

HOUSE No. 4152

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year Two Thousand Twelve

An Act relative to third grade reading proficiency.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 SECTION 1. It is a goal of the commonwealth to have all students reading proficiently
2 by the end of third grade, thereby increasing students' potential for academic success.

3 SECTION 2. (a) The secretary of education, in collaboration with the commissioners of
4 the departments of early education and care, elementary and secondary education, and higher
5 education, shall appoint an Early Literacy Expert Panel of no fewer than 6 and no more than 12
6 experts on children's early language and literacy development. Said appointments shall be made
7 in consultation with the senate and house chairs of the joint committee on education and the
8 senate and house chairs of the joint committee on higher education. The secretary and one of the
9 appointees selected by the panel shall be designated as co-chairs. The panel shall advise the 3
10 departments and the executive office of education on the refinement and implementation of plans
11 for early literacy development including, but not limited to, the Massachusetts Striving Readers
12 Comprehensive Literacy Plan, the Early Learning Challenge Plan, and Race to the Top,
13 including the activities and programs offered by the District and School Assistance Centers and
14 Readiness Centers to support language and literacy acquisition for children from birth to third

grade, inclusive. The council shall conduct its first meeting not more than 60 days after the effective date of this act. The panel shall meet not less than 4 times annually for the first 4 years following the effective date of this act. The panel shall then continue to meet for a time period to be determined by the panel co-chairs. Panel members, with the exception of the panel co-chairs, shall each be appointed for a term of 4 years. No member, with the exception of the panel co-chairs, shall serve for more than 2 consecutive terms. The members of the panel shall serve without compensation but may be reimbursed for expenses necessarily and reasonably incurred in the performance of their duties. Panel members shall not, by virtue of their membership, be deemed state employees under chapter 268A of the general laws.

(b) The panel shall make recommendations to the secretary and the commissioners of the departments of early education and care, elementary and secondary education, and higher education on the alignment, coordination, and implementation of, but not limited to, the following areas:

(1) comprehensive curricula on language and literacy development for children in early education and care programs and grades pre-kindergarten to third grade, inclusive, that (i) is anchored in rich content to be studied through thematic units; (ii) uses a wide variety of types of text to support content under study; (iii) emphasizes the role of oral language and discussion in promoting early reading skills; and (iv) contains a balanced instructional design focused on developing both meaning-based skills, such as comprehension, conceptual knowledge, vocabulary, and code-based skills, such as letter knowledge, letter sounds and word reading;

(2) effective instructional practices to promote children’s language and literacy development in early education and care programs and grades pre-kindergarten to third grade, inclusive, including tiered instructional strategies and materials;

(3) pre-service and in-service professional development and training for educators on language and literacy development, the administration of screenings and assessments, and the analysis of data gained through screenings and assessments to make instructional decisions to improve language and literacy acquisition in young children;

(4) developmentally appropriate screening and assessment to monitor and report on children’s progress toward achieving benchmarks in language and literacy development across educational levels prior to third grade and measuring school readiness and children’s reading proficiency from pre-kindergarten to third grade;

(5) family partnership strategies for improving the quality, frequency, and efficacy of home-school interactions to support children’s literacy and language development, as well as for building community capacity to support family literacy practices; and

(6) action steps to implement the recommendations contained in “Turning the Page: Refocusing Massachusetts for Reading Success” by Nonie Lesaux.

The panel shall also advise on leveraging existing and new federal grant opportunities and private funding to support language and literacy acquisition for children from birth to third grade, inclusive. Subject to appropriation, the secretary and commissioners may appoint personnel necessary to coordinate the activities of the panel and provide administrative support as needed.

SECTION 3. The secretary, in coordination with the panel co-chair and the 3 commissioners, shall prepare and submit an annual report on the activities of the expert panel in advising the departments. The report shall include information on the alignment and collaboration between the 3 commissioners, as overseen by the secretary, on early language and literacy development for children from birth to third grade, inclusive, and on teacher training and professional development on early language and literacy, and all subject areas covered in (b)(1)-(6). The report shall also include a description of all state and federal funding related to early literacy and the programs such funding supports. The secretary shall submit the report on or before December 31 to the clerks of the senate and the house of representatives, who shall forward the same to the senate and house chairs of the joint committee on education and senate and house chairs of the joint committee on higher education and the chairs of the senate and house committees on ways and means. The report shall also be made available on the websites of the departments of early education and care, elementary and secondary education, and higher education and on the website of the executive office of education.