

SENATE No. 2653

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

—
**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Third General Court
(2023-2024)**
—

SENATE, March 21, 2024.

The committee on Education, to whom was referred the petitions (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 263) of Sal N. DiDomenico, Paul W. Mark, John C. Velis, Angelo J. Puppolo, Jr. and other members of the General Court for legislation to promote high-quality comprehensive literacy instruction in all Massachusetts schools, report the accompanying bill (Senate, No. 2653).

For the committee,
Jason M. Lewis

SENATE No. 2653

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**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Third General Court
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An Act to promote high-quality early literacy instruction and improve student outcomes.

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. Section 55A of chapter 15 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2022
2 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after the words “curriculum and assessments;”
3 in line 56, the following language:-

4 (6) evaluate the alignment of literacy instructional materials and curricula with
5 department-recommended high quality literacy instructional materials and curricula, as per
6 section 1E of chapter 69;

7 SECTION 2. Said section 55A of chapter 15, as so appearing, is hereby further amended
8 by striking the language “(6) review the progress of overall student achievement and; (7)
9 evaluate student performance, school and district management, overall district governance and
10 any other areas deemed necessary by the office.” in lines 56 through 59, and replacing it with the
11 following language:-

12 (7) review the progress of overall student achievement and; (8) evaluate student
13 performance, school and district management, overall district governance and any other areas
14 deemed necessary by the office.

15 SECTION 3. Section 1E of chapter 69 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2022
16 Official Edition, is hereby amended by adding at the end of the first paragraph the following
17 sentence:- Curricula selected to meet the curriculum frameworks for elementary literacy must be
18 aligned with evidence-based literacy instruction.

19 SECTION 4. Subsection (c)(ii) of section 1S of chapter 69 of the General Laws, as so
20 appearing, is hereby amended by striking out, in line 41, the words “and (J)”, and inserting in
21 place thereof the following words:- (J) implementing evidence-based literacy instruction; and
22 (K)

23 SECTION 3. Said subsection (c)(ii) of section 1S of chapter 69, as so appearing, is
24 hereby further amended by striking out, in line 44, the word “(I)”, and inserting in place thereof
25 the following word:- (J)

26 SECTION 5. Section 38G of chapter 71 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby
27 amended by inserting after the word “personnel”, in line 281, the following:-

28 provided that policies and guidelines must include alignment with evidence-based
29 literacy instruction for educator preparation programs to be approved.

30 SECTION 6.

31 Section 1. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, as used in this bill,
32 the following words shall, unless the context requires otherwise, have the following meanings:-

33 “department” means the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

34 “Evidence-based literacy instruction" means structured instructional practices, including
35 sequential, systematic, explicit, and cumulative teaching, that (i) are based on reliable,
36 trustworthy, and valid evidence consistent with science-based reading research; (ii) are used in
37 core or general instruction, supplemental instruction, intervention services, and intensive
38 intervention services; (iii) have a demonstrated record of success in adequately increasing
39 students' reading competency, vocabulary, oral language, and comprehension and in building
40 mastery of the foundational reading skills of phonological and phonemic awareness, alphabetic
41 principle, phonics, spelling, and text reading fluency; and (iv) are able to be differentiated in
42 order to meet the individual needs of students. Evidence-based literacy instruction should align
43 with scientifically based reading research standards set forth in 20 USC 6368 (3)(4)(5)(6)(7).

44 "Science-based reading research" means research that (i) applies rigorous, systematic,
45 and objective observational or experimental procedures to obtain valid knowledge relevant to
46 reading development, reading instruction, and reading and writing difficulties and (ii) explains
47 how proficient reading and writing develop, why some children have difficulties developing key
48 literacy skills, and how schools can best assess and instruct early literacy, including the use of
49 evidence-based literacy instruction practices to promote reading and writing achievement.

50 Section 2. (a) The department shall provide tools and resources to aid districts in
51 providing adequate professional development aligned with evidence-based literacy instruction
52 and science-based reading research for literacy teachers, paraprofessionals, and reading
53 specialists in grades pre-kindergarten through third grade.

54 (b) The department shall create and maintain

55 i. A list of department-approved, high-quality professional development programs and
56 vendors aligned with evidence-based literacy instruction best practices and science-based reading
57 research.

58 ii. A set of online training modules available and free to all teachers that provide training
59 on the foundational practices and pedagogy aligned with evidence-based literacy instruction best
60 practices and science-based reading research.

61 Section 3: Each school district shall at least two times per year assess each student's
62 reading ability and progress in literacy skills, from kindergarten through at least third grade,
63 using a valid, developmentally appropriate screening instrument approved by the department.
64 Consistent with section 2 of chapter 71B of the general laws and the department's dyslexia and
65 literacy guidelines, if such screenings determine that a student is significantly below relevant
66 benchmarks for age-typical development in specific literacy skills, the school shall determine
67 which actions within the general education program will meet the student's needs, including
68 differentiated or supplementary evidence-based literacy instruction and ongoing monitoring of
69 progress. Within 30 school days of a screening result that is significantly below the relevant
70 benchmarks, the school shall inform the student's parent or guardian of the screening results and
71 the school's response and shall offer them the opportunity for a follow-up discussion.

72 Section 4: (a) The department shall create guidelines for districts to use to determine if
73 any students exhibit a reading deficiency. Guidelines shall include the steps that districts must
74 follow to address and remedy such reading deficiencies. The department shall consult experts to
75 identify and make available to districts literacy intervention approaches that are aligned with the
76 essential components of evidence-based literacy instruction and science-based reading research.

77 (b) Districts shall follow department guidelines established in subsection (a) for any
78 student in kindergarten through grade 3 who exhibits a deficiency in reading.

79 Section 5: (a)(1) The department shall identify a list of data requirements for reporting
80 purposes in order to ensure that districts are implementing evidence-based literacy instruction
81 under this bill. The department shall publish reporting requirements by the start of each school
82 year.

83 (2) Beginning in 2025, each district shall report annually to the department, on or before
84 October 31, the data reporting requirements set out in subsection (a)(1).

85 (b) Annually, beginning no later than December 31, 2025, the department shall aggregate
86 data collected from each district under this section and file a report with the clerks of the senate
87 and house of representatives, the joint committee on education and made public on the
88 department's website.

89 Section 6. The department shall convene a panel of expert stakeholders to study the early
90 literacy education landscape in the Commonwealth and draft recommendations to maximize
91 dissemination of evidence-based literacy instruction best practices among the educator workforce
92 in Massachusetts, which shall include, but not be limited to, pre-service training for teachers,
93 administrators, and related school-based service providers; professional development for in-
94 service teachers, administrators, and related school-based service providers; best practices related
95 to educator licensure, license endorsements or similar credentials intended to demonstrate
96 advanced knowledge of evidence-based literacy instruction best practices; and such other matters
97 as the panel may determine would advance more equitable literacy outcomes for all
98 Massachusetts students.

99 Said recommendations shall be published in a report filed with the clerks of the senate
100 and the house of representatives, the joint committee on education and made public on the
101 department's website no later than December 31, 2025.

102 Section 7. The department shall promulgate such rules and regulations as it deems
103 necessary to implement the provisions of this bill.