

SENATE No. 2924

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

SENATE, January 22, 2026.

The committee on Senate Ways and Means to whom was referred the House Bill relative to teacher preparation and student literacy (House, No. 4683) (also based on Senate, No. 2855); reports, recommending that the same ought to pass with an amendment striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in place thereof the text of Senate document numbered 2924.

For the committee,
Michael J. Rodrigues

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(2025-2026)

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 29 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2024 Official Edition,
2 is hereby amended by inserting after section 2NNNNNN, inserted by section 19 of chapter 73 of
3 the acts of 2025, the following section:-

4 Section 2000000. (a) There shall be established and set up on the books of the
5 commonwealth a separate, non-budgeted special revenue fund known as the Early Literacy Fund,
6 which shall be administered by the secretary of education. The fund shall be credited with: (i)
7 appropriations or other money authorized or transferred by the general court and specifically
8 designated to be credited to the fund; (ii) funds from public and private sources including, but
9 not limited to, gifts, grants and donations; and (iii) any interest earned on such money.

10 (b) Amounts credited to the fund shall be expended, without further appropriation, to: (i)
11 develop a free, complete high-quality curriculum for kindergarten through grade 3 that meets
12 frameworks established in section 1E of chapter 69 of the General Laws; (ii) implement section
13 1E ¾ of said chapter 69; and (iii) provide grants to school districts to support: (1) updating
14 curricula to meet the curriculum frameworks established in said section 1E ½ of said chapter 69;
15 (2) purchasing materials related to such curricula; and (3) providing professional development to
16 educators to support implementation of new curricula.

17 (c) Any unexpended balance in the fund at the end of a fiscal year shall remain available
18 for expenditure in subsequent fiscal years.

19 SECTION 2. The first sentence of the fifth paragraph of section 55A of chapter 15 of the
20 General Laws, as appearing in the 2024 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out
21 clauses (6) and (7) and inserting in place thereof the following 3 clauses:- (6) evaluate the
22 alignment of literacy instructional materials and curricula with department-recommended
23 evidence-based literacy instruction and high-quality curricula, as defined in section 1E ½ of
24 chapter 69; (7) review the progress of overall student achievement; and (8) evaluate student
25 performance, school and district management, overall district governance and any other areas
26 deemed necessary by the office.

27 SECTION 3. Chapter 69 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after
28 section 1E the following 2 sections:-

29 Section 1E ½. (a) As used in this section and section 1E ¾, the following words shall
30 have the following meanings unless the context clearly requires otherwise:

31 “Evidence-based literacy instruction”, literacy instruction that: (i) is based on methods
32 backed by scientific research; and (ii) has a demonstrated record of success in increasing student
33 competency in reading ability, vocabulary, oral language and comprehension through well-
34 designed and well-implemented studies to produce measurable and positive effects on student
35 learning outcomes.

36 “Five research-based areas in reading instruction”, phonemic awareness, phonics,
37 fluency, vocabulary and comprehension; provided, however, that comprehension shall include
38 oral reading, oral communication skills and reading comprehension.

39 “High-quality curriculum”, a curriculum reviewed and approved by the department.

40 (b) A district shall select a high-quality curriculum to meet the curriculum frameworks
41 under section 1E for kindergarten through grade 3 literacy that: (i) includes instruction in the five
42 research-based areas in reading instruction and oral language development; and (ii) utilizes and
43 is based upon evidence-based literacy instruction.

44 (c)(1) A district may apply for and the department may grant a waiver for the district to
45 use a kindergarten through grade 3 literacy instruction curriculum that does not appear on the
46 department’s list of high-quality curricula and that has not already been reviewed by the
47 department; provided, however, that any such literacy instruction curriculum shall utilize and be
48 based on evidence-based literacy instruction and meet quality standards determined by the
49 department.

50 (2) A waiver granted pursuant to this subsection may be approved for a period of not
51 more than 5 years; provided, however, that the department may approve the renewal of such
52 waiver if the district continues to utilize evidence-based literacy practices and meet quality
53 standards as determined by the department. A district shall report to the department during the
54 waiver period any student data as requested by the department.

