

STATE OF NEW YORK

9747

IN SENATE

April 2, 2026

Introduced by Sen. COONEY -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Education

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to early literacy education

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. Short title. This act shall be known and may be cited as
2 the "right to read act".

3 § 2. The education law is amended by adding a new section 819 to read
4 as follows:

5 § 819. Early literacy education. 1. For purposes of this section, the
6 following terms shall have the following meanings:

7 (a) "Evidence-based" means the instruction or item described is based
8 on rigorous, reliable, trustworthy and valid scientific evidence and has
9 demonstrated a record of success in addressing students' reading compe-
10 tency in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary develop-
11 ment, reading fluency and comprehension, including background knowledge
12 oral language and writing.

13 (b) "Phonemic awareness" means the ability to notice, think about and
14 manipulate individual sounds in spoken syllables and words.

15 (c) "Vocabulary development" means the process of acquiring new words.
16 "Vocabulary development" includes improving all areas of communication,
17 including listening, speaking, reading and writing which is directly
18 related to school achievement and is a strong predictor for reading
19 success.

20 (d) "Reading fluency" means the ability to read words, phrases and
21 sentences accurately, at an appropriate speed, and with expression.

22 (e) "Reading comprehension" means a function of word recognition
23 skills and language comprehension skills and shall include having suffi-
24 cient background information and vocabulary in order for the reader to
25 understand the words in front of them. "Reading comprehension" also
26 includes the active process that requires intentional thinking during
27 which meaning is constructed through interactions between the text and
28 reader. Comprehension skills are taught explicitly by demonstrating,

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 explaining, modeling and implementing specific cognitive strategies to
2 help beginning readers derive meaning through intentional, problem-solv-
3 ing thinking processes.

4 (f) "Three-cueing", or "meaning structure visual" (MSV) means a method
5 that teaches students to use meaning, structure and syntax, and visual
6 cues when attempting to read an unknown word.

7 (g) "Cultural responsiveness" means alignment with the New York state
8 culturally-responsive sustaining education (CRSE) framework.

9 (h) "Culturally-responsive sustaining education (CRSE) framework"
10 means a framework that helps educators create student-centered learning
11 environments that: affirm racial, linguistic and cultural identities;
12 prepare students for rigor and independent learning, develop students'
13 abilities to connect across lines of difference; elevate historically
14 marginalized voices; and empower students as agents of social change.

15 2. Commencing the school year following the publication of the
16 approved instructional programming as set forth in subdivision five of
17 this section, each school district shall provide all students in pre-
18 kindergarten through fifth grade programming and services necessary to
19 ensure to the greatest extent possible that students, as they progress
20 through pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, first, second, third, fourth
21 and fifth grades develop the necessary foundational reading skills to
22 enable them to master the academic standards and expectations applicable
23 to the sixth grade curriculum and beyond. The instructional programming
24 and services for teaching students to read must be evidence-based and
25 scientifically-based, must focus on reading competency in the areas of
26 phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency,
27 comprehension, including background knowledge, oral language and writ-
28 ing, oral skill development, and must align with CRSE framework.
29 Districts shall ensure that all early literacy programming and services
30 are part of an aligned and coherent plan designed to improve student
31 reading outcomes in grades pre-kindergarten through five.

32 3. Commencing the school year following the publication of the
33 approved professional development programs as set forth in subdivision
34 seven of this section, every school district shall ensure that all
35 teachers employed to teach pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, first,
36 second, third, fourth and fifth grades, including teachers with multiple
37 subject and education specialist teaching credentials, possess adequate
38 capabilities to teach literacy using evidence-based instruction. Teach-
39 ers employed by a district before or on the effective date of this
40 section may meet this requirement by presenting evidence of their profi-
41 ciency in reading instruction through completion of professional learn-
42 ing courses including, but not limited to, evidence-based means of
43 teaching foundational reading skills in print concepts, phonological
44 awareness, phonics and word recognition, comprehension and supporting
45 reading fluency for all pupils, including establishing tiered supports
46 for students with reading difficulties including those with character-
47 istics of dyslexia and dysgraphia, English learners and students with
48 exceptional needs. Teachers employed by a district after the effective
49 date of this section shall meet this requirement by successfully
50 completing at least thirty-five hours of evidence-based training in
51 reading instruction in accordance with subdivision seven of this
52 section. Alternatively, current and future educators can provide
53 evidence that their teacher preparation program adequately covered all
54 of these topics during their enrollment. To the extent possible, school
55 leaders of elementary schools should also meet the requirements of this
56 section.

4. The department shall provide grants to BOCES and/or school districts to hire onsite literacy coaches trained in the science of reading, focusing on high need districts with at least seventy-five percent of third graders reading below proficiency based on the two thousand twenty-four--two thousand twenty-five New York state English language arts assessment.

5. Following consultation with the city school districts of the cities of New York, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and Yonkers, the department shall develop a list of approved, evidence-based curricula that meets the definition set forth in paragraph (a) of subdivision one of this section. Such list shall be posted on the department's website and shall at a minimum be updated annually. Such list shall not include instructional programming or materials that employ three-cueing or meaning structure visual (MSV). Approved curricula shall at a minimum:

(a) have been proven to accelerate student progress in attaining reading competency;

(b) provide explicit and systematic skill development in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, comprehension and reading fluency, including oral skill development;

(c) be evidence-based and be aligned with the preschool through elementary and secondary education standards for reading adopted by the department;

(d) include evidence-based valid and reliable assessments that provide initial and ongoing analysis of a student's progress in attaining reading competency at least three times per year, beginning in kindergarten; and

(e) include texts on core academic content to assist students in maintaining or meeting grade-appropriate proficiency levels in academic subjects in addition to reading, while ensuring alignment with the state's CRSE framework.

