

Stricken language would be deleted from and underlined language would be added to present law.

State of Arkansas
95th General Assembly
Regular Session, 2025

A Bill

SENATE BILL 206

By: Senator Crowell

By: Representative R. Burkes

For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT TO AMEND THE RIGHT TO READ ACT; TO AMEND THE AMOUNT OF THE LITERACY TUTORING GRANT AWARDED UNDER THE RIGHT TO READ ACT; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Subtitle

TO AMEND THE RIGHT TO READ ACT; AND TO AMEND THE AMOUNT OF THE LITERACY TUTORING GRANT AWARDED UNDER THE RIGHT TO READ ACT.

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

SECTION 1. Arkansas Code § 6-17-429(b) and (c), concerning requirements for certain individuals to have proficient knowledge and skills to teach reading and obtain certain professional development under the Right to Read Act, are amended to read as follows:

(b)(1)(A) ~~No later than 2023, the~~ The following shall have proficient knowledge and skills to teach reading consistent with the best practices of scientific reading instruction:

(i) A person who completes a state-approved educator preparation program; and

(ii) A person seeking teacher licensure by reciprocity or by adding an endorsement.

(B) ~~No later than 2023, a~~ A person who completes a state-approved educator preparation program other than a teacher of elementary education program shall demonstrate an awareness of the best practices of scientific reading instruction.



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(2) ~~Beginning no later than the 2022-2023 school year, each~~ Each state-approved educator preparation program shall post on its website information describing its program to prepare teachers to teach reading using scientific reading instruction aligned with but not limited to the content measured by the stand-alone reading assessment adopted by the State Board of Education under § 6-17-402.

(c)(1) ~~Beginning with the 2018-2019 school year, a~~ Each 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~~ Each 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 2. Arkansas Code § 6-17-429(d)(2), concerning the requirement for teachers to demonstrate proficiency or awareness in the knowledge and practices of scientific reading instruction under the Right to Read Act, is amended to read as follows:

(2) All teachers ~~who begin employment in the 2023-2024 school year and each following school year~~ shall demonstrate proficiency or awareness in knowledge and practices of scientific reading instruction as is

applicable to their teaching position by completing the prescribed proficiency or awareness in knowledge and practices of scientific reading instruction credential either:

- (A) As a condition of licensure; or
- (B) Within one (1) year if the teacher is:
 - (i) Already licensed; or
 - (ii) Employed under a waiver from licensure.

SECTION 3. Arkansas Code § 6-17-429(f)-(h), concerning resources, curriculum programs, and professional development requirements under the Right to Read Act, are amended to read as follows:

(f) ~~By the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year, the~~ The division 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~~ A public school district and open-enrollment public charter school ~~purchasing that~~ purchases a curriculum program shall choose a curriculum program from the division'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 division's approved list of curriculum programs shall submit the following to the division 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.

(3) ~~By the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year, any~~ A public school district or open-enrollment public charter school that ~~is using~~ uses a curriculum program that is not from the division's approved list created under subsection (f) of this section shall notify all parents, legal guardians, and persons standing in loco parentis to students in writing and on the public school district's or open-enrollment public charter school's website.

(h) ~~By the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year, a~~ Each 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.

SECTION 4. Arkansas Code § 6-17-429(i)(3)(B)(i), concerning notification of a public school district's or an open-enrollment public charter school's violation of requirements under the Right to Read Act, is amended to read as follows:

(B)(i) ~~Beginning with the 2023-2024 school year, if~~ If the state board determines that a public school district or an open-enrollment public charter school has violated subdivision (i)(3)(A) of this section, the state board shall notify the public school district or the open-enrollment public charter school of its violation.

SECTION 5. Arkansas Code § 6-17-429(j)(2)(B), concerning the establishment, administration, and amount of a literacy tutoring grant under the Right to Read Act, is amended to read as follows:

(B) The literacy tutoring grant created under subdivision (j)(2)(A) of this section shall be in the amount of ~~five hundred dollars (\$500)~~ one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500) per eligible student per year on a first-come, first-served basis, with priority given to eligible students who are to be retained in grade three (3).

SECTION 6. Arkansas Code § 6-17-429(j)(2)(C)(vi), concerning

responsibilities of the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education to administer and implement the literacy tutoring grant under the Right to Read Act, is amended to read as follows:

(vi) Remit payment for services provided, up to a maximum of ~~five hundred dollars (\$500)~~ one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500) per eligible student per school year, which may be used for any of the following purposes designed to improve reading or literacy skills:

(a) Online or in-person, high-dosage tutoring services from a list of state-approved providers whose employees are trained in the science of reading and hold:

(1) Valid teaching certificates in either elementary education or reading; or

(2) Baccalaureate or graduate degrees in education, English, or another subject area indicative of expertise in reading and literacy; or

(b) Evidence-based digital literacy applications or software programs from a list of state-approved programs that are in alignment with the science of reading;