

TECHNICAL REVIEW:	No
COMMITTEE STATEMENT:	ASSEMBLY: Yes Appropriations
	SENATE: No

(Audio archived recordings of the committee meetings, corresponding to the date of the committee statement, *may possibly* be found at www.njleg.state.nj.us)

FLOOR AMENDMENT STATEMENT:	No
LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE:	Yes 06/28/2024 07/01/2024

VETO MESSAGE:	No
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GOVERNOR'S PRESS RELEASE ON SIGNING:	Yes
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REPORTS:	No
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HEARINGS:	No
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NEWSPAPER ARTICLES:	No
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CL/MM

Title 18A.
Chapter 6.
Article 24. (New)
Student Reading
Literacy
Instruction
§§1-9
C.18A:6-142
to 18A:6-150
§10
Note

P.L. 2024, CHAPTER 52, *approved August 13, 2024*
Senate Committee Substitute for
Senate, Nos. 2644, 2645, and 2646

1 **AN ACT** concerning student literacy and supplementing chapter 6 of
2 Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

3
4 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
5 *of New Jersey:*

6
7 1. As used in this act:

8 “Foundational literacy instruction” means an evidence-based
9 reading instruction practice that addresses the acquisition of
10 language, phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics and
11 spelling, fluency, vocabulary, oral language, and comprehension
12 that may be differentiated to meet the needs of individual students.

13 “Reading proficiency” means the level at which a student scores
14 on a universal literacy screening, diagnostic assessment,
15 standardized summative assessment, or progress monitoring in
16 relation to grade-level expectations.

17 “Screening period” means the time period required to conduct a
18 universal literacy screening and determine screening results.

19 “Universal literacy screening” means a process conducted to
20 gather information about the literacy skills of a student to identify
21 or predict a student’s risk of experiencing reading difficulties in
22 order to inform instruction, differentiate targeted intervention, and
23 determine if additional assessment is required.

24

25 2. a. There is established in the Department of Education a
26 Working Group on Student Literacy. The purpose of the working
27 group shall be to provide recommendations to the department
28 regarding the implementation of evidence-based literacy strategies,
29 appropriate and reliable instruments for a universal literacy
30 screening, and high-quality literacy instructional materials.

31 b. The working group shall consist of members appointed by
32 the Commissioner of Education. The working group shall be
33 composed of members representing the northern, central, and

1 southern regions of the State, and shall include, but not be limited
2 to:

3 (1) at least one member who is a parent of a student enrolled in
4 a school district with expertise on how to meaningfully include
5 parents on this topic; and

6 (2) literacy experts and practitioners with demonstrated success
7 implementing evidenced-based literacy strategies, including:

8 (a) at least one member who has expertise working with
9 students with disabilities;

10 (b) at least one member who has expertise working with
11 multilingual learners;

12 (c) at least one member who is a current practitioner in grades
13 preschool through grade three with specialized experience in
14 foundational literacy instruction and intervention;

15 (d) at least one member who has expertise working with
16 students with dyslexia;

17 (e) at least one member who is a certified school library media
18 specialist;

19 (f) at least one member who is a representative from the public
20 charter schools community; and

21 (g) at least one member who is a certified speech-language
22 specialist.

23 c. Appointments to the working group shall be made within 60
24 days after the effective date of this act. The working group shall
25 organize as soon as practicable, but no later than the 30th day after
26 the members are appointed. Vacancies in the membership of the
27 working group shall be filled in the same manner as the original
28 appointments were made.

29

30 3. a. It shall be the duty of the working group to examine and
31 make recommendations to the Department of Education regarding
32 the implementation of evidence-based literacy strategies,
33 appropriate and reliable instruments for a universal literacy
34 screening, and high-quality literacy instructional materials.

35 b. The recommendations shall include, but not be limited to, an
36 examination of:

37 (1) the body of research related to universal literacy screenings
38 and literacy instruction materials;

39 (2) ways to expand professional learning for universal literacy
40 screenings;

41 (3) acceptable and reliable instruments for conducting universal
42 literacy screenings, which shall consider: constructs measured;
43 technical adequacy; attention to linguistic diversity; and
44 administration usability and support; and

45 (4) State and national best practices, regulations, and policies
46 that support successful foundational literacy instruction,
47 assessment, and intervention.

1 4. a. The Department of Education shall, after consideration of
2 the recommendations provided by the working group pursuant to
3 section 3 of this act, develop and publish guidance for use by school
4 districts beginning with the 2025-2026 school year regarding:

5 (1) acceptable and reliable instruments for conducting a
6 universal literacy screening;

7 (2) high-quality literacy instructional materials;

8 (3) best practices for the frequency of screening students in
9 grades kindergarten through three, and grades four through 12; and

10 (4) data analysis strategies for high-quality literacy instruction
11 and intervention.

12 b. The department shall disseminate the guidance developed
13 pursuant to this section to school districts.
14

15 5. a. A school district shall, at least twice annually, conduct a
16 literacy screening of each student enrolled in kindergarten through
17 grade three to determine a student's reading proficiency using an
18 acceptable and reliable instrument for a universal literacy screening
19 that complies with the guidance issued by the department pursuant
20 to section 4 of this act, within the limit of funds appropriated or
21 otherwise made available to the district for this purpose.

22 b. Following the screening conducted pursuant to subsection a.
23 of this section, a school district shall provide to the student any
24 necessary supports as determined by the district, which may include
25 conducting an additional screening. Supports shall be provided in a
26 manner consistent with the district's intervention and referral
27 services as required pursuant to State Board of Education
28 regulations.
29

30 6. a. A school district shall provide written notification to a
31 parent or guardian of a student's results of the universal literacy
32 screening within 30 days of the close of the initial screening period
33 conducted pursuant to subsection a. of section 5 of this act. The
34 notification shall include the identification of a student's literacy
35 screening score with a comparison to grade-level norms, and
36 information concerning the range of intervention and referral
37 services supports, including but not limited to, reading intervention
38 supports available in the district to assist the student in meeting
39 grade-level reading proficiency goals.

40 b. A school district shall report universal literacy screening
41 data to the department in a manner and frequency determined by the
42 Commissioner of Education, in consultation with the working group
43 established pursuant to section 2 of this act.

44 c. Nothing in this section shall be construed to preclude the
45 screening requirements of P.L.2013, c.210 (C.18A:40-5.1 et seq.),
46 or any other screening requirement of school districts established by
47 any other law or regulation.

1 7. The department shall establish an online resource center to
2 aid school districts in the selection of evidence-based, high-quality
3 literacy instructional materials, including data analysis tools, as part
4 of the school district's implementation of the New Jersey Student
5 Learning Standards in English Language Arts. The online resource
6 center shall be consistent with the guidance developed by the
7 department pursuant to section 4 of this act.

8
9 8. a. The Department of Education shall establish a
10 professional development program regarding evidence-based
11 foundational literacy instruction, which shall be available to all
12 school districts at no cost. The program shall be made available to:
13 teaching staff members serving students in preschool through grade
14 six, including school library media specialists serving students in
15 kindergarten through grade six, individuals serving multilingual
16 learners and students with disabilities, and individuals holding an
17 educational services certificate with a reading specialist
18 endorsement, individuals holding an educational services certificate
19 with an early literacy specialist endorsement, and individuals
20 holding an educational services certificate with a speech-language
21 specialist endorsement; and school administrators.

22 b. The program shall be differentiated by grade band. The
23 program shall include, but is not limited to:

24 (1) for teaching staff members serving students in preschool
25 through grade three:

- 26 (a) orthography;
- 27 (b) phonological and phonemic awareness;
- 28 (c) phonics;
- 29 (d) fluency; and
- 30 (e) vocabulary and comprehension; and

31 (2) for teaching staff members serving students in grades four
32 through six:

- 33 (a) the neurobiology of reading;
- 34 (b) advanced word study;
- 35 (c) fluency; and
- 36 (d) comprehension; and

37 (3) for school administrators: the design and implementation of
38 high-quality literacy instruction in preschool through grade six.

39
40 9. a. A school district shall use the professional development
41 program established pursuant to section 8 of this act or any other
42 evidence-based literacy instructional material that complies with the
43 requirements of section 8 of this act to annually provide
44 professional development to all teaching staff members serving
45 students in preschool through grade six, including school library
46 media specialists serving students in kindergarten through grade
47 six, individuals serving multilingual learners and students with
48 disabilities, individuals holding an educational services certificate

1 with a reading specialist endorsement, individuals holding an
2 educational services certificate with an early literacy specialist
3 endorsement, and individuals holding an educational services
4 certificate with a speech-language specialist endorsement.

5 b. A school district shall use the professional development
6 program established pursuant to section 8 of this act or any other
7 evidence-based literacy instruction material that complies with the
8 requirements of section 8 of this act to annually provide training to
9 school administrators on the design and implementation of high-
10 quality literacy instruction in schools.

11 c. A school district may utilize the professional development
12 instruction provided pursuant to section 2 of P.L.2013, c.105
13 (C.18A:6-131) to satisfy the requirements of this section, provided
14 the professional development instruction complies with the
15 requirements of this section.

16

17 10. Sections 1 through 4 of this act shall take effect
18 immediately. Sections 5 through 7 of this act shall take effect
19 immediately and shall first apply in the 2025-2026 school year
20 provided the guidance required pursuant to section 4 of this act has
21 been issued, except the Commissioner of Education may take any
22 anticipatory administrative action in advance as necessary for the
23 implementation of the provisions of this act. Sections 8 and 9 shall
24 take effect on July 1, 2025.

25

26

27

28

29 _____
30 Requires DOE to establish working group on student literacy;
31 mandates universal literacy screenings for kindergarten through
32 grade three students; requires professional development for certain
school district employees.

CHAPTER 52

AN ACT concerning student literacy and supplementing chapter 6 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

C.18A:6-142 Definitions.

1. As used in this act:

“Foundational literacy instruction” means an evidence-based reading instruction practice that addresses the acquisition of language, phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics and spelling, fluency, vocabulary, oral language, and comprehension that may be differentiated to meet the needs of individual students.

“Reading proficiency” means the level at which a student scores on a universal literacy screening, diagnostic assessment, standardized summative assessment, or progress monitoring in relation to grade-level expectations.

“Screening period” means the time period required to conduct a universal literacy screening and determine screening results.

