



THE GENERAL COURT OF MASSACHUSETTS  
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON, 02133-1053

## Conference Report: An Act Relative to Teacher Preparation and Student Literacy *Fact Sheet and Highlights*

The Legislature's agreement on comprehensive literacy reforms will modernize and strengthen Massachusetts' approach to early literacy by establishing clear statewide standards for evidence-based reading instruction, ensuring access to high-quality K-3 curricula, enhancing educator training and support, and creating new reporting and accountability systems.

The compromise legislation advances early literacy by requiring consistent statewide literacy screening, improving educator preparation, and supporting districts in adopting proven instructional materials and practices.

### **Leading on High-Quality Literacy Education**

---

***Strengthens the Standard for Reading and Language Curriculum.*** Requires school districts to select K-3 reading curricula that meet guidelines set by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) restricted to evidence-based literacy instruction and featuring phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and phonemic awareness. Ensures that every curriculum is backed by scientific research and has a demonstrated record of success in increasing student competency in reading ability, vocabulary, oral language, and comprehension.

***Offers Free Curriculum, List of Options to Districts.*** Requires DESE to make a free, complete, high-quality K-3 literacy curriculum directly available to Massachusetts school districts. DESE has already designed a curriculum for grades K-2 that is fully aligned with this legislation's learning standards and is structured to improve early learning instruction; under this legislation, DESE would extend the curriculum through the 3rd grade. Requires DESE to continue its practice of maintaining a list of other evidence-based K-3 literacy curriculum options that is kept up to date with current best practices and new curriculum releases. Sets a deadline—six months after the bill is signed into law—for DESE to develop its list of curricula and to notify districts of the free curriculum that will be available by the 2027-2028 school year.

***Sets Timeline for Implementation.*** Gives school districts until the start of the 2027-2028 school year to adopt a K-3 literacy curriculum that meets the new framework, or to secure approval from DESE for a waiver for a curriculum that is evidence based but not yet approved by DESE.

***Removes Unproven Teaching Methods.*** Prohibits curricula that are not evidence-based and curricula that rely on implicit or incidental word reading strategies, including MSV/three cueing.

### **Ensuring Flexibility and Accountability**

---

***Offers Reasonable Local Waivers.*** Allows school districts to apply for a waiver for DESE's permission to utilize a K-3 literacy curriculum that does not appear on the agency's list, as long as the district can demonstrate the curriculum's evidence-based effectiveness.

***Checks Students' Progress.*** Requires school districts to assess students' reading ability and review their achievement progress at least twice per school year from kindergarten to 3rd grade. For students significantly below benchmarks,

schools would be required to notify their families within 30 days of the screening result—along with a plan for addressing the student’s needs.

***Supports Dyslexia Screening.*** Codifies dyslexia and literacy screening requirements and requires schools to develop screening protocols for potential neurological learning disabilities, including dyslexia, and annually report their screening practices.

***Publishes Relevant Data.*** Tracks district and state progress by requiring DESE to annually report data related to districts’ use of literacy curricula and instructional practices. DESE would be required to aggregate and publish statewide data annually.

***Tracks Local Compliance.*** Integrates literacy standards into the current plans that districts are required to develop every three years. District improvement plans would be required to address implementation and compliance with the new literacy requirements.

### **Supporting the Commonwealth’s Educators**

---

***Offers Professional Development Tools.*** Extends state support to local educators by requiring DESE to offer tools and resources to help districts provide professional development that follows evidence-based reading curricula for K-3 literacy teachers, paraprofessionals, and reading specialists.

***Tests Out Teaching Apprenticeships.*** The bill updates a 2024 pilot program to support paid teaching apprenticeships in high-needs districts, through which DESE is directed to support teachers’ wages and essential expenses to ensure broad participation. DESE must report on outcomes, licensure pass rates, hiring, student impact, and the feasibility of expanding the program statewide.

***Ensures Qualified Educator Preparation.*** Reflects the new reading curriculum standards in the state’s professional certification process for educators. Requires the Board of Education’s guidelines for educator preparation programs to align with evidence-based literacy instruction.