

State of Arkansas  
92nd General Assembly  
Regular Session, 2019

# A Bill

SENATE BILL 153

By: Senators J. English, Bledsoe, B. Davis, Irvin  
By: Representatives Barker, Bentley, Brown, Capp, Cavanaugh, Crawford, Dalby, Della Rosa,  
Lundstrum, J. Mayberry, Petty, Rushing, Speaks, Vaught

## For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL-LEVEL IMPROVEMENT PLANS AND THE RIGHT TO READ ACT; TO REQUIRE THAT A PUBLIC SCHOOL INCLUDE IN ITS ANNUAL SCHOOL-LEVEL IMPROVEMENT PLAN A LITERACY PLAN; TO REQUIRE THAT THE CURRICULUM, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AND GRADUATE STUDIES RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT AND OPEN-ENROLLMENT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SCIENCE OF READING; TO REQUIRE THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION CREATE AN APPROVED LIST OF CURRICULUM PROGRAMS THAT ARE SUPPORTED BY THE SCIENCE OF READING; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

## Subtitle

TO REQUIRE SCHOOL-LEVEL IMPROVEMENT, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, CURRICULUM, AND GRADUATE STUDIES PLANS TO BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SCIENCE OF READING.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. DO NOT CODIFY. Legislative findings.

The General Assembly finds that:

- (1) The Right to Read Act, § 6-17-429, addresses the science of reading for current educators and those in an undergraduate teaching program;
- (2) If educators do not have an understanding of scientific



reading instruction, many students will not receive the reading instruction necessary to read at grade level;

(3) The percentage of Arkansas students in grade three (3) who were "ready" or "exceeding" in reading on the 2018 ACT Aspire test was thirty-eight percent (38%);

(4) Dyslexia programs in Arkansas should be aligned to structured literacy as outlined by the International Dyslexia Association; and

(5) Educators throughout the state are in the process of completing the appropriate professional development requirements with respect to the science of reading and structured literacy, but public school districts have not provided those teachers with the necessary materials and resources to implement the methods required by science of reading and structured literacy programs in their classrooms.

SECTION 2. Arkansas Code § 6-15-2914(b), concerning the annual submission of school-level improvement plans, is amended to read as follows:

(b)(1)(A) Beginning on May 1, 2018, and by May 1 annually thereafter, a public school shall submit to its public school district a school-level improvement plan for approval by the public school district and public school district board of directors for implementation in the following school year.

(B)(i) A public school district and an open-enrollment public charter school shall include a literacy plan in the annual school-level improvement plan required under subdivision (b)(1)(A) of this section.

(ii) The literacy plan required under subdivision (b)(1)(B)(i) of this section shall include without limitation a curriculum program and a professional development program that are:

(a) Aligned with the literacy needs of the public school district; and

(b) Based on the science of reading as defined by § 6-17-429(k)(1).

(2) School-level improvement plans shall be posted on the public school district's website by August 1 of each year.

SECTION 3. Arkansas Code § 6-17-429(c), concerning the professional development requirements under the Right to Read Act, is amended to read as

follows:

(c)(1) Beginning with the 2018-2019 school year, a public school district and an open-enrollment public charter school shall provide the following professional development in scientific reading instruction:

(A) For teachers licensed at the elementary level in kindergarten through grade six (K-6), teachers with a special education license in kindergarten through grade twelve (K-12), and teachers licensed as reading specialists in kindergarten through grade twelve (K-12), professional development for one (1) of the prescribed pathways to obtaining a proficiency credential in knowledge and practices in scientific reading instruction; and

(B) For teachers licensed at a level other than the elementary level in kindergarten through grade six (K-6), teachers with a special education license in kindergarten through grade twelve (K-12), and teachers licensed as reading specialists in kindergarten through grade twelve (K-12), professional development for one (1) of the prescribed pathways to obtaining an awareness credential in knowledge and practices in scientific reading instruction.

(2) Beginning with the 2020-2021 school year, a public school or open-enrollment public charter school that does not provide the professional development under subdivision (c)(1) of this section shall:

(A) Be placed in probationary status; and

(B) Provide notice to parents that the public school district has not met the requirements of this section.

SECTION 4. Arkansas Code § 6-17-429(e)-(g), concerning educator preparation and professional development programs required under the Right to Read Act, are amended to read as follows:

(e) A provider of a state-approved educator preparation program, graduate program, or alternative preparation program shall include in its annual report to the Department of Education a description of the provider's program to prepare educators to teach reading using scientific reading instruction.

(f) By the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year, the department shall identify and create an approved list of materials, resources, and curriculum programs for public school districts and open-enrollment public charter schools that are supported by the science of reading and based on

instruction that is explicit, systematic, cumulative, and diagnostic, including without limitation:

- (1) Dyslexia programs that are evidence-based and:
  - (A) Aligned to structured literacy; or
  - (B) Grounded in the Orton-Gillingham methodology;
- (2) Evidence-based reading intervention programs; and
- (3) Evidence-based reading programs that are grounded in the science of reading.

(g)(1) By the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year, any public school district and open-enrollment public charter school purchasing a curriculum program shall choose a curriculum program from the department's approved list of curriculum programs created under subsection (f) of this section.

(2) A public school district or open-enrollment public charter school that chooses to purchase a curriculum program that is not from the department's approved list of curriculum programs shall submit the following to the department for approval of the alternative curriculum program:

- (A) A rationale for choosing the alternative curriculum program; and
- (B) Evidence-based research regarding the alternative curriculum program.

(h) By the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year, a public school district and an open-enrollment public charter school shall establish a professional development program as required by § 6-15-2914(b)(1)(B) that shall:

- (1) Include without limitation instruction based on the science of reading; and
- (2) Be provided on an annual basis after the professional development required under subdivision (c)(1) of this section is complete.

~~(f)~~(i)(1)(A) A public school district or an open-enrollment public charter school that employs an educator in violation of this section or that does not provide the professional development as required under this section shall be in violation of the Standards for Accreditation of Arkansas Public Schools and School Districts and may be placed in probationary status by the department.

- (B) A public school district or an open-enrollment public

charter school placed in probationary status under subdivision ~~(f)(1)(A)~~ (i)(1)(A) of this section shall send written notification to the parents of the students in the public school district of the reason for being placed in probationary status.

(2) A provider of a state-approved educator preparation program, graduate program, or alternative preparation program that does not comply with the requirements of this section may be subject to penalties up to and including having the provider's approval status revoked.

~~(g)(j)(1)~~ The department ~~is vested with the authority to and shall enforce:~~

(1) Enforce this section; and

~~(2) The department shall promulgate~~ Promulgate rules to implement this section.

(k) As used in this section:

(1) "Science of reading" means the study of the relationship between cognitive science and educational outcomes; and

(2) "Structured literacy" means an approach by which licensed personnel teach reading in an explicit, systematic, cumulative, and diagnostic manner.

**APPROVED: 2/11/19**