“Universal literacy screening” means a process conducted to gather information about the literacy skills of a student to identify or predict a student’s risk of experiencing reading difficulties in order to inform instruction, differentiate targeted intervention, and determine if additional assessment is required.

C.18A:6-143 "Working Group on Student Literacy" established.

2. a. There is established in the Department of Education a Working Group on Student Literacy. The purpose of the working group shall be to provide recommendations to the department regarding the implementation of evidence-based literacy strategies, appropriate and reliable instruments for a universal literacy screening, and high-quality literacy instructional materials.

b. The working group shall consist of members appointed by the Commissioner of Education. The working group shall be composed of members representing the northern, central, and southern regions of the State, and shall include, but not be limited to:

(1) at least one member who is a parent of a student enrolled in a school district with expertise on how to meaningfully include parents on this topic; and

(2) literacy experts and practitioners with demonstrated success implementing evidenced-based literacy strategies, including:

(a) at least one member who has expertise working with students with disabilities;

(b) at least one member who has expertise working with multilingual learners;

(c) at least one member who is a current practitioner in grades preschool through grade three with specialized experience in foundational literacy instruction and intervention;

(d) at least one member who has expertise working with students with dyslexia;

(e) at least one member who is a certified school library media specialist;

(f) at least one member who is a representative from the public charter schools community; and

(g) at least one member who is a certified speech-language specialist.

c. Appointments to the working group shall be made within 60 days after the effective date of this act. The working group shall organize as soon as practicable, but no later than the 30th day after the members are appointed. Vacancies in the membership of the working group shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointments were made.

C.18A:6-144 Working Group on Student Literacy duties, recommendations.

3. a. It shall be the duty of the working group to examine and make recommendations to the Department of Education regarding the implementation of evidence-based literacy strategies, appropriate and reliable instruments for a universal literacy screening, and high-quality literacy instructional materials.

b. The recommendations shall include, but not be limited to, an examination of:

- (1) the body of research related to universal literacy screenings and literacy instruction materials;
- (2) ways to expand professional learning for universal literacy screenings;
- (3) acceptable and reliable instruments for conducting universal literacy screenings, which shall consider: constructs measured, technical adequacy, attention to linguistic diversity, and administration usability and support; and
- (4) State and national best practices, regulations, and policies that support successful foundational literacy instruction, assessment, and intervention.

C.18A:6-145 Develop, publish guidance, literacy.

4. a. The Department of Education shall, after consideration of the recommendations provided by the working group pursuant to section 3 of this act, develop and publish guidance for use by school districts beginning with the 2025-2026 school year regarding:

- (1) acceptable and reliable instruments for conducting a universal literacy screening;
- (2) high-quality literacy instructional materials;
- (3) best practices for the frequency of screening students in grades kindergarten through three and grades four through 12; and
- (4) data analysis strategies for high-quality literacy instruction and intervention.

b. The department shall disseminate the guidance developed pursuant to this section to school districts.

C.18A:6-146 Universal literacy screening.

5. a. A school district shall, at least twice annually, conduct a literacy screening of each student enrolled in kindergarten through grade three to determine a student's reading proficiency using an acceptable and reliable instrument for a universal literacy screening that complies with the guidance issued by the department pursuant to section 4 of this act within the limit of funds appropriated or otherwise made available to the district for this purpose.

b. Following the screening conducted pursuant to subsection a. of this section, a school district shall provide to the student any necessary supports as determined by the district, which may include conducting an additional screening. Supports shall be provided in a manner consistent with the district's intervention and referral services as required pursuant to State Board of Education regulations.

C.18A:6-147 Written notification, student results, universal literacy screening.

6. a. A school district shall provide written notification to a parent or guardian of a student's results of the universal literacy screening within 30 days of the close of the initial screening period conducted pursuant to subsection a. of section 5 of this act. The notification shall include the identification of a student's literacy screening score with a comparison to grade-level norms and information concerning the range of intervention and referral services supports, including, but not limited to, reading intervention supports available in the district to assist the student in meeting grade-level reading proficiency goals.

b. A school district shall report universal literacy screening data to the department in a manner and frequency determined by the Commissioner of Education in consultation with the working group established pursuant to section 2 of this act.

c. Nothing in this section shall be construed to preclude the screening requirements of P.L.2013, c.210 (C.18A:40-5.1 et seq.) or any other screening requirement of school districts established by any other law or regulation.

C.18A:6-148 Online resource center established.

7. The department shall establish an online resource center to aid school districts in the selection of evidence-based, high-quality literacy instructional materials, including data analysis tools, as part of the school district's implementation of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards in English Language Arts. The online resource center shall be consistent with the guidance developed by the department pursuant to section 4 of this act.

C.18A:6-149 Professional development program established, literacy instruction, Department of Education.

8. a. The Department of Education shall establish a professional development program regarding evidence-based foundational literacy instruction, which shall be available to all school districts at no cost. The program shall be made available to: teaching staff members serving students in preschool through grade six, including school library media specialists serving students in kindergarten through grade six; individuals serving multilingual learners and students with disabilities; and individuals holding an educational services certificate with a reading specialist endorsement, individuals holding an educational services certificate with an early literacy specialist endorsement, and individuals holding an educational services certificate with a speech-language specialist endorsement; and school administrators.

b. The program shall be differentiated by grade band. The program shall include, but is not limited to:

(1) for teaching staff members serving students in preschool through grade three:

- (a) orthography;
- (b) phonological and phonemic awareness;
- (c) phonics;
- (d) fluency; and
- (e) vocabulary and comprehension;

(2) for teaching staff members serving students in grades four through six:

- (a) the neurobiology of reading;
- (b) advanced word study;
- (c) fluency; and
- (d) comprehension; and

(3) for school administrators: the design and implementation of high-quality literacy instruction in preschool through grade six.

C.18A:6-150 Professional development program, literacy, teaching staff.

9. a. A school district shall use the professional development program established pursuant to section 8 of this act or any other evidence-based literacy instructional material that complies with the requirements of section 8 of this act to annually provide professional development to all teaching staff members serving students in preschool through grade six, including school library media specialists serving students in kindergarten through grade six, individuals serving multilingual learners and students with disabilities, individuals holding an educational

services certificate with a reading specialist endorsement, individuals holding an educational services certificate with an early literacy specialist endorsement, and individuals holding an educational services certificate with a speech-language specialist endorsement.

b. A school district shall use the professional development program established pursuant to section 8 of this act or any other evidence-based literacy instruction material that complies with the requirements of section 8 of this act to annually provide training to school administrators on the design and implementation of high-quality literacy instruction in schools.

c. A school district may utilize the professional development instruction provided pursuant to section 2 of P.L.2013, c.105 (C.18A:6-131) to satisfy the requirements of this section, provided the professional development instruction complies with the requirements of this section.

10. Sections 1 through 4 of this act shall take effect immediately. Sections 5 through 7 of this act shall take effect immediately and shall first apply in the 2025-2026 school year provided the guidance required pursuant to section 4 of this act has been issued, except the Commissioner of Education may take any anticipatory administrative action in advance as necessary for the implementation of the provisions of this act. Sections 8 and 9 shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

Approved August 13, 2024.

SENATE, No. 2644

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
221st LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 8, 2024

Sponsored by:

Senator M. TERESA RUIZ

District 29 (Essex and Hudson)

Senator VIN GOPAL

District 11 (Monmouth)

Co-Sponsored by:

Senator Singleton

SYNOPSIS

Requires school districts to implement reading intervention program for students in certain grades as part of implementation of New Jersey Student Learning Standards in English Language Arts.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/17/2024)

1 AN ACT concerning early literacy and supplementing chapter 35 of
2 Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

3

4 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
5 of New Jersey:

6

7 1. a. As used in this section:

8 “Multi-tiered system of supports” means a systemic approach
9 that addresses the academic and social-emotional needs of all
10 students at various levels of intensity. Through the multi-tiered
11 system of supports, a teacher shall provide high-quality,
12 scientifically-based or evidence-based instruction and intervention
13 that is matched to student needs.

14 “Reading deficiency” means scoring below grade level or being
15 determined to be at risk of scoring below grade level based on a
16 screening assessment.

17 b. A school district shall offer a reading intervention program to
18 students in grades kindergarten through three as part of the district’s
19 implementation of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards in
20 English Language Arts. The program shall be offered to a student
21 who exhibits a reading deficiency as determined by a Commissioner
22 of Education-approved assessment.

23 c. The reading intervention program shall:

24 (1) utilize a data-driven multi-tiered system of supports;

25 (2) provide explicit and systemic instruction in phonological
26 awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, as
27 applicable;

28 (3) monitor the progress of a student’s reading skills throughout
29 the school year; and

30 (4) be adjusted throughout the year, if necessary, according to
31 student needs.

32 d. School districts shall adopt high-quality instructional materials
33 grounded in scientifically based reading research to implement the
34 program. The Department of Education shall provide school
35 districts with age-appropriate materials designed to implement the
36 provisions of this subsection.

37 e. The department shall develop and implement a process to
38 evaluate the reading intervention program required pursuant to
39 subsection b. of this section.

40

41 2. This act shall take effect immediately and shall first apply to
42 the first full school year following the date of enactment.

43

44

45

STATEMENT

46

47 This bill requires that a school district offer a reading
48 intervention program to students in grades kindergarten through

1 three. The reading intervention program is to: (1) utilize a data-
2 driven multi-tiered system of supports; (2) provide explicit and
3 systemic instruction in phonological awareness, phonics, fluency,
4 vocabulary, and comprehension, as applicable; (3) monitor the
5 progress of a student's reading skills throughout the school year;
6 and (4) be adjusted throughout the year, if necessary, according to
7 student needs.

8 The bill also requires the department to provide school districts
9 with age-appropriate materials designed to implement the program.
10 Under the bill, school districts are required to adopt high-quality
11 instructional materials grounded in scientifically-based reading
12 research to implement the program. The department is to provide
13 school districts with age-appropriate materials designed to
14 implement the provisions of this subsection.

15 The bill also requires the department to develop and implement a
16 process to evaluate the reading intervention program required under
17 the bill.