55 (3) A district that receives a waiver under this subsection shall publicly post to its website
56 any report submitted to the department with information required pursuant to paragraph (2) and
57 curriculum samples.

58 (4) The department may audit waivers approved pursuant to this subsection at any time.
59 The audit shall include, but not be limited to, a comprehensive review of the: (i) curriculum
60 materials; (ii) instructional documentation; and (iii) instructional practices in the classroom.

61 (5) The department may rescind approval of a waiver approved pursuant to this
62 subsection based on audit findings before the expiration of the waiver; provided, however, that if
63 a waiver is rescinded, the department shall assist the district with implementing a high-quality
64 curriculum.

65 (d) The department shall maintain and make available to school districts a free, complete
66 high-quality curriculum for kindergarten through grade 3 that meets frameworks under section
67 1E; provided, however, that such free, complete high-quality curriculum or a free curriculum
68 certified pursuant to subsection (b) of section 1E ³/₄ shall meet any requirements under section
69 27C of chapter 29.

70 Section 1E ³/₄. (a) The department shall provide tools and resources to aid districts in
71 providing professional development aligned with evidence-based literacy instruction for literacy
72 teachers, paraprofessionals and reading specialists in kindergarten through grade 3.

73 (b) The department shall create and maintain: (i) a list of department-approved
74 professional development programs and vendors aligned with evidence-based literacy instruction
75 best practices; (ii) a set of online training modules available at no cost to all teachers that provide
76 training on the foundational practices and pedagogy aligned with evidence-based literacy
77 instruction best practices; and (iii) a list of high-quality curricula. The department shall update
78 said lists and modules to account for developments in best practices and curriculum.

79 SECTION 4. Section 1S of said chapter 69, as appearing in the 2024 Official Edition, is
80 hereby amended by striking out, in line 41, the words “and (J)” and inserting in place thereof the
81 following words:- (J) implementing evidence-based literacy instruction; and (K).

82 SECTION 5. Said section 1S of said chapter 69, as so appearing, is hereby further
83 amended by inserting after the word “subgroups”, in line 48, the following words:- ; and
84 provided further, that the district plan shall address the implementation of and compliance with
85 section 1E ½.

86 SECTION 6. Said section 1S of said chapter 69, as so appearing, is hereby further
87 amended by adding the following 2 subsections:-

88 (h)(1) Annually, not later than August 15, the department shall identify a list of data
89 requirements that each district shall report to the department related to curricula consistent with
90 evidence-based literacy instruction under section 1E ½. The department shall make the list of
91 data requirements publicly available on the department’s website.

92 (2) Annually, not later than October 31, each district shall report to the department the
93 data required by the department pursuant to paragraph (1).

94 (i) Annually, not later than December 31, the department shall: (i) aggregate data
95 collected from each district pursuant to subsection (h); (ii) prepare and publish a report on the
96 aggregated data; and (iii) file the report with the clerks of the senate and the house of
97 representatives, the senate and house committees on ways and means and the joint committee on
98 education. The department shall make the report publicly available on the department’s website.

99 SECTION 7. Section 2 of chapter 70 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby
100 amended by inserting after the definition of “Equalized property valuation” the following
101 definition:-

102 “Evidence-based literacy instruction”, as defined in section 1E ½ of chapter 69.

103 SECTION 8. Said section 2 of said chapter 70, as so appearing, is hereby further
104 amended by inserting after the definition of “Excess effort” the following definition:-

105 “Five research-based areas in reading instruction”, as defined in section 1E ½ of chapter
106 69.

107 SECTION 9. Section 38G of chapter 71 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby
108 amended by inserting after the word “personnel”, in line 281, the following words:-

109 ; provided, however, that policies and guidelines shall align with evidence-based literacy
110 instruction for educator preparation programs to be approved by the commissioner.

