HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 2329 FILED ON: 1/16/2025

HOUSE . . . . . No. 698

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Danillo A. Sena and Simon Cataldo

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act to promote high-quality early literacy instruction and improve student outcomes.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
Danillo A. Sena	*37th Middlesex*	*1/16/2025*
Simon Cataldo	*14th Middlesex*	*1/16/2025*
Patrick Joseph Kearney	*4th Plymouth*	*2/14/2025*
Mary S. Keefe	*15th Worcester*	*4/1/2025*
Bud L. Williams	*11th Hampden*	*4/9/2025*
Patricia A. Duffy	*5th Hampden*	*4/9/2025*
Margaret R. Scarsdale	*1st Middlesex*	*4/18/2025*
Andres X. Vargas	*3rd Essex*	*6/17/2025*
Justin Thurber	*5th Bristol*	*9/17/2025*

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HOUSE . . . . . No. 698

By Representatives Sena of Acton and Cataldo of Concord, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 698) of Danillo A. Sena, Simon Cataldo and Patrick Joseph Kearney relative to early literacy instruction and student outcomes. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the One Hundred and Ninety-Fourth General Court
(2025-2026)

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:

SECTION 1. Section 55A of chapter 15, as appearing in the 2022 Official Edition, so appearing, is hereby amended by striking the language "(6) review the progress of overall student achievement and; (7) evaluate student performance, school and district management, overall district governance and any other areas deemed necessary by the office." in lines 56 through 59, and replacing it with the following language:- "(6) evaluate the alignment of literacy instructional materials and curricula with department-recommended high quality literacy instructional materials and curricula, as per section 1E of chapter 69; (7) review the progress of overall student achievement and; (8) evaluate student performance, school and district management, overall district governance and any other areas deemed necessary by the office."

SECTION 2. Section 1E of chapter 69 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2022 Official Edition, is hereby amended by adding at the end of the first paragraph the following

12 sentence:- Curricula selected by school districts to meet the curriculum frameworks for
13 elementary literacy must be aligned with evidence-based literacy instruction.

14 SECTION 3. Subsection (c)(ii) of section 1S of chapter 69 of the General Laws, as so
15 appearing, is hereby amended by striking out, in line 41, the words "and (J)", and inserting in
16 place thereof the following words:- (J) implementing evidence-based literacy instruction; and
17 (K)

18 SECTION 4. Said subsection (c)(ii) of said section 1S of chapter 69, as so appearing, is
19 hereby further amended by striking out, in line 44, the word "(I)", and inserting in place thereof
20 the following word:- (J)

21 SECTION 5. Said subsection (c)(ii) of section 1S of chapter 69, as so appearing, is
22 hereby further amended by adding at the end of the first paragraph the following sentence:-
23 District plans must address implementing evidence-based literacy instruction if the results from
24 the early literacy screening required by section 2 of chapter 71B indicate more than 50 percent of
25 students in kindergarten through third grade are below relevant benchmarks for age-typical
26 development in specific literacy skills."

27 SECTION 6. Section 38G of chapter 71 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby
28 amended by inserting after the word "personnel", in line 281, the following:-

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

31 SECTION 7.

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

34 “Department” means the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

35 “Evidence-based literacy instruction" means structured instructional practices, including
36 sequential, systematic, explicit, and cumulative teaching, that (i) addresses the five essential
37 components of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development,
38 reading fluency — including oral reading/communication skills, and reading comprehension, (ii)
39 are based on reliable, trustworthy, and valid evidence consistent with scientifically-based reading
40 research; (iii) are used in core or general instruction, supplemental instruction, intervention
41 services, and specialized reading instruction provided in accordance with an individualized
42 education plan; (iv) have a demonstrated record of success in adequately increasing students'
43 competency in the areas of, vocabulary development, oral language, and comprehension and in
44 building mastery of the foundational reading skills of phonological and phonemic awareness,
45 alphabetic principle, phonics, writing and spelling, and text reading fluency; and (v) are able to
46 be differentiated in order to meet the individual needs of students. The instruction may not
47 include implicit and incidental instruction in word reading, visual memorization of whole words,
48 guessing from context, and picture cues, which may also be known as MSV or three-cueing.
49 Evidence-based literacy instruction should align with scientifically-based reading research
50 standards set forth in 20 USC 6368 (3)(4)(5)(6)(7).

51 "Scientifically based reading research" means research as defined by Congress in 20 USC
52 6368 (6) that (i) applies rigorous, systematic, and objective observational or experimental
53 procedures to obtain valid knowledge relevant to reading development, reading instruction, and

54 reading and writing difficulties and (ii) includes research that a) employs systematic, empirical
55 methods that draw on observations or experiment; b) involves rigorous data analyses that are
56 adequate to test the stated hypothesis and justify the general conclusions drawn; c) relies on
57 measurements or observational methods that provide valid data across evaluators and observers
58 and across multiple measurements and observations; and d) has been accepted by a peer-
59 reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous,
60 objective, and scientific review, and (iii) explains how proficient reading and writing develop,
61 why some children have difficulties developing key literacy skills, and how schools can best
62 assess and instruct early literacy, including the use of evidence-based literacy instruction
63 practices to promote reading and writing achievement.

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

68 (b) The department shall create and maintain

69 i. A list of department-approved, high-quality professional development programs and
70 vendors aligned with evidence-based literacy instruction best practices and scientifically-based
71 reading research.

72 ii. A set of online training modules available and free to all teachers that provide training
73 on the foundational practices and pedagogy aligned with evidence-based literacy instruction best
74 practices and scientifically-based reading research.

75 Section 3: (a) The department shall create guidelines for districts to use to determine if
76 any students exhibit a reading deficiency. Guidelines shall include the steps that districts must
77 follow to address and remedy such reading deficiencies. The department shall consult experts to
78 identify and make available to districts literacy intervention approaches that are aligned with the
79 essential components of evidence-based literacy instruction and scientifically-based reading
80 research.

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

83 Section 4: (a)(1) The department shall identify a list of data requirements for reporting
84 purposes in order to ensure that districts are implementing evidence-based literacy instruction
85 under this bill. The department shall publish reporting requirements by the start of each school
86 year.

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

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

93 Section 5. The department shall promulgate such rules and regulations as it deems
94 necessary to implement the provisions of this bill.

95 Section 6. In establishing apprenticeship pathways to educator licensure, the Department
96 shall ensure that all participants in approved apprenticeship programs shall receive an adequate
97 foundation in providing Evidence-based literacy instruction.