SENATE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR
SENATE, Nos. 2644, 2645, and 2646

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
221st LEGISLATURE

ADOPTED JUNE 20, 2024

Sponsored by:

Senator M. TERESA RUIZ

District 29 (Essex and Hudson)

Senator VIN GOPAL

District 11 (Monmouth)

Assemblywoman CARMEN THERESA MORALES

District 34 (Essex)

Assemblywoman PAMELA R. LAMPITT

District 6 (Burlington and Camden)

Assemblywoman ANNETTE QUIJANO

District 20 (Union)

Assemblywoman ELIANA PINTOR MARIN

District 29 (Essex and Hudson)

Co-Sponsored by:

**Senators Singleton, McKnight, Burgess, Turner, Moriarty, Testa,
Assemblywomen Flynn, Reynolds-Jackson, Lopez, Katz, Assemblyman
Rodriguez, Assemblywoman Murphy, Assemblyman Miller,
Assemblywomen Bagolie, Speight, Swain and Assemblyman Tully**

SYNOPSIS

Requires DOE to establish working group on student literacy; mandates universal literacy screenings for kindergarten through grade three students; requires professional development for certain school district employees.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Substitute as adopted by the Senate Education Committee.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/28/2024)

1 AN ACT concerning student literacy and supplementing chapter 6 of
2 Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

3

4 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
5 of New Jersey:

6

7 1. As used in this act:

8 “Foundational literacy instruction” means an evidence-based
9 reading instruction practice that addresses the acquisition of
10 language, phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics and
11 spelling, fluency, vocabulary, oral language, and comprehension
12 that may be differentiated to meet the needs of individual students.

13 “Reading proficiency” means the level at which a student scores
14 on a universal literacy screening, diagnostic assessment,
15 standardized summative assessment, or progress monitoring in
16 relation to grade-level expectations.

17 “Screening period” means the time period required to conduct a
18 universal literacy screening and determine screening results.

19 “Universal literacy screening” means a process conducted to
20 gather information about the literacy skills of a student to identify
21 or predict a student’s risk of experiencing reading difficulties in
22 order to inform instruction, differentiate targeted intervention, and
23 determine if additional assessment is required.

24

25 2. a. There is established in the Department of Education a
26 Working Group on Student Literacy. The purpose of the working
27 group shall be to provide recommendations to the department
28 regarding the implementation of evidence-based literacy strategies,
29 appropriate and reliable instruments for a universal literacy
30 screening, and high-quality literacy instructional materials.

31 b. The working group shall consist of members appointed by
32 the Commissioner of Education. The working group shall be
33 composed of members representing the northern, central, and
34 southern regions of the State, and shall include, but not be limited
35 to:

36 (1) at least one member who is a parent of a student enrolled in
37 a school district with expertise on how to meaningfully include
38 parents on this topic; and

39 (2) literacy experts and practitioners with demonstrated success
40 implementing evidenced-based literacy strategies, including:

41 (a) at least one member who has expertise working with
42 students with disabilities;

43 (b) at least one member who has expertise working with
44 multilingual learners;

45 (c) at least one member who is a current practitioner in grades
46 preschool through grade three with specialized experience in
47 foundational literacy instruction and intervention;

1 (d) at least one member who has expertise working with
2 students with dyslexia;

3 (e) at least one member who is a certified school library media
4 specialist;

5 (f) at least one member who is a representative from the public
6 charter schools community; and

7 (g) at least one member who is a certified speech-language
8 specialist.

9 c. Appointments to the working group shall be made within 60
10 days after the effective date of this act. The working group shall
11 organize as soon as practicable, but no later than the 30th day after
12 the members are appointed. Vacancies in the membership of the
13 working group shall be filled in the same manner as the original
14 appointments were made.

15

16 3. a. It shall be the duty of the working group to examine and
17 make recommendations to the Department of Education regarding
18 the implementation of evidence-based literacy strategies,
19 appropriate and reliable instruments for a universal literacy
20 screening, and high-quality literacy instructional materials.

21 b. The recommendations shall include, but not be limited to, an
22 examination of:

23 (1) the body of research related to universal literacy screenings
24 and literacy instruction materials;

25 (2) ways to expand professional learning for universal literacy
26 screenings;

27 (3) acceptable and reliable instruments for conducting universal
28 literacy screenings, which shall consider: constructs measured;
29 technical adequacy; attention to linguistic diversity; and
30 administration usability and support; and

31 (4) State and national best practices, regulations, and policies
32 that support successful foundational literacy instruction,
33 assessment, and intervention.

34

35 4. a. The Department of Education shall, after consideration of
36 the recommendations provided by the working group pursuant to
37 section 3 of this act, develop and publish guidance for use by school
38 districts beginning with the 2025-2026 school year regarding:

39 (1) acceptable and reliable instruments for conducting a
40 universal literacy screening;

41 (2) high-quality literacy instructional materials;

42 (3) best practices for the frequency of screening students in
43 grades kindergarten through three, and grades four through 12; and

44 (4) data analysis strategies for high-quality literacy instruction
45 and intervention.

46 b. The department shall disseminate the guidance developed
47 pursuant to this section to school districts.

1 5. a. A school district shall, at least twice annually, conduct a
2 literacy screening of each student enrolled in kindergarten through
3 grade three to determine a student's reading proficiency using an
4 acceptable and reliable instrument for a universal literacy screening
5 that complies with the guidance issued by the department pursuant
6 to section 4 of this act, within the limit of funds appropriated or
7 otherwise made available to the district for this purpose.

8 b. Following the screening conducted pursuant to subsection a.
9 of this section, a school district shall provide to the student any
10 necessary supports as determined by the district, which may include
11 conducting an additional screening. Supports shall be provided in a
12 manner consistent with the district's intervention and referral
13 services as required pursuant to State Board of Education
14 regulations.

15
16 6. a. A school district shall provide written notification to a
17 parent or guardian of a student's results of the universal literacy
18 screening within 30 days of the close of the initial screening period
19 conducted pursuant to subsection a. of section 5 of this act. The
20 notification shall include the identification of a student's literacy
21 screening score with a comparison to grade-level norms, and
22 information concerning the range of intervention and referral
23 services supports, including but not limited to, reading intervention
24 supports available in the district to assist the student in meeting
25 grade-level reading proficiency goals.

26 b. A school district shall report universal literacy screening
27 data to the department in a manner and frequency determined by the
28 Commissioner of Education, in consultation with the working group
29 established pursuant to section 2 of this act.

30 c. Nothing in this section shall be construed to preclude the
31 screening requirements of P.L.2013, c.210 (C.18A:40-5.1 et seq.),
32 or any other screening requirement of school districts established by
33 any other law or regulation.

34
35 7. The department shall establish an online resource center to
36 aid school districts in the selection of evidence-based, high-quality
37 literacy instructional materials, including data analysis tools, as part
38 of the school district's implementation of the New Jersey Student
39 Learning Standards in English Language Arts. The online resource
40 center shall be consistent with the guidance developed by the
41 department pursuant to section 4 of this act.

42
43 8. a. The Department of Education shall establish a
44 professional development program regarding evidence-based
45 foundational literacy instruction, which shall be available to all
46 school districts at no cost. The program shall be made available to:
47 teaching staff members serving students in preschool through grade
48 six, including school library media specialists serving students in

1 kindergarten through grade six, individuals serving multilingual
2 learners and students with disabilities, and individuals holding an
3 educational services certificate with a reading specialist
4 endorsement, individuals holding an educational services certificate
5 with an early literacy specialist endorsement, and individuals
6 holding an educational services certificate with a speech-language
7 specialist endorsement; and school administrators.

8 b. The program shall be differentiated by grade band. The
9 program shall include, but is not limited to:

10 (1) for teaching staff members serving students in preschool
11 through grade three:

- 12 (a) orthography;
- 13 (b) phonological and phonemic awareness;
- 14 (c) phonics;
- 15 (d) fluency; and
- 16 (e) vocabulary and comprehension; and

17 (2) for teaching staff members serving students in grades four
18 through six:

- 19 (a) the neurobiology of reading;
- 20 (b) advanced word study;
- 21 (c) fluency; and
- 22 (d) comprehension; and

23 (3) for school administrators: the design and implementation of
24 high-quality literacy instruction in preschool through grade six.

25

26 9. a. A school district shall use the professional development
27 program established pursuant to section 8 of this act or any other
28 evidence-based literacy instructional material that complies with the
29 requirements of section 8 of this act to annually provide
30 professional development to all teaching staff members serving
31 students in preschool through grade six, including school library
32 media specialists serving students in kindergarten through grade
33 six, individuals serving multilingual learners and students with
34 disabilities, individuals holding an educational services certificate
35 with a reading specialist endorsement, individuals holding an
36 educational services certificate with an early literacy specialist
37 endorsement, and individuals holding an educational services
38 certificate with a speech-language specialist endorsement.

39 b. A school district shall use the professional development
40 program established pursuant to section 8 of this act or any other
41 evidence-based literacy instruction material that complies with the
42 requirements of section 8 of this act to annually provide training to
43 school administrators on the design and implementation of high-
44 quality literacy instruction in schools.

45 c. A school district may utilize the professional development
46 instruction provided pursuant to section 2 of P.L.2013, c.105
47 (C.18A:6-131) to satisfy the requirements of this section, provided

1 the professional development instruction complies with the
2 requirements of this section.

3
4 10. Sections 1 through 4 of this act shall take effect
5 immediately. Sections 5 through 7 of this act shall take effect
6 immediately and shall first apply in the 2025-2026 school year
7 provided the guidance required pursuant to section 4 of this act has
8 been issued, except the Commissioner of Education may take any
9 anticipatory administrative action in advance as necessary for the
10 implementation of the provisions of this act. Sections 8 and 9 shall
11 take effect on July 1, 2025.

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR **SENATE, Nos. 2644, 2645, and 2646**

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 20, 2024

The Senate Education Committee favorably reports a Senate Committee Substitute for Senate Bill Nos. 2644, 2645 and 2646.

This committee substitute requires the Department of Education to establish a Working Group on Student Literacy, mandates universal literacy screenings for kindergarten through grade three students, and requires professional development for certain school district employees.

Under the committee substitute, the department is to establish the Working Group on Student Literacy. The purpose of the working group is to provide recommendations to the department regarding the implementation of evidence-based literacy strategies, appropriate and reliable instruments for a universal literacy screening, and high-quality literacy instructional materials. The working group is to consist of members appointed by the Commissioner of Education who are to include at least one parent of a student enrolled in a school district, and literacy experts and practitioners with demonstrated success implementing evidenced-based literacy strategies.