6. The department shall develop a competitive grant program that allows districts to replace non-evidence-based curricula with curricula from the approved department list of evidence-based curricula. Funds from this grant may be used to provide professional learning for educators to effectively implement the new evidence-based curricula.

7. (a) The department shall develop a list of approved professional development programs that are evidence-based and provide opportunities for practical application of evidence-based literacy instruction in the classroom. Programs should address significant reading deficiencies and apply intervention strategies for struggling students including students with characteristics of dyslexia and dysgraphia, in addition to teaching general, evidence-based literacy instructional approaches for all students. The department shall include on such list the approved professional development programs that are available online. Such list shall be posted on the department's website and shall at a minimum be updated annually. The department shall ensure that each professional development program included on such list:

(i) is focused on or aligns with the science of reading, and is comprehensive and research-based, including the following:

(1) the study of organized, systematic, explicit skills including phonemic awareness, direct, systematic, explicit phonics, and decoding strategies;

(2) a strong literature, language and comprehension component encompassing both oral and written language;

(3) ongoing screening techniques to inform teaching;

(4) early intervention measures; and

1 (5) guided practice in a clinical setting;

2 (ii) includes rigorous evaluations of learning both throughout and at
3 the conclusion of the course, which a participant must pass to success-
4 fully complete the course; and

5 (iii) aligns with the approved instructional programming published in
6 accordance with subdivision five of this section.

7 (b) For purposes of this subdivision, "direct, systematic, explicit
8 phonics" means phonemic awareness, spelling patterns, the direct
9 instruction of sound/symbol codes and practice in connected text, and
10 the relationship of direct, systematic, explicit phonics.

11 8. (a) Every school district, at least three times per year, shall
12 give the parent or guardian of each student in pre-kindergarten through
13 grade five a progress report about such student's literacy progress. For
14 pre-kindergarten students, such report shall include an assessment of
15 cognitive abilities, including executive function, and social-emotional
16 learning. For kindergarten through grade five, such progress report
17 shall include information about the following:

18 (i) the student's reading proficiency as measured by district reading
19 assessments and screeners;

20 (ii) information about the literacy programming and services being
21 provided to the student, including curriculum; and

22 (iii) list of evidence-based home and community resources that fami-
23 lies and caregivers can use to support their child's reading and
24 language development.

25 (b) The department shall develop a progress report template for
26 districts to meet the requirements set forth pursuant to this subdivi-
27 sion.

28 9. (a) By September fifteenth of the school year subsequent to the
29 school year school districts are required to commence providing the
30 programming and services set forth in subdivision two of this section,
31 and on an annual basis thereafter, the commissioner shall submit a
32 report to the legislative committees with jurisdiction over pre-kinder-
33 garten through grade twelve education summarizing, at minimum, the
34 state's performance on each of the following metrics:

35 (i) students' literacy and reading progression using state growth
36 measures. The commissioner shall analyze the state's progress in regard
37 to students' reading and literacy using the state's educational assess-
38 ment system. The system shall measure individual students' educational
39 growth in the area of reading based on indicators of current achievement
40 growth, and each individual student's growth must be shown relative to
41 the student's prior achievement. Indicators of achievement and prior
42 achievement shall be based on highly reliable statewide assessments. The
43 commissioner shall include aggregated data and disaggregated data show-
44 ing educational growth by school site, grade and race/ethnicity;

45 (ii) by school site and grade, the percentage of teachers required to
46 possess capabilities in research-based literacy instruction as specified
47 under subdivision three of this section that have successfully completed
48 training or otherwise demonstrated knowledge in evidence-based literacy
49 instruction;

50 (iii) by school site and grade, the names of the approved professional
51 development programs in accordance with subdivision seven of this
52 section used by teachers; and

53 (iv) by school site and grade, the names of the approved instructional
54 programming and supporting materials as specified under subdivision five
55 of this section that were used at the beginning and end of the school
56 year.

1 (b) The department shall publish this information on its website in a
2 clear and accessible format.

3 § 3. Section 3004 of the education law is amended by adding a new
4 subdivision 7 to read as follows:

5 7. a. The commissioner shall prescribe regulations requiring that all
6 persons applying on or after September second, two thousand twenty-six
7 for a teaching certification or license valid for service in the early
8 childhood or elementary grades shall, in addition to all the other
9 certification or licensing requirements, have completed course work or
10 training in evidence-based literacy instruction that meets the require-
11 ments set forth in subdivision seven of section eight hundred nineteen
12 of this chapter.

13 b. The commissioner shall ensure that teacher preparation insti-
14 tutions, starting in the two thousand twenty-six--two thousand twenty-
15 seven academic year, include evidence-based literacy instruction that
16 meets the requirements set forth in subdivision seven of section eight
17 hundred nineteen of this chapter.

18 § 4. This act shall take effect immediately.