. We have expertise related to all elements of the State Literacy Plan. The following describes how we the elements, although not all are directly related to professional development of school personnel (more details can be provided by request):

- Element 1: Effective Leadership. Professional development delivered would be systemic in nature and could include teachers, administrators, board members and others deemed important by the LEA. The role of UNR faculty would be facilitation of school or district teams to sustain high-quality, research-based literacy instruction.
- Element 2: Alignment with the Common Core State Standards. Our faculty are on the cutting edge of their discipline and are heavily involved with the CCSS. They promote language-rich literacy with a wide range of texts. They are able to differentiate literacy instruction for core support, for intervention and for enrichment. Faculty with specific expertise in ELL and special education collaborate to enrich those aspects of literacy instruction. In addition, our faculty have developed research-based instruction and assessment that are used throughout the nation and are in high demand nationally,
- Element 3: Teacher Preparation Program. The College of Education prepares preservice teachers and collaborates with schools districts to align instruction and experiences with the realities of schools and state policies.
- Element 4: Work with community organizations. The attached description of the Center for Learning and Literacy outlines potential activities with afterschool programs and the community.
- Element 5: Early Childhood Literacy: Early childhood and family educators in the College of Education have a track record of supporting literacy development from birth to grade three and in family and community contexts. The Family Story Teller is an example of an award-winning program focused on family literacy. Faculty play leadership roles in PK-3 efforts across Nevada, and have a history of working with child care providers and agencies.
- Element 6: Fostering Critical thinking, questioning, and independent learning. Our philosophy of education is learner-centered. We assume that teachers are decision-makers who use data to determine the continually-changing need for scaffolded

instruction, explicit direction, and student independent discovery. Our PD reflects these beliefs.

History of Service within Nevada

UNR is the land grant institution in Nevada and the College of Education embraces the land grant philosophy of service to the state. Literacy faculty have served the state by preparing preservice and inservice teachers, as well as literacy leaders in Nevada. Individual faculty have a history of working with schools and districts to improve instruction. We were the providers of teacher development through the Reading Excellence Act, enabling almost 200 teachers across the state to earn master's degrees in literacy studies. One of our faculty members was the Principal Investigator of the Nevada Reading First grant, also a state-wide effort to improve early literacy. We have worked with over 200 teachers in WCSD to earn master's degrees in literacy through Title I cohorts and through the Lemelson Literacy project. We have a long and distinguished history of service to Nevada in literacy instruction.

In addition to our Nevada work, our faculty are nationally recognized for their innovation in instruction and assessment, as well as their high quality research. We bring a national perspective to local problems.



University of Nevada, Reno

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Memo

To: Whom It May Concern
From: Donald Bear, Director
Date: 2/10/2012
Re: Striving Readers Grant activities

The E.L. Cord Foundation Center for Learning and Literacy would value being considered a part of the Striving Readers Grant activities for the LEAs in Nevada.

We feel that we can offer the following:

To provide professional development, particularly in the areas of vocabulary, phonics, and spelling; develop and staff Reading Buddies and Tier II literacy interventions in schools, K – 12; conduct professional development in Tiered intervention programs and support literacy research; and offer onsite tutoring and assessments.

For specificity in the Striving Readers proposals, the participation of the CLL can be divided into five categories.

Reading Interventions: Reading Buddies is a developmental, research-based literacy intervention program for children who experience difficulties learning to read, write and spell. Each semester, the center provides tutoring in four elementary schools in Washoe County and serves approximately 100 children; see www.unr.edu/cll. These programs are perfect to serve for enrichment and Tier II interventions. Professional Development to teach educators how to develop and manage **Reading Buddies** programs in their districts is available.

Word Study Professional Development: Teachers and teacher leaders learn techniques to blend reading, word study, phonics, vocabulary, including academic and content-specific, and spelling instruction. Word study with English learners is a strand throughout all of the professional development. The professional development can be provided at the school, and at district levels through a blend of activities from classroom visits and PLCs to webcasts and online activities. In elementary grades, the focus is on the alphabetic and pattern layers. At the upper level, the focus is on patterns and morphology. A 10-15-week word study course is available online for credit or as an audit.

In daylong workshops, for example, educators learn more about effective phonics, spelling and vocabulary instruction. There are keynote speakers, breakouts by grade levels and interest groups, plenty of materials, videos of local teachers teaching and sharing their organizational and assessment patterns, and time to talk about the sequence of word study instruction in teachers' classrooms. Workshops may serve approximately 125 participants; teachers study with leaders in the field and plan their word study program with experienced mentor teachers. Over a year, another workshop day and a few focus meetings can be configured.

Word study has recently been shown to be a significant part of a large intervention study with sixth through eighth graders. Significant results have been reported in an elementary school study for second and fourth graders in Tier II interventions.

Tutoring in Reading and Writing at the Center: Approximately 200 children who struggle learning to read and write are tutored by preservice and inservice teachers. This program runs throughout the year: in the fall and spring, children meet with tutors twice a week; in the summer, children meet with their tutors four days a week. A progress report is mailed to parents to use in educational planning at school and home.

Research in Assessment, Development, and Effective Instruction: The faculty and doctoral students involved in the CLL conduct research in a variety of areas. Currently, the assessment of secondary English learners' literacy development is in focus. This includes an examination of the academic and morphological development of secondary students. We are showing administrators and literacy leaders a new measure on teacher effectiveness in providing word study instruction. A validation study has just been completed. We are also studying the literacy development of children with chromosome anomalies. The staff is glad to participate in similar literacy activities.

Individual Literacy Assessments: When a family or school district is especially concerned about a child's reading development they may ask us to conduct a literacy assessment. The director works with graduate students to provide in-depth assessments to understand how the children are learning to read and write, and to make meaningful suggestions for educational planning at school, home, and in tutoring. Assessments of adults are also conducted to consider reading difficulties in post- secondary studies.