The working group is to examine and provide recommendations on:

(1) the body of research related to universal literacy screenings and literacy instruction materials;

(2) ways to expand professional learning for universal literacy screenings;

(3) acceptable and reliable instruments for conducting universal literacy screenings, which shall consider: constructs measured; technical adequacy; attention to linguistic diversity; and administration usability and support; and

(4) State and national best practices, regulations, and policies that support successful foundational literacy instruction, assessment, and intervention.

The department is to develop and publish guidance for use by school districts beginning with the 2025-2026 school year based on the recommendations of the working group.

The committee substitute requires a school district to, at least twice annually, conduct a literacy screening of each student enrolled in kindergarten through grade three to determine a student's reading

proficiency using an acceptable and reliable instrument for a universal literacy screening that complies with the guidance issued by the department. A school district is also required to provide a student any necessary supports as determined by the district, which may include conducting an additional screening.

The committee substitute requires a school district to provide written notification to a parent or guardian of a student's results of the universal literacy screening within 30 days of the close of the initial screening period. Under the committee substitute, a school district is to report universal literacy screening data to the department in a manner and frequency determined by the commissioner.

The department is required to establish an online resource center to aid school districts in the selection of evidence-based, high-quality literacy instructional materials, including data analysis tools, as part of the school district's implementation of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards in English Language Arts.

Finally, the committee substitute requires the department to establish a professional development program regarding evidence-based foundational literacy instruction, which shall be available to all school districts at no cost. This program is to be differentiated by grade band. School districts are to use the professional development program established by the committee substitute to provide professional development to certain teaching staff members and school administrators.

SENATE BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR **SENATE, Nos. 2644, 2645, and 2646**

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 24, 2024

The Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee reports favorably Senate Bill Nos. 2644, 2645, and 2646 SCS.

This bill requires that a school district offer a reading intervention program to students in grades kindergarten through three. The reading intervention program is to: (1) utilize a data-driven multi-tiered system of supports; (2) provide explicit and systemic instruction in phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, as applicable; (3) monitor the progress of a student's reading skills throughout the school year; and (4) be adjusted throughout the year, if necessary, according to student needs.

The bill also requires the department to provide school districts with age-appropriate materials designed to implement the program. Under the bill, school districts are required to adopt high-quality instructional materials grounded in scientifically-based reading research to implement the program. The department is to provide school districts with age-appropriate materials designed to implement the provisions of this subsection.

The bill also requires the department to develop and implement a process to evaluate the reading intervention program required under the bill.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) determines that this bill will lead to an indeterminate increase in school district expenditures related to conducting, at least twice annually, literacy screenings of each student in kindergarten through grade three. While the OLS does not have access to information concerning the number of school districts that already conduct literacy screenings adhering to the provisions of the bill, the office assumes that many school districts already utilize a literacy screening tool of some kind. A school district's costs will be minimized to the extent that it already meets some or all of the requirements that will be promulgated by the Department of Education through guidance issued pursuant to the bill.

The OLS also notes that the Department of Education may experience indeterminate administrative cost increases to implement certain requirements of the bill, including: developing and

promulgating guidance concerning reading and literacy instruction; establishing an online resource center to support school districts in selecting literacy instructional materials and data analysis tools; and establishing a professional development program concerning evidence-based foundational literacy instruction. Some or all of these requirements may be able to be subsumed within existing staff and resources that are already dedicated to similar departmental efforts.

LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE
SENATE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR
SENATE, Nos. 2644, 2645, and 2646
STATE OF NEW JERSEY
221st LEGISLATURE

DATED: JULY 3, 2024

SUMMARY

- Synopsis:** Requires DOE to establish working group on student literacy; mandates universal literacy screenings for kindergarten through grade three students; requires professional development for certain school district employees.
- Type of Impact:** Annual local school district expenditure increase; potential annual State expenditure increase.
- Agencies Affected:** Local school districts; Department of Education.

Office of Legislative Services Estimate

Annual Fiscal Impact	
Potential State Expenditure Increase	Indeterminate
Local School District Expenditure Increase	Indeterminate

- The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) determines that this bill will lead to an indeterminate increase in school district expenditures related to conducting, at least twice annually, literacy screenings of each student in kindergarten through grade three.
- While the OLS does not have access to information concerning the number of school districts that already conduct literacy screenings adhering to the provisions of the bill, the office assumes that many school districts already utilize a literacy screening tool of some kind. A school district's costs will be minimized to the extent that it already meets some or all of the requirements that will be promulgated by the Department of Education through guidance issued pursuant to the bill.
- The OLS also notes that the Department of Education may experience indeterminate administrative cost increases to implement certain requirements of the bill, including: developing and promulgating guidance concerning reading and literacy instruction; establishing an online resource center to support school districts in selecting literacy

instructional materials and data analysis tools; and establishing a professional development program concerning evidence-based foundational literacy instruction.

- Some or all of the bill's requirements that are applicable to the department may be able to be subsumed within existing staff and resources that are already dedicated to similar departmental efforts.

BILL DESCRIPTION

This bill requires the Department of Education and school districts to implement various efforts to improve student literacy in the State.

This bill requires a school district to, at least twice annually, conduct a literacy screening of each student enrolled in kindergarten through grade three to determine a student's reading proficiency. The literacy screening is required to comply with guidance issued by the department pursuant to the bill, following recommendations from the Working Group on Student Literacy. A school district is also required to provide a student any necessary supports as determined by the district, which may include conducting an additional screening. Pursuant to the bill, a school district is to report universal literacy screening data to the department in a manner and frequency determined by the department.

The bill requires the department to establish an online resource center to aid school districts in the selection of evidence-based, high-quality literacy instructional materials, including data analysis tools, as part of the school district's implementation of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards in English Language Arts. The department is also required to, beginning with the 2025-2026 school year, develop and publish guidance for use by school districts concerning literacy screening and instruction.

Finally, the bill requires the department to establish a professional development program regarding evidence-based foundational literacy instruction, which is to be available to all school districts at no cost. School districts are to use the professional development program established by the bill to provide professional development to certain teaching staff members and school administrators.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

None received.

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

The OLS determines that this bill will lead to an indeterminate increase in school district expenditures related to conducting, at least twice annually, literacy screenings of each student in kindergarten through grade three. While the OLS does not have access to information concerning the number of school districts that already conduct literacy screenings adhering to the provisions of the bill, the office assumes that many school districts already utilize a literacy screening tool of some kind. A school district's costs will be minimized to the extent that it already meets some or

all of the requirements that will be promulgated by the Department of Education through guidance issued pursuant to the bill.

For the purposes of illustration, the OLS notes that data from the Department of Education indicates total kindergarten through grade three enrollment of 376,644 in the fall of 2023. Assuming a high-end annual cost of \$15 per student to administer the screening and adjusting upward to account for staff training and implementation costs, the maximum Statewide costs that may be borne by school districts is \$6.0 million. The \$15 annual per student cost is based on information published by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts concerning the implementation of literacy screening assessments and the costs of various assessment providers.

The OLS also notes that the Department of Education may experience indeterminate administrative cost increases to implement certain requirements of the bill, including: developing and promulgating guidance concerning reading and literacy instruction; establishing an online resource center to support school districts in selecting literacy instructional materials and data analysis tools; and establishing a professional development program concerning evidence-based foundational literacy instruction. Some or all of these requirements may be able to be subsumed within existing staff and resources that are already dedicated to similar departmental efforts.

Section: Education
Analyst: Christopher Myles
Senior Fiscal Analyst
Approved: Thomas Koenig
Legislative Budget and Finance Officer

This legislative fiscal estimate has been produced by the Office of Legislative Services due to the failure of the Executive Branch to respond to our request for a fiscal note.

This fiscal estimate has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67 (C.52:13B-6 et seq.).

ASSEMBLY, No. 4303

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

221st LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MAY 10, 2024

Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman CARMEN THERESA MORALES

District 34 (Essex)

Assemblywoman ANNETTE QUIJANO

District 20 (Union)

Assemblywoman ELIANA PINTOR MARIN

District 29 (Essex and Hudson)

Co-Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman Flynn

SYNOPSIS

Requires school districts to screen certain students for reading deficiencies.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/24/2024)

1 AN ACT concerning student literacy and supplementing chapter 40
2 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

3

4 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
5 of New Jersey:

6

7 1. a. As used in this section, “reading deficiency” means
8 scoring below grade level or being determined to be at risk of
9 scoring below grade level based on a screening assessment.

10 b. A school district shall screen each student enrolled in
11 kindergarten through grade three using a reading assessment
12 approved or authorized pursuant to subsections f. or g. of this
13 section. The assessment shall be administered three times per
14 school year.

15 c. A school district shall annually screen any newly-enrolled
16 student in the district in grades four through 12 using a reading
17 assessment approved or authorized pursuant to subsections f. or g.
18 of this section.

19 d. A school district shall screen any enrolled student at the
20 request of the parent or guardian of the student using a reading
21 assessment approved or authorized pursuant to subsections f. or g.
22 of this section.

23 e. The reading assessments required pursuant to subsections b.,
24 c., and d. of this section shall:

25 (1) measure phonological awareness, decoding, fluency,
26 vocabulary, and comprehension; and

27 (2) identify students who have a reading deficiency.

28 f. (1) The Department of Education shall enter into a contract
29 with at least two screening providers that have a reliable and valid
30 reading assessment that meets the requirements of this act. Within
31 the limits of available funds, the department shall make these
32 reading assessments available for use by school districts.

33 (2) The department shall establish and distribute a list of
34 providers with reliable and valid reading assessments approved for
35 school district use for the screening and monitoring of student
36 progress toward grade level reading.

37 g. Upon application, a school district may be granted a waiver
38 of the requirement to use one of the reading assessments that have
39 been approved by the department pursuant to subsection f. of this
40 section, if the school district demonstrates to the department’s
41 satisfaction that it has selected a comparable reading assessment.

42 h. A school district shall notify a parent or guardian of a
43 student who exhibits a reading deficiency no later than 15 days after
44 identification of the deficiency.

45 i. A school district shall provide appropriate evidence-based
46 intervention strategies to any student exhibiting a reading
47 deficiency as determined through the screening conducted pursuant
48 to subsections b., c., and d. of this section.

1 j. A school district shall annually report to the department the
2 number of students screened pursuant to this section and the number
3 of students who were identified through the screening as exhibiting
4 a reading deficiency.

