

Action Item - 36

Title: Contract with Listen Innovation Inc. and Vista Higher Learning for the Purchase of Supplemental Online Multilingual Student Instructional Resources (\$133,340)

Board of Education Meeting Date: 10/24/2024

Action Under Consideration:

The Administration recommends that the Board of Education authorize The School District of Philadelphia, through the Superintendent or his designee, to execute and perform a contract, subject to funding, as follows:

With:

Listen Innovation Inc.
Vista Higher Learning, Inc.

Purpose:

Purchase of online student instructional resources for supplemental online instructional support in English Language Development and Spanish Language Arts for District students who are English Learners.

Start date: 10/25/2024

End Date: 10/24/2027

Compensation not to exceed:

\$133,340

Separate Compensation by Contractor:

Listen Innovation, Inc.: \$111,140
Vista Higher Learning, Inc.: \$22,200

Location:

All Schools

Renewal Option:

- Number of renewal options: 2
- Duration of each option: 1 year

Maximum Compensation authorized per option period:

All entities will be paid out of a total aggregate amount as follows:

Option year 1 - Not to exceed \$48,070

Option year 2 - Not to exceed \$49,390

Description:**Why is this contract needed?**

Supplemental multilingual online instructional resources are needed to meet the needs of English Learners (ELs). The District's English Learners speak over 130 different languages, which requires the support of additional supplemental resources in order to address the diverse needs of this population.

Under Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (2015), ELs who have been enrolled in District English Language Development (ELD) programs for five or more years are considered "experienced" or "long-term" English Learners. Approximately 47% of District high school EL students are considered "experienced" and/or "long-term" English Learners. Students who remain in ELD programs for prolonged periods of time face significant barriers to attaining English language proficiency and graduating from high school, including being considered college and career ready. The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) expects ELs to be "reclassified" or exited from ELD programs within six years. Reclassification should demonstrate sufficient English proficiency to be successful in their college and career aspirations.

To prepare students to exit from ELD programs, a high school course titled Cross Curricular Language Development (CCLD) was developed to support the needs of long-term EL students. The Office of Special Education and Diverse Learners seeks authorization to contract with Listen Innovation, Inc. to purchase the Listenwise online program to supplement the core instructional text of CCLD. Listenwise is a supplemental program designed to improve student modes of communication, both interpretive and expressive.

In addition, the Office of Special Education and Diverse Learners requests authorization to contract with Vista Higher Learning for the purchase of Avanza digital licenses to supplement the District's Spanish Dual Language instructional program. Avanza provides teachers and students with online digital subscriptions incorporating authentic Spanish texts and leveraging students' existing cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This approach incorporates diverse assessment methods, differentiated instruction, and supports for learners on different reading levels in Spanish or English. Students will have access to this program outside the classroom to practice their language, comprehension, and linguistic skills. Avanza incorporates interactive student participation that supports core instruction and provides teachers and students with live data on performance outcomes. This resource is a goal oriented and targeted supplemental asset to the District's core instructional resources.

How will the success of this contract be measured?

The success of this contract will be measured by the progress of 700 students enrolled in the Cross Curricular Language Development (CCLD) program and students in grades 6-8 enrolled in Dual Language program schools. This will include improvements in modes of communication, critical thinking, and multimodal

communication skills, as well as enhanced WIDA ACCESS scores, reclassification rates, and performance in core content courses.

When applicable, is this an evidence-based strategy? If so, what evidence exists to support this approach?

These supplemental programs are evidence-based and peer-reviewed, and have been successfully implemented in many school districts across the United States. The Contractors' high-quality instructional materials are crucial resources for effective teaching and learning. Extensive research demonstrates their positive impact on both teacher development and student achievement. In January 2023, Listenwise earned ESSA Level IV certification. This achievement means that Listenwise has complied with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requirements. The research findings within the completed ESSA Evidence Level IV report validate how Listenwise supports second language learner. An excerpt from the report highlights this point: "Focusing on second language learners, researchers with the Understanding Language initiative at Stanford University describe four fundamentals of effective English Language Development curriculums: purposeful communication, incorporating disciplinary practices from multiple content areas, focus on authentic language, and organizing instruction into thematic units. These fundamentals are meant to produce instruction that leverages learners' strengths and interests in ways that support academic, linguistic, and social-emotional development (Weiss, Kuo, & Zwiers, 2022).

Since 2004, the WIDA English Language Development standards have reflected the need for multilingual learners to learn content and language together in ways that are linguistically and culturally sustainable (WIDA, 2020). Since listening comprehension can outpace reading comprehension for many students through middle school or even beyond (Sticht & James, 1984), audio can equalize access to academic content. Listening comprehension is defined as the interactive process between speaker and the listener with an emphasis on the listener, who is responsible for applying meaning to the oral input (Bingol, 2017). Listening comprehension as a skill depends upon several interconnected sub-skills and knowledge sets, such as vocabulary, syntactic knowledge, cognitive regulation, and background knowledge (Kim, Petscher, Uccelli, & Kelcey, 2020; Recht & Leslie, 1988). In their daily lives, students depend on listening comprehension skills to follow instructions, comprehend spoken language, and have everyday conversations (Hogan, Adlof, & Alonzo, 2014).

Vista Learning Avanza is a Spanish language supplemental literacy support designed for K-12 students, based heavily on the "Science of Reading" research, which emphasizes systematic and explicit phonics instruction, focusing on phonemic awareness, phonics decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension development, allowing for targeted instruction based on individual student data to address literacy gaps and promote reading proficiency in Spanish.

When applicable, was a larger community of District community members and/or stakeholders involved in this selection process? If so, what groups and how?

Consistent with the District's competitive procurement process, the selection process that resulted in the selection of these Contractors included a committee of District professional staff, such as curriculum specialists with relevant expertise, who reviewed and evaluated the Contractors' RFP responses.

Which Goal and/or Guardrail does this Action Item support?

Has this investment been discussed during a progress monitoring session?

Which session?

The online supplemental resources align with Board of Education Goals 3 and 4 by supporting English Learners in achieving grade-level proficiency in reading. Additionally, these programs contribute to the elimination of culturally biased educational practices that impede student success, as outlined in Guardrail 4.

Does this Action Item support a specific strategy/intervention identified in the Strategic Plan?

This Action Item supports strategic action 3.8 by expanding support for English Learners. The requested supplemental resources promote challenging activities and appropriate support for English Learners, allowing them to achieve English proficiency and engage in grade level content.

Related resolution(s)/action item(s)

N/A

Funding Source(s)

FY25: Categorical - Title III Grant

FY26: Categorical - Title III Grant

FY27: Categorical - Title III Grant

Office Originating Request:

Special Education and Diverse Learners