



Valdosta State University

April 15, 2025

Meeting Minutes

Council Members Present

Chairman Scott Johnson, Katie Bennett, Dr. Gary Bingham, Amy Denty, Carlett Fulcher, Dr. Lindee Morgan, Senator Blake Tillery, Julie Walker, Christie Moore, Andri Pilgrim

Council Members Present Online

Dr. Yancey Ford, Senator Chris Erwin, Senator Billy Hickman, Ellen Wiley, Senator Jason Esteves, Senator Demetrius Douglas, Jaillene Hunter

Welcome (video)

Dr. Richard Carvajal, President, Valdosta State University

Valdosta State Literacy and Teacher Education

Dr. David A. Slykhuis, Dean, College of Education

- *The College of Education and Human Services is the largest at the university (1,700 students in teacher preparation programs).*
- *Dr. Debbie Paine, Dr. Jodi Cronin, and Kailie Wingate (VSU student) presented additional information about the College of Education and student experiences in teacher preparation programs.*

Introductions and Council Acknowledgements

Scott Johnson, Chairman:

- *Recognized Andri Pilgrim and Dr. Norris Price for their retirements this school year.*
- *Congratulated Christie Moore and Representative Demetrius Douglas for their recent appointments to the Council.*
- *Reviewed legislation and budgets passed during the 2025 Session relating to literacy.*
- *Acknowledged and thanked Dr. Morgan and the Deal Center for the screener selection process that will result in the top-ranked screener, Amira, being offered to schools and school systems as the free screener.*
- *Shared that Georgia Reads Community Awardees are being visited in April and May.*

Georgia Reads

Georgia Reads Coach

- *Malcolm Mitchell provided updates and inspiration as the Georgia Reads Coach and spoke about the Georgia Reads Community visits.*

Panel Discussion on the GPEE CARES Study

Rewriting How Reading is Taught

Panel moderators included: Dr. Dana Rickman, President, Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education (GPEE) and Claire Suggs, Education Policy Consultant.

Panelists included: Michael Singletary, Director of Curriculum and Instruction

Assessment and School Improvement, Grady County Schools; Kerri-Ann Williams, Director of Literacy, Fulton County Schools; and Grant Rivera, Superintendent, Marietta City Schools.

- *The panel members provided an overview of their school systems, and the people, processes, and programs used to improve literacy districtwide.*
- *They focused on leadership and teacher training, coaching, and support.*
- *Superintendents also shared strategies to support students including data utilization and funding allocations to create improvements in literacy skills.*
- *Each district shared systems for setting high expectations, processes for continuous improvement, and considerations for long-term sustainability.*

Working Group Updates

- Sarah Richards provided a Literacy Plan update and the School Leadership Working Group (on behalf of Dr. Longgear) update.
 - *The School Leadership Working Group started this year and is led by Dr. Longgear.*
 - *The Group reviewed leadership training resources from other states and is working toward support and recommendations for school leaders.*
- Dr. Gary Bingham provided– Birth-5 Working Group updates.
 - *He shared that the focus on this group is ensuring that every child has the foundational skills needed to be ready for kindergarten.*
 - *He thanked legislators for continuing the increase in CAPS funding.*
 - *DECAL is working to develop the GELDS.*
 - *The Early Learning and Literacy Lab is in development for training.*
 - *The group is reviewing readiness assessments and readiness needs.*
- Amy Denty provided the K-12 Working Group updates.
 - *House Bill 307 successfully combined legislation to create the Early Literacy and Dyslexia Act. The bill passed the House and Senate with full support.*
 - *The Group will focus on guidance and support for interventions in schools and is hoping to ensure consistency across the state.*
 - *The Barriers for Learning Group had a past focus on hearing and vision screening. The group continues to push forward the recommendations for state agencies to work together to improve hearing and vision screening processes.*
 - *The Barriers for Learning Group is working toward their north stars: Access for healthy development, emotional well-being, and educational achievement; positive-language-rich interactions; evidence-based practices and developmentally responsive conditions for learning; safety and connection for young children.*

- Dr. Laura Lynch provided the Educator Preparation Working Group updates.
 - *All educator preparation programs have aligned their curriculum to the science of reading.*
 - *GACE will be updated for literacy assessments by this summer.*
 - *Working Group discussed establishing metrics related to GACE scores.*
 - *This Group will support coaching and best practices to support the new coaching coordination committee.*
- Dr. Cayanna Good provided Community Working Group updates
 - *Georgia Reads Communities had the opportunity to meet and share highlights of their best practices during the last Community Working Group meeting.*
 - *The Deal Center will conduct an external evaluation of our Georgia Reads Communities with results expected in March 2026.*
 - *The Georgia Reads Award application will open on Georgia Reads Day, September 22.*
 - *Rep. Douglas will join this Working Group.*

Public Comment

Sucheta Kamath discussed executive function.

Next Steps and Adjournment

Chairman Johnson concluded the meeting and shared that the next Council meeting will be at Dalton State on July 22.