5

6 2. The Department of Education shall annually provide funds
7 to school districts to implement the provisions of this act. Funds
8 shall be allocated to school districts in accordance with the funding
9 methodology determined by the department.

10

11 3. This act shall take effect immediately and shall first apply to
12 the first full school year following the date of enactment, except
13 that the Commissioner of Education may take such anticipatory
14 administrative action in advance thereof as shall be necessary for
15 the implementation of the provisions of this act.

16

17

18

STATEMENT

19

20 This bill requires school districts to screen certain students for
21 reading deficiencies.

22 Under the bill, a school district is required to screen each student
23 enrolled in kindergarten through grade three using a reading
24 assessment approved by the Department of Education. The
25 screening is to occur three times per school year. Additionally, a
26 school district is required to screen newly-enrolled students in
27 grades four through 12 using an approved reading assessment. The
28 bill requires a school district to screen any enrolled student at the
29 request of the parent or guardian of the student.

30 Under the bill, the reading assessment is required to: (1) measure
31 phonological awareness, decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and
32 comprehension; and (2) identify students who have a reading
33 deficiency. The department is required to enter into a contract with
34 at least two screening providers that have a valid and reliable
35 reading assessment with the ability to screen students pursuant to
36 the provisions of this bill. Within the limits of available funds, the
37 department is required to make these reading assessments available
38 for use by school districts.

39 Additionally, the department is required to establish and
40 distribute a list of providers of reliable and valid reading
41 assessments approved for school district use for the screening and
42 monitoring of student progress toward grade level reading.

43 The bill permits a school district to be granted a waiver of the
44 requirement to use one of the department-approved reading
45 assessments if it demonstrates to the department's satisfaction that
46 it has selected a comparable reading assessment.

47 Under the bill, a school district is required to notify a parent or
48 guardian of a student who exhibits a reading deficiency no later

A4303 MORALES, QUIJANO

1 than 15 days after the deficiency is identified. The school district is
2 also required to provide appropriate evidence-based intervention
3 strategies to any student that exhibits a reading deficiency.

4 A school district is also required to annually report to the
5 department the number of students screened and the number of
6 students who were identified through the screening as exhibiting a
7 reading deficiency.

8 The bill defines a “reading deficiency” as scoring below grade
9 level or being determined to be at risk of scoring below grade level
10 based on a screening assessment.

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR
ASSEMBLY, Nos. 4303, 4304, and 4308

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
221st LEGISLATURE

ADOPTED JUNE 24, 2024

Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman CARMEN THERESA MORALES

District 34 (Essex)

Assemblywoman PAMELA R. LAMPITT

District 6 (Burlington and Camden)

Assemblywoman ANNETTE QUIJANO

District 20 (Union)

Assemblywoman ELIANA PINTOR MARIN

District 29 (Essex and Hudson)

Co-Sponsored by:

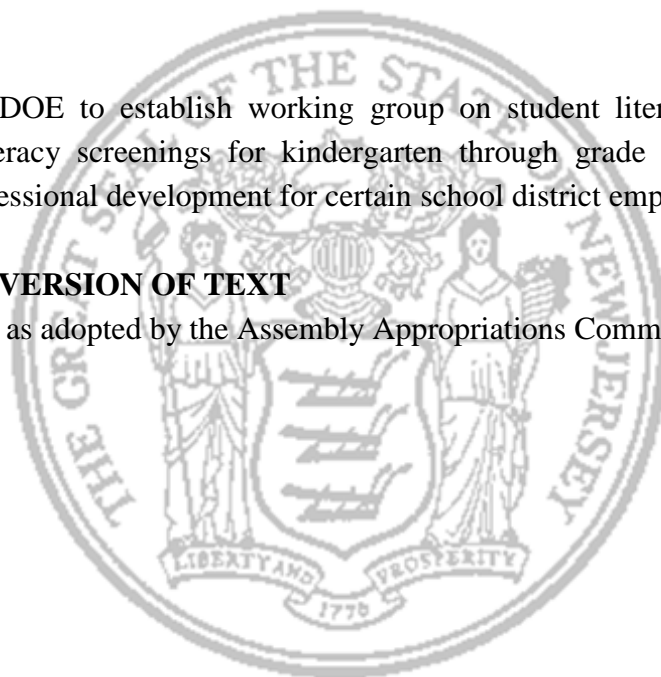
Assemblywomen Flynn, Reynolds-Jackson, Lopez, Katz, Assemblyman Rodriguez, Assemblywoman Murphy, Assemblyman Miller, Assemblywomen Bagolie, Speight, Swain and Assemblyman Tully

SYNOPSIS

Requires DOE to establish working group on student literacy; mandates universal literacy screenings for kindergarten through grade three students; requires professional development for certain school district employees.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Substitute as adopted by the Assembly Appropriations Committee.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/28/2024)

1 **AN ACT** concerning student literacy and supplementing chapter 6 of
2 Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

3

4 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
5 of New Jersey:

6

7 1. As used in this act:

8 “Foundational literacy instruction” means an evidence-based
9 reading instruction practice that addresses the acquisition of
10 language, phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics and
11 spelling, fluency, vocabulary, oral language, and comprehension
12 that may be differentiated to meet the needs of individual students.

13 “Reading proficiency” means the level at which a student scores
14 on a universal literacy screening, diagnostic assessment,
15 standardized summative assessment, or progress monitoring in
16 relation to grade-level expectations.

17 “Screening period” means the time period required to conduct a
18 universal literacy screening and determine screening results.

19 “Universal literacy screening” means a process conducted to
20 gather information about the literacy skills of a student to identify
21 or predict a student’s risk of experiencing reading difficulties in
22 order to inform instruction, differentiate targeted intervention, and
23 determine if additional assessment is required.

24

25 2. a. There is established in the Department of Education a
26 Working Group on Student Literacy. The purpose of the working
27 group shall be to provide recommendations to the department
28 regarding the implementation of evidence-based literacy strategies,
29 appropriate and reliable instruments for a universal literacy
30 screening, and high-quality literacy instructional materials.

31 b. The working group shall consist of members appointed by
32 the Commissioner of Education. The working group shall be
33 composed of members representing the northern, central, and
34 southern regions of the State, and shall include, but not be limited
35 to:

36 (1) at least one member who is a parent of a student enrolled in
37 a school district with expertise on how to meaningfully include
38 parents on this topic; and

39 (2) literacy experts and practitioners with demonstrated success
40 implementing evidenced-based literacy strategies, including:

41 (a) at least one member who has expertise working with
42 students with disabilities;

43 (b) at least one member who has expertise working with
44 multilingual learners;

45 (c) at least one member who is a current practitioner in grades
46 preschool through grade three with specialized experience in
47 foundational literacy instruction and intervention;

- 1 (d) at least one member who has expertise working with
2 students with dyslexia;
- 3 (e) at least one member who is a certified school library media
4 specialist;
- 5 (f) at least one member who is a representative from the public
6 charter schools community; and
- 7 (g) at least one member who is a certified speech-language
8 specialist.
- 9 c. Appointments to the working group shall be made within 60
10 days after the effective date of this act. The working group shall
11 organize as soon as practicable, but no later than the 30th day after
12 the members are appointed. Vacancies in the membership of the
13 working group shall be filled in the same manner as the original
14 appointments were made.
15
- 16 3. a. It shall be the duty of the working group to examine and
17 make recommendations to the Department of Education regarding
18 the implementation of evidence-based literacy strategies,
19 appropriate and reliable instruments for a universal literacy
20 screening, and high-quality literacy instructional materials.
- 21 b. The recommendations shall include, but not be limited to, an
22 examination of:
- 23 (1) the body of research related to universal literacy screenings
24 and literacy instruction materials;
- 25 (2) ways to expand professional learning for universal literacy
26 screenings;
- 27 (3) acceptable and reliable instruments for conducting universal
28 literacy screenings, which shall consider: constructs measured;
29 technical adequacy; attention to linguistic diversity; and
30 administration usability and support; and
- 31 (4) State and national best practices, regulations, and policies
32 that support successful foundational literacy instruction,
33 assessment, and intervention.
34
- 35 4. a. The Department of Education shall, after consideration of
36 the recommendations provided by the working group pursuant to
37 section 3 of this act, develop and publish guidance for use by school
38 districts beginning with the 2025-2026 school year regarding:
- 39 (1) acceptable and reliable instruments for conducting a
40 universal literacy screening;
- 41 (2) high-quality literacy instructional materials;
- 42 (3) best practices for the frequency of screening students in
43 grades kindergarten through three, and grades four through 12; and
- 44 (4) data analysis strategies for high-quality literacy instruction
45 and intervention.
- 46 b. The department shall disseminate the guidance developed
47 pursuant to this section to school districts.

1 5. a. A school district shall, at least twice annually, conduct a
2 literacy screening of each student enrolled in kindergarten through
3 grade three to determine a student's reading proficiency using an
4 acceptable and reliable instrument for a universal literacy screening
5 that complies with the guidance issued by the department pursuant
6 to section 4 of this act, within the limit of funds appropriated or
7 otherwise made available to the district for this purpose.

8 b. Following the screening conducted pursuant to subsection a.
9 of this section, a school district shall provide to the student any
10 necessary supports as determined by the district, which may include
11 conducting an additional screening. Supports shall be provided in a
12 manner consistent with the district's intervention and referral
13 services as required pursuant to State Board of Education
14 regulations.

15
16 6. a. A school district shall provide written notification to a
17 parent or guardian of a student's results of the universal literacy
18 screening within 30 days of the close of the initial screening period
19 conducted pursuant to subsection a. of section 5 of this act. The
20 notification shall include the identification of a student's literacy
21 screening score with a comparison to grade-level norms, and
22 information concerning the range of intervention and referral
23 services supports, including but not limited to, reading intervention
24 supports available in the district to assist the student in meeting
25 grade-level reading proficiency goals.

26 b. A school district shall report universal literacy screening
27 data to the department in a manner and frequency determined by the
28 Commissioner of Education, in consultation with the working group
29 established pursuant to section 2 of this act.

30 c. Nothing in this section shall be construed to preclude the
31 screening requirements of P.L.2013, c.210 (C.18A:40-5.1 et seq.),
32 or any other screening requirement of school districts established by
33 any other law or regulation.