111 SECTION 10. Said chapter 71 is hereby further amended by striking out section 57A, as
112 so appearing, and inserting in place thereof the following section:-

113 Section 57A. The department of elementary and secondary education, in consultation
114 with the department of early education and care, shall, subject to appropriation, issue guidelines
115 to assist districts in developing screening procedures or protocols for students that demonstrate at
116 least 1 potential indicator of a neurological learning disability including, but not limited to,
117 dyslexia. Districts shall annually report to the department of elementary and secondary education
118 on the procedures or protocols used for screening for risk of dyslexia including, but not limited
119 to, evidence-based tools and assessments broken down by component skills for each grade level
120 and timeframes for such assessments. The commissioner shall annually make publicly available
121 on the department’s website data on which screening assessments are employed by each school
122 district, including, but not limited to, kindergarten through grade 3 literacy screening
123 assessments and whether the screening assessments utilized are approved by the department.

124 SECTION 11. Said chapter 71 is hereby further amended by inserting after section 57A
125 the following 2 sections:-

126 Section 57B. (a) For the purposes of this section and section 57C, the term “screening
127 assessments” shall mean tools and assessments that can be used to identify students at risk for
128 poor academic outcomes as determined by the department.

129 (b) The department of elementary and secondary education, in consultation with the
130 department of early education and care, shall issue regulations requiring districts to adopt
131 screening procedures and protocols for reading ability and progress in literacy skills for all
132 students in kindergarten through grade 3 using screening assessments. The regulations shall
133 include a threshold at which a student is determined to be significantly below the grade level
134 benchmark. The commissioner shall annually make publicly available on the department’s
135 website data on which screening assessments are employed by each district to conduct reading
136 screening.

137 Section 57C. (a) Each district shall assess each student’s reading ability and progress in
138 literacy skills from kindergarten through at least grade 3, using a screening assessment approved
139 by the department of elementary and secondary education, at such intervals as determined by the
140 commissioner but in no event less than twice per school year. The department shall update
141 approved screening assessments to remain current with best practices and evidence-based
142 assessments. The screening assessment of the student’s reading ability and progress shall be
143 consistent with section 2 of chapter 71B, the department’s dyslexia guidelines issued pursuant to
144 section 57A and literacy guidelines issued pursuant to section 57B.

145 (b) If a screening assessment determines that a student is significantly below relevant
146 grade level benchmarks in specific literacy skills, the district shall determine which actions
147 within the general education program will meet the student’s needs, including, but not limited to,
148 differentiated or supplementary evidence-based reading instruction and ongoing monitoring of
149 progress. Not later than 30 days after a screening result that determines that a student is
150 significantly below the relevant grade level benchmark, the district shall inform the student’s
151 parent or guardian of the screening results and the school’s response on what actions within the
152 general education program will meet the student’s needs and shall offer the student’s parent or
153 guardian the opportunity for a follow-up discussion.

154 SECTION 12. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, in fiscal year
155 2026, the comptroller shall transfer \$25,000,000 from the Education and Transportation Capital
156 and Innovation Fund established in section 2DDDDDD of chapter 29 of the General Laws to the
157 Early Literacy Fund established in section 2OOOOOO of said chapter 29.

158 SECTION 13. The department of elementary and secondary education shall promulgate
159 regulations as it deems necessary to implement this act and to ensure that high-quality curricula
160 meet the needs of all students, including students with disabilities and English language learners.

161 SECTION 14. School districts shall begin reporting required pursuant to paragraph (2) of
162 subsection (h) of section 1S of chapter 69 of the General Laws in the 2027-2028 school year.

163 SECTION 15. Not later than December 31, 2027, the department of elementary and
164 secondary education shall make publicly available on the department’s website the first report
165 required pursuant to subsection (i) of section 1S of chapter 69 of the General Laws.

166 SECTION 16. Prior to the beginning of the 2027-2028 school year, each school district
167 shall: (i) adopt high-quality curriculum for kindergarten through grade 3 literacy that meets the
168 curriculum frameworks pursuant to section 1E ½ of chapter 69 of the General Laws; or (ii) have
169 an approved curriculum waiver from the department of elementary and secondary education
170 pursuant to said section 1E ½ of said chapter 69.

171 SECTION 17. Not later than 6 months following passage of this act, the department of
172 elementary and secondary education shall develop a list of high-quality curricula and make
173 available for school districts the free and complete high-quality curriculum for kindergarten
174 through grade 3 as required pursuant to subsection (d) of section 1E ½ of chapter 69 of the
175 General Laws.