

HB 2914 --LITERACY OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

SPONSOR: Lewis

This bill creates, repeals, and modifies provisions relating to literacy of elementary school students.

EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS (Section 161.097)

The bill requires teacher education programs to instruct teacher candidates on the selection and use of high-quality reading curricula and instructional materials.

The bill repeals a requirement for teacher candidates to be instructed on best practices in the field of literacy instruction as recommended by the literacy advisory council.

Beginning July 1, 2027, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) will annually review and publicly report on the compliance of educator preparation programs with literacy and reading instruction requirements of current law and those established in the bill. The review will evaluate whether instruction is grounded in the components of evidence-based reading instruction and educator preparation programs not in compliance with these requirements must not be approved to certify new teachers.

STATE AID FOR READING INSTRUCTION (Section 161.241)

The bill expands evidence-based reading instruction to all active teachers in kindergarten through grade three and provides that the current Evidence-Based Reading Instruction Program Fund can be used to fund reading tutoring programs inside regular school hours, rather than only outside regular school hours.

Subject to appropriation, DESE must remit to each school district and charter school \$500 for each fourth grade student who exhibited a substantial reading deficiency in any of grades kindergarten to grade three, or who was identified as dyslexic, and who subsequently scores at the proficient level or higher in reading on the annual summative English language arts assessment administered to fourth grade students.

IDENTIFICATION OF READING DEFICIENCIES (Sections 167.268, 167.340, and 167.645)

The bill requires school districts to provide summer school for reading improvement instruction for students that do not meet the state's objectives for reading as demonstrated by performance on the Missouri universal reading literacy assessment established in Section 167.645, RSMo.

The bill establishes the "Missouri Universal Reading Literacy Assessment", a uniform, universal, literacy-based reading assessment administered to students in kindergarten through grade three (K-3) in every school district and charter school in the State. The Assessment will score each student in one of the following categories: below basic, basic, grade-level, proficient, or advanced. Proficiency benchmarks associated with these categories will be determined by DESE.

School districts and charter schools must assess all students in grades K-3 on the Assessment during three annual administration windows established by DESE. The first annual administration window must occur within the first 20 days of enrollment. DESE must provide the Assessment to school districts and charter schools at no cost. The Assessment will be used to comply with dyslexia screening requirements established in current law and to screen for characteristics of dyslexia and reading deficiency and assess other skills detailed in the bill. Student results on the screener will not be used to make decisions concerning the accreditation of a public school or school district.

The bill repeals a provision requiring school districts and charter schools to assess newly enrolled students in grades 1-5 on a reading assessment selected from a state-approved list.

A student who scores "basic" on the Assessment will be identified as having a reading deficiency. A student who scores "below basic" on the Assessment will be identified as having a substantial reading deficiency.

A school district or charter school must notify the parent within 30 days after the identification of a student with a substantial reading deficiency that, if the child's substantial reading deficiency is not corrected by the end of third grade, the child will not be promoted to fourth grade unless the child qualifies for a good cause exemption. Retention of a third-grade student with a substantial reading deficiency is mandatory unless the child qualifies for a good cause exemption or scores basic or higher on a retest opportunity through the Assessment, as provided in the bill.

A good cause exemption can be granted to students under certain conditions specified in the bill. To request a good cause exemption, a student's teacher must submit documentation to the school principal recommending the student's promotion, including the type of exemption being requested and the child's existing reading improvement plan or individualized education plan, as appropriate. The school principal will discuss the recommendation with the teacher and determine whether the student qualifies for a good cause exemption. If the school principal determines that the student qualifies for the good cause exemption, the school principal must make such recommendation in writing to the superintendent, who will accept or reject the school principal's recommendation in writing.

The school district will assist schools with notifying parents of students who are retained of the reasons for the retention, along with a description of the proposed interventions and supports that will be provided to the child to remedy the identified area or areas of reading deficiency in the following school year. School districts must establish an intensive acceleration class for all retained students that will have a reduced teacher-student ratio and provide explicit, systematic, sequential, and cumulative reading instruction and intervention for the majority of student contact time daily.

By October 1 annually, each school board will report in writing to DESE certain information regarding reading instruction, such as the board's policies regarding student retention and promotion, the number and percentage of students identified as having reading deficiencies or substantial reading deficiencies, the number and percentage of all students retained in K-3 due to substantial reading deficiencies, and the total number and percentage of third-grade students who were promoted with good cause exemptions, as provided in the bill.

LITERARY ADVISORY COUNCIL (Section 186.080)

The bill repeals the statute establishing the Literacy Advisory Council and repeals the Council's duties, including allowing for its recommendations to the Commissioner of Education and the State Board of Education.

This bill is similar to HB 2914 and SB 1442 (2026).