34
35 7. The department shall establish an online resource center to
36 aid school districts in the selection of evidence-based, high-quality
37 literacy instructional materials, including data analysis tools, as part
38 of the school district's implementation of the New Jersey Student
39 Learning Standards in English Language Arts. The online resource
40 center shall be consistent with the guidance developed by the
41 department pursuant to section 4 of this act.

42
43 8. a. The Department of Education shall establish a
44 professional development program regarding evidence-based
45 foundational literacy instruction, which shall be available to all
46 school districts at no cost. The program shall be made available to:
47 teaching staff members serving students in preschool through grade
48 six, including school library media specialists serving students in

1 kindergarten through grade six, individuals serving multilingual
2 learners and students with disabilities, and individuals holding an
3 educational services certificate with a reading specialist
4 endorsement, individuals holding an educational services certificate
5 with an early literacy specialist endorsement, and individuals
6 holding an educational services certificate with a speech-language
7 specialist endorsement; and school administrators.

8 b. The program shall be differentiated by grade band. The
9 program shall include, but is not limited to:

10 (1) for teaching staff members serving students in preschool
11 through grade three:

- 12 (a) orthography;
- 13 (b) phonological and phonemic awareness;
- 14 (c) phonics;
- 15 (d) fluency; and
- 16 (e) vocabulary and comprehension; and

17 (2) for teaching staff members serving students in grades four
18 through six:

- 19 (a) the neurobiology of reading;
- 20 (b) advanced word study;
- 21 (c) fluency; and
- 22 (d) comprehension; and

23 (3) for school administrators: the design and implementation of
24 high-quality literacy instruction in preschool through grade six.

25

26 9. a. A school district shall use the professional development
27 program established pursuant to section 8 of this act or any other
28 evidence-based literacy instructional material that complies with the
29 requirements of section 8 of this act to annually provide
30 professional development to all teaching staff members serving
31 students in preschool through grade six, including school library
32 media specialists serving students in kindergarten through grade
33 six, individuals serving multilingual learners and students with
34 disabilities, individuals holding an educational services certificate
35 with a reading specialist endorsement, individuals holding an
36 educational services certificate with an early literacy specialist
37 endorsement, and individuals holding an educational services
38 certificate with a speech-language specialist endorsement.

39 b. A school district shall use the professional development
40 program established pursuant to section 8 of this act or any other
41 evidence-based literacy instruction material that complies with the
42 requirements of section 8 of this act to annually provide training to
43 school administrators on the design and implementation of high-
44 quality literacy instruction in schools.

45 c. A school district may utilize the professional development
46 instruction provided pursuant to section 2 of P.L.2013, c.105
47 (C.18A:6-131) to satisfy the requirements of this section, provided

1 the professional development instruction complies with the
2 requirements of this section.

3
4 10. Sections 1 through 4 of this act shall take effect
5 immediately. Sections 5 through 7 of this act shall take effect
6 immediately and shall first apply in the 2025-2026 school year
7 provided the guidance required pursuant to section 4 of this act has
8 been issued, except the Commissioner of Education may take any
9 anticipatory administrative action in advance as necessary for the
10 implementation of the provisions of this act. Sections 8 and 9 shall
11 take effect on July 1, 2025.

ASSEMBLY APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR ASSEMBLY, Nos. 4303, 4304, and 4308

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 24, 2024

The Assembly Appropriations Committee reports favorably an Assembly Committee Substitute for Assembly Bill Nos. 4303, 4304, and 4308.

This committee substitute requires the Department of Education to establish a Working Group on Student Literacy, mandates universal literacy screenings for kindergarten through grade three students, and requires professional development for certain school district employees.

Under the committee substitute, the department is to establish the Working Group on Student Literacy. The purpose of the working group is to provide recommendations to the department regarding the implementation of evidence-based literacy strategies, appropriate and reliable instruments for a universal literacy screening, and high-quality literacy instructional materials. The working group is to consist of members appointed by the Commissioner of Education who are to include at least one parent of a student enrolled in a school district, and literacy experts and practitioners with demonstrated success implementing evidenced-based literacy strategies.

The working group is to examine and provide recommendations on:

(1) the body of research related to universal literacy screenings and literacy instruction materials;

(2) ways to expand professional learning for universal literacy screenings;

(3) acceptable and reliable instruments for conducting universal literacy screenings, which shall consider: constructs measured; technical adequacy; attention to linguistic diversity; and administration usability and support; and

(4) State and national best practices, regulations, and policies that support successful foundational literacy instruction, assessment, and intervention.

The department is to develop and publish guidance for use by school districts beginning with the 2025-2026 school year based on the recommendations of the working group.

The committee substitute requires a school district to, at least twice annually, conduct a literacy screening of each student enrolled in

kindergarten through grade three to determine a student's reading proficiency using an acceptable and reliable instrument for a universal literacy screening that complies with the guidance issued by the department. A school district is also required to provide a student any necessary supports as determined by the district, which may include conducting an additional screening.

The committee substitute requires a school district to provide written notification to a parent or guardian of a student's results of the universal literacy screening within 30 days of the close of the initial screening period. Under the committee substitute, a school district is to report universal literacy screening data to the department in a manner and frequency determined by the commissioner.

The department is required to establish an online resource center to aid school districts in the selection of evidence-based, high-quality literacy instructional materials, including data analysis tools, as part of the school district's implementation of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards in English Language Arts.

Finally, the committee substitute requires the department to establish a professional development program regarding evidence-based foundational literacy instruction, which shall be available to all school districts at no cost. This program is to be differentiated by grade band. School districts are to use the professional development program established by the committee substitute to provide professional development to certain teaching staff members and school administrators.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Fiscal information for this bill is currently unavailable.

LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE
ASSEMBLY, No. 4303
STATE OF NEW JERSEY
221st LEGISLATURE

DATED: JUNE 28, 2024

SUMMARY

Synopsis: Requires school districts to screen certain students for reading deficiencies.

Type of Impact: Annual State expenditure increase; annual expenditure and revenue increases for school districts.

Agencies Affected: Department of Education; school districts.

Office of Legislative Services Estimate

Fiscal Impact	<u>Annual</u>
State Expenditure Increase	Approximately \$6.0 million
School District Expenditure Increase	Indeterminate
School District Revenue Increase	Indeterminate

- The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) concludes that this bill would likely result in an annual expenditure increase of approximately \$6.0 million, conditional on the contracts that the Department of Education would enter into for the provision of screening services.
- The bill would also likely result in costs related to the State reimbursing school districts for the provision of evidenced-based intervention strategies to students exhibiting reading deficiencies. However, the bill is not specific with respect to the nature of the intervention strategies, and the cost of providing such strategies is consequently unknown.
- School districts may experience indeterminate expenditure increases and concurrent revenue increases associated with the costs of administering screening tests and providing intervention strategies, which would be reimbursed by the State per the bill.

BILL DESCRIPTION

This bill requires the Department of Education to enter into contracts with at least two screening providers that have a reliable and valid reading assessment, which measures

phonological awareness, decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, and which is able to identify students who have a reading deficiency. School districts would be required to administer these screening tests three times per school year to all students in grades kindergarten through three, and to administer the screening tests to any newly-enrolled student in grades four through 12 as well as any enrolled student at the request of the parent or guardian. A school district would be required to provide evidenced-based intervention strategies to any student exhibiting a reading deficiency as determined by the screening tests.

The department would be required to provide funds to the school districts to support the cost of administering the screening tests and providing intervention strategies.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

None received.

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

The OLS concludes that this bill would result in an annual expenditure increase for the State of approximately \$6.0 million, depending on the contracts that the Department of Education enters into for the provision of screening services.

Under the bill, screening tests would be administered to students in grades kindergarten through three, and would be administered three times throughout the course of a school year. Based on information published by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts concerning the implementation of literacy screening assessments and the costs of various assessment providers, the OLS assumes an approximate high-end annual cost of \$15 per student to administer the screening. Data from the New Jersey Department of Education indicates that, in total, there were 376,644 students enrolled in grades kindergarten through three Statewide in the fall of 2023. Consequently, the OLS estimates a base annual cost of \$5.6 million to administer the screening assessments to students in grades kindergarten through three. In addition to these costs, there may be some additional costs to account for staff training and materials, resulting in a total estimate of \$6.0 million in additional costs to the State per year.

However, the OLS notes that the cost to the State is contingent on the contracts entered into by the department and may vary from this estimate depending on the actual cost of the contracts. Under the bill, school districts are also required to screen any newly enrolled students in grades four through 12, and any students for whom the parent or guardian requests a screening. Consequently, costs may be higher depending on the number of additional students that are screened.

Additionally, the bill requires school districts to provide evidence-based intervention strategies to students that are determined to exhibit a reading deficiency by the screening assessments. While the bill is not specific with respect to the nature of the evidence-based intervention strategies, and the cost of providing such strategies is consequently unknown, the OLS notes for the purposes of illustration that 58.2 percent of students in grade three were not completely meeting grade-level expectations according to the results of the New Jersey Student Learning Assessments in English Language Arts administered in the 2022-2023 school year.

School districts may experience indeterminate expenditure increases and concurrent revenue increases associated with the costs of administering screening tests and providing evidenced-based intervention strategies, which would be reimbursed by the State.

Section: Education

*Analyst: Abigail Chambers
Associate Fiscal Analyst*

*Approved: Thomas Koenig
Legislative Budget and Finance Officer*

This legislative fiscal estimate has been produced by the Office of Legislative Services due to the failure of the Executive Branch to respond to our request for a fiscal note.

This fiscal estimate has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67 (C.52:13B-6 et seq.).

LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR
ASSEMBLY, Nos. 4303, 4304, and 4308
STATE OF NEW JERSEY
221st LEGISLATURE

DATED: JULY 1, 2024

SUMMARY

- Synopsis:** Requires DOE to establish working group on student literacy; mandates universal literacy screenings for kindergarten through grade three students; requires professional development for certain school district employees.
- Type of Impact:** Annual local school district expenditure increase; potential annual State expenditure increase.
- Agencies Affected:** Local school districts; Department of Education.

