

# SENATE . . . . . No. 2653

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## 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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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

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