Office of Legislative Services Estimate

Annual Fiscal Impact	
Potential State Expenditure Increase	Indeterminate
Local School District Expenditure Increase	Indeterminate

- The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) determines that this bill will lead to an indeterminate increase in school district expenditures related to conducting, at least twice annually, literacy screenings of each student in kindergarten through grade three.
- While the OLS does not have access to information concerning the number of school districts that already conduct literacy screenings adhering to the provisions of the bill, the office assumes that many school districts already utilize a literacy screening tool of some kind. A school district's costs will be minimized to the extent that it already meets some or all of the requirements that will be promulgated by the Department of Education through guidance issued pursuant to the bill.
- The OLS also notes that the Department of Education may experience indeterminate administrative cost increases to implement certain requirements of the bill, including: developing and promulgating guidance concerning reading and literacy instruction; establishing an online resource center to support school districts in selecting literacy

instructional materials and data analysis tools; and establishing a professional development program concerning evidence-based foundational literacy instruction.

- Some or all of the bill's requirements that are applicable to the department may be able to be subsumed within existing staff and resources that are already dedicated to similar departmental efforts.

BILL DESCRIPTION

This bill requires the Department of Education and school districts to implement various efforts to improve student literacy in the State.

This bill requires a school district to, at least twice annually, conduct a literacy screening of each student enrolled in kindergarten through grade three to determine a student's reading proficiency. The literacy screening is required to comply with guidance issued by the department pursuant to the bill, following recommendations from the Working Group on Student Literacy. A school district is also required to provide a student any necessary supports as determined by the district, which may include conducting an additional screening. Pursuant to the bill, a school district is to report universal literacy screening data to the department in a manner and frequency determined by the department.

The bill requires the department to establish an online resource center to aid school districts in the selection of evidence-based, high-quality literacy instructional materials, including data analysis tools, as part of the school district's implementation of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards in English Language Arts. The department is also required to, beginning with the 2025-2026 school year, develop and publish guidance for use by school districts concerning literacy screening and instruction.

Finally, the bill requires the department to establish a professional development program regarding evidence-based foundational literacy instruction, which is to be available to all school districts at no cost. School districts are to use the professional development program established by the bill to provide professional development to certain teaching staff members and school administrators.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

None received.

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

The OLS determines that this bill will lead to an indeterminate increase in school district expenditures related to conducting, at least twice annually, literacy screenings of each student in kindergarten through grade three. While the OLS does not have access to information concerning the number of school districts that already conduct literacy screenings adhering to the provisions of the bill, the office assumes that many school districts already utilize a literacy screening tool of some kind. A school district's costs will be minimized to the extent that it already meets some or

all of the requirements that will be promulgated by the Department of Education through guidance issued pursuant to the bill.

For the purposes of illustration, the OLS notes that data from the Department of Education indicates total kindergarten through grade three enrollment of 376,644 in the fall of 2023. Assuming a high-end annual cost of \$15 per student to administer the screening and adjusting upward to account for staff training and implementation costs, the maximum Statewide costs that may be borne by school districts is \$6.0 million. The \$15 annual per student cost is based on information published by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts concerning the implementation of literacy screening assessments and the costs of various assessment providers.

The OLS also notes that the Department of Education may experience indeterminate administrative cost increases to implement certain requirements of the bill, including: developing and promulgating guidance concerning reading and literacy instruction; establishing an online resource center to support school districts in selecting literacy instructional materials and data analysis tools; and establishing a professional development program concerning evidence-based foundational literacy instruction. Some or all of these requirements may be able to be subsumed within existing staff and resources that are already dedicated to similar departmental efforts.

Section: Education

*Analyst: Christopher Myles
Senior Fiscal Analyst*

*Approved: Thomas Koenig
Legislative Budget and Finance Officer*

This legislative fiscal estimate has been produced by the Office of Legislative Services due to the failure of the Executive Branch to respond to our request for a fiscal note.

This fiscal estimate has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67 (C.52:13B-6 et seq.).

Governor Murphy Signs Legislation Bolstering Literacy Education for New Jersey Students

08/13/2024

TRENTON – During this year’s [State of the State Address](#), Governor Phil Murphy pledged to introduce new initiatives to increase literacy rates among New Jersey schoolchildren, furthering the state’s status as home to one of the best public education systems in the nation. Today, in collaboration with partners in the Legislature, the Governor signed two bills into law advancing his promise to set New Jersey’s students on course for lifelong success. The legislation will establish new initiatives to ensure young learners have access to the tools and resources needed to become strong, confident readers while also empowering our workforce of educators with professional development opportunities.

“Literacy education represents the foundation upon which all future learning is built, and we owe it to our children to give them the strongest foundation possible. By bolstering support for literacy education, we are enabling New Jersey students to thrive both academically and in life, helping them to become informed, thoughtful, and engaged citizens,” **said Governor Murphy**. “Recent years have brought forth many challenges for our schools and our children. Understanding that strong reading skills have the potential to open countless doors for young learners, we must work together to support accelerated literacy learning in communities across the state. This legislation balances targeted intervention, tested learning strategies, teacher training, and continuous monitoring to ensure we deliver for our students. I thank Senate Majority Leader Teresa Ruiz for championing this important work in the Legislature, and I look forward to seeing the positive impact of these initiatives on our school communities.”

“Student literacy, especially for our youngest learners, is both fundamental to all student learning and a core element to bridging achievement and opportunity gaps,” **said Kevin Dehmer, Acting Commissioner of Education**. “These new initiatives, when coupled with our other programs to foster literacy, such as high-impact tutoring for students and existing professional development for teachers, can help students build those foundational skills that are so crucial to learning. These combined efforts will have lasting benefits for generations of students.”

The first bill – [S2644/A4303](#) – aims to strengthen foundational literacy instruction by establishing a Working Group on Student Literacy. This group, comprised of members appointed by the Commissioner of Education from all regions of the state, will be responsible for making recommendations to the Department of Education on the implementation of evidence-based literacy strategies, screening methods, and instruction for students, in addition to investigating ways to expand professional learning.

Based on these recommendations, the Department will develop and publish guidance for school districts to use beginning with the 2025-2026 school year, and shall establish an online resource center to aid school districts in the selection of evidence-based, high-quality literacy instructional materials, including data analysis tools, as part of the school district’s implementation of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards in English Language Arts. Additionally, the Department will create a professional development program for early education teaching staff, including librarians, and those serving multilingual learners and/or students with disabilities. This will be available to all districts at no cost.

Under the bill, districts will be required to conduct literacy screenings at least twice annually for students in grades K-3, beginning in the 2025-2026 school year. Districts must notify parents and guardians of their child's results within 30 days of the close of the initial screening period. The Fiscal Year 2025 budget includes \$5.25 million for literacy initiatives to advance this work.

The primary sponsors of S2644/A4303 are Senate Majority Leader M. Teresa Ruiz, Senator Vin Gopal, Assemblywoman Carmen Morales, Assemblywoman Pamela Lampitt, Assemblywoman Annette Quijano, and Assemblywoman Eliana Pintor Marin.

"This is a forward-looking package of educational enhancement bills that will help rectify pandemic-related learning loss, close the achievement gap and improve literacy rates for our students," **said Senate President Nick Scutari**. "The literacy instruction and intervention programs will be especially important for students who have experienced academic disparities. They will help advance educational equity in New Jersey's schools. I want to commend Senate Majority Leader Ruiz, Senator Gopal and Senator Turner for their collaborative work with the Department of Education, our Assembly colleagues and education advocacy groups to get this done."

"Increased equity in education, especially for foundational literacy, will serve every community in New Jersey," **said Assembly Speaker Craig J. Coughlin**. "When every child in our state has greater opportunity to succeed, we all benefit. These laws will ensure more strategic use of resources for our best-in-the-nation public schools. I want to commend my colleagues for all of their work on this legislation, partnering with teachers and other experts and advocates in the field to deliver for New Jersey's kids."

"The bills signed today establish a framework to address the alarming fact that 57.6% of all third graders statewide are not meeting reading proficiency levels, with even more troubling rates for students of color, with 73.6% of Black and 72.5% of Latino third graders not reading at grade level," **said Senate Majority Leader M. Teresa Ruiz**. "These initiatives are a major step toward reversing these trends by strengthening foundational literacy instruction and addressing long standing educational inequities across New Jersey."

"Reading is the cornerstone of learning and academic achievement, and if we do not intervene now, another generation of children will fail to achieve their academic and economic potential," **added Senator Ruiz**. "Early success in school significantly boosts the likelihood of students obtaining a high school diploma, pursuing higher education, and improving their future earning potential. The data is clear - median earnings rise from \$35,500 for those without a high school diploma to \$66,600 for those with a bachelor's degree. Setting our children up for success in life begins in the classroom. This is not only an investment in their futures but in the future of our communities."

"This is one of the smartest investments the state can make," **said Senator Paul Sarlo, Chair of the Senate Budget Committee**. "Giving our students the skills and knowledge they need to pursue educational achievement and compete in the rapidly-evolving workplace will improve their future opportunities and contribute to the state's economy. Our schools are an important foundation for educational excellence and economic progress. This initiative will help build a better future for New Jersey."

"There is no greater investment we can make than investing in our children and this legislation will help us do that," **said Assemblywoman Eliana Pintor Marin, Chair of the Assembly Budget Committee**. "Specifically, it will enable us to focus on evidence-based practices and will assist us in identifying and addressing exactly where students face reading difficulties, ensuring timely and effective interventions for those in need."

“New Jersey public schools are among the finest in the nation, yet too often our children struggle to meet basic literacy proficiency thresholds,” **said Senator Vin Gopal, Chair of the Senate Education Committee.** “Securing our children’s success later in life begins in the classroom. These foundational literacy skills can determine a student’s academic success, college readiness, and future career and economic prospects. Establishing a framework for reading assessments and interventions will give teachers and school districts a reliable resource to draw from in order to help all our students reach their fullest potential.”

“Today marks a pivotal moment in our efforts to enhance literacy instruction in New Jersey,” **said Assemblywoman Carmen Morales.** “This new law will be instrumental in helping us ensure that every child receives the foundational skills needed to succeed in the classroom, fostering a brighter and more equitable future for our students.”

“This legislation is a testament to our continued commitment to education excellence. By focusing on early intervention and continued support, we are laying the groundwork for long-term success in schools,” **said Assembly Education Committee Chair Pamela Lampitt.** “I applaud today’s signing of this important bill and know that it will help strengthen our already top-notch education system.”

“By instituting universal literacy screenings, we are taking proactive steps to address reading challenges early on,” **said Assemblywoman Annette Quijano.** “This law will provide an invaluable resource for our teachers and ensure that every student receives the necessary support to develop stronger reading skills.”

The second bill – [A2288/S2647](#) – establishes the Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery in the Department of Education to promote student literacy and advance learning equity through academic recovery practices.

The office will be responsible for improving the Department’s capacity to make data-driven decisions, coordinate resources, and research best practices to support the creation of effective literacy, learning equity, learning acceleration policies, and professional development opportunities.

The primary sponsors for A2288/S2647 are Senate Majority Leader M. Teresa Ruiz, Senator Shirley Turner, Assemblywoman Yvonne Lopez, Assemblyman Benjie Wimberly, and Assemblyman Sterley Stanley.

“Recent state test scores show significant drops in student performance compared to pre-pandemic, with preexisting disparities worsening for low-income students, students of color, and students with disabilities,” **said Senator Shirley Turner.** “The academic performance data is abundant and alarming, and we must utilize it in our efforts to ensure all students have a fair shot at success in school. Establishing the new Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery will help improve our understanding of the factors that impact students reading ability and will implement new data-driven strategies to get students back on track.”

“Establishing the Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery enables us to take a critical step to provide our students with the resources they need to achieve their full academic potential,” **said Assemblywoman Yvonne Lopez.** “The legislation signed into law today works to ensure that our school districts have access to such vital information, allowing them to make data-driven decisions regarding their literacy and learning equity policies.”

“The office being created through this bill will provide the necessary resources and expertise to close achievement gaps, particularly for our most vulnerable students,” **said Assemblyman Benjie E. Wimberly.** “By focusing on effective strategies and partnerships, we can strengthen student literacy and advance learning equity, leading to improved educational outcomes across the state.”

“Our goal is to provide every student with the opportunity to succeed, regardless of the obstacles they’ve faced,” **said Assemblyman Sterley Stanley**. “This bill being signed today will play a vital role in collecting and analyzing relevant data in order to ensure that we, as a State that prides itself on the world class education we are able to offer, implement the most effective solutions so our students can continue to thrive.”

“Early literacy is the foundation for academic success,” **said NJEA President Sean M. Spiller**. “We owe it to our children to give them every resource and every opportunity they need as they learn to read. Every child learns in a different way and at a different pace. We hope that this new effort will give our members more tools to identify challenges, offer needed supports and help their students succeed.”

“The New Jersey Parent Teacher Association (NJPTA) supports the Literacy Bill Package (Bill A2288ACS and S2644/2645/2646 SCS). This legislation establishes the Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery within the Department of Education (DOE), mandates universal literacy screenings for students from kindergarten through grade three and requires professional development for specific school district employees,” **said Sharon Roseboro, President of NJPTA**. “Research indicates that children who engage in reading at home are better prepared for academic success. Additionally, reading has been shown to enhance mental function. To ensure all children have equal opportunities, it is crucial to support measures that level the playing field. Parental involvement is vital to the success of these initiatives.”

“New Jersey’s public education system consistently produces some of the best student outcomes in the nation. However, Governor Murphy and legislators recognize that student literacy achievement must not only return to pre-COVID-19 levels but also surpass them. Today’s endorsed legislation underscores this critical goal and introduces measures for both support and accountability to ensure its achievement,” **said Richard Bozza, Executive Director of NJASA**.

“The New Jersey Children’s Foundation shares the administration and Senate Majority Leader Teresa Ruiz’s belief that learning to read is such a critical factor in lifelong success. That is why we truly appreciate the Governor signing this legislation which takes very necessary steps forward in improving our ability to teach all students to read at an early age,” **said Barbara Martinez, Executive Director of the New Jersey Children’s Foundation**.

“JerseyCAN is thrilled and thankful for Governor Murphy’s great leadership, Senate Majority Leader Ruiz’s collaborative efforts, and the commitment of cross-sector organizations, educators, and parents to get us to this bold step of the passage of foundational literacy and academic recovery legislation that, though not a magic bullet, is the sorely-needed equalizer that all of New Jersey’s children deserve. Governor Murphy once stated that New Jersey is where opportunity lives, where education is valued, and where justice is embraced and today, as the Governor cements pivotal foundational literacy and academic recovery legislation into law, these words ring resoundingly true,” **said Paula White, Executive Director of JerseyCAN**.

“We thank Governor Murphy, Majority Leader Ruiz and all the legislative sponsors for recognizing the urgency of the challenges facing New Jersey’s schools, from learning loss to longstanding resource gaps in our urban centers. These new laws were the product of collaboration with a broad array of education stakeholders and will give more schools, both district and public charter schools, the tools to grow and expand their literacy programs to meet the needs of our youngest learners. While this policy response will require a continued all-hands-on-deck approach, New Jersey’s public charter schools stand ready to meet that challenge,” **said Harry Lee, President and CEO of the New Jersey Public Charter Schools Association**.

“Literacy is the essential skill that serves as the foundation for all learning. The New Jersey School Boards Association thanks Governor Murphy for prioritizing this issue and Senate Majority Leader Ruiz for her leadership in spearheading these critical measures that demonstrate her commitment to the children of New Jersey. And we applaud the entire Legislature for taking swift and bipartisan action in promoting and approving these bills, which will better prepare New Jersey’s students to become lifelong learners and productive citizens. We look forward to seeing the positive impact they will have on students’ academic achievement,” **said Dr. Timothy J. Purnell, NJSBA Executive Director and CEO.**

“Foundational literacy skills are not only the cornerstone of a high quality education but serve as the key to lifelong success, something every New Jersey student deserves. The school leaders who make up the membership of the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association, in partnership with loving parents and dedicated teachers, are committed to developing all students’ literacy skills at the earliest possible ages. This legislative package was developed collaboratively with the Legislature, the Governor, and education stakeholders, and NJPSA wants to thank Senator Ruiz and Governor Murphy for their commitment to our children. From ABCs to written worlds to be explored, NJ’s future readers are fortunate to learn here!” **said Debra Bradley, NJPSA Director of Government Relations, and Karen Bingert, NJPSA Executive Director.**

“ACNJ commends the Legislature and the Administration for these intentional policies to address literacy amongst New Jersey school-aged children. With only 42 percent of third graders meeting or exceeding proficiency standards in English language arts, there is a pressing need for action. Statewide efforts, including understanding student literacy, implementing literacy screenings, and supporting educators, are crucial and speak to New Jersey’s commitment to investing in children,” **said Mary Coogan, President & CEO, Advocates for Children of NJ.**

“With Gov. Murphy signing legislation to establish the Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery and a working group on student literacy, along with mandating universal K-3 literacy screenings, New Jersey’s students who have fallen behind will have the resources and personnel they need to get back on track,” **said AFTNJ President Jennifer S. Higgins.**

“We are delighted to see these bills come to fruition and thankful to Senator Ruiz for her sponsorship and advocacy. The real beneficiaries are the children of New Jersey, whose lives will be changed by this literacy initiative,” **said Elisabeth Ginsburg, Executive Director, Garden State Coalition of Schools.**

“On behalf of the New Jersey Speech-Language-Hearing Association (NJSHA), an organization representing more than 1,100 speech-language pathologists and audiologists working in schools as well as health care settings and private practice, I first want to thank Majority Leader Teresa Ruiz for her vision and leadership on the issue of student literacy,” **said Dr. Karen Kimberlin, a speech-language pathologist (SLP) who specializes in language and literacy disorders, and who represented the Association on the Literacy Working Group created by the Majority Leader.** “We also thank the Assembly sponsors of the bills, Education Chair Pamela Lampitt and Housing Chair Yvonne Lopez and of course, Governor Murphy for signing this legislation today. SLPs are experts in language development, both oral expression and language comprehension, which are critical to the development of literacy skills. So, we are pleased that a Speech Language Specialist (SLS), as SLPs are called in school settings, will have a role in implementing these laws as a member of the Working Group on Student Literacy in the Department of Education.”

“The ability to communicate effectively is the cornerstone of learning. New Jersey Tutoring Corps, Inc. wholeheartedly supports the signing of bills S2644/45/46, providing measures to strengthen literacy education for NJ children and their teachers. Further, we strongly support the signing of bill A2288, establishing an office focused on learning equity and academic recovery. Together, these bills will provide NJ students, particularly our students who are furthest

behind, with more opportunities to succeed both academically and in terms of their confidence as learners. Thank you, Senator Ruiz and Governor Murphy, for your efforts on behalf of education for all students in our state," **said Katherine Bassett, CEO NJ Tutoring Corps.**

"The New Jersey Association of School Librarians (NJASL) applauds Governor Murphy on the passage of the legislative initiatives to support student literacy (S2644,2645,2646). To most powerfully address reading deficiency, NJASL believes we must pair the foundational literacy skills with the simple joy of reading, and this really is the core mission of the school librarian. The thrill of a new book in the hands of a child after a school library visit or the excitement of students clamoring to ask questions of an author after a reading - to witness these interactions is to understand the superpowers of the school librarian and their ability to support student reading!" **said Beth Raff, President of New Jersey Association of School Libraries.**

"Early literacy in any language is essential for student success. NJTESOL/NJBE is encouraged that these bills will support Multilingual Learners' success in reading by providing academic assistance for all struggling early readers," **said Kathleen Fernandez, Executive Director, NJ Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages/NJ Bilingual Educators.**

"Save Our Schools NJ thanks Governor Murphy and Senator Ruiz for their commitment to the students of New Jersey. Making sure districts have resources is fundamental to their ongoing literacy efforts," **said Julie Larrea Borst, Executive Director, Save Our School NJ Community Organizing.**

"Strengthening reading and literacy outcomes for students gives them a better head start in all walks of life and provides improved preparation for continuing their post-secondary education or for entering the workforce, even for youth workers. We thank the sponsors and supporters of this legislation, as well as Governor Murphy, for giving our students even more opportunity toward professional and personal development in these early stages," **said NJBIA President and CEO Michele Siekerka.**

"We are pleased to see legislation passed which finally starts NJ school districts addressing our general education literacy proficiency issues by using best practices, based in reading science, for reading instruction with all children. Additionally, we are thankful for legislation which will require all K-3 universal literacy screenings to help identify children early who might have reading challenges, like Dyslexia and get the appropriate intervention they need before they fall so far behind!" **said Elizabeth Barnes, Founding Member, Decoding Dyslexia-NJ.**