
OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 1094

AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF READING MODELS OR PROGRAMS.

SUMMARY

By law, beginning with the school year that starts July 1, 2023, each local and regional board of education (i.e., “school board”) must implement one of five State Department of Education (SDE)-approved reading curriculum models or programs for grades pre-kindergarten to three. This bill gives school boards more flexibility to meet this requirement.

Under current law, school boards may request a waiver from the SDE commissioner to use an alternative reading curriculum model or program instead of an approved one.

The bill:

1. specifies that school boards that receive a waiver must implement their alternative models or programs according to their waivers’ provisions starting with the school year beginning July 1, 2024 (the 2024-25 school year);
2. gives school boards that are not in compliance with the law, and have not received a waiver, two years to partially implement an SDE-approved model or program before full implementation;
3. eliminates a provision that allows the commissioner to grant a school board more time for implementation if the board can show it has insufficient resources or funding to do so as long as the board demonstrates ongoing efforts to implement a model or program;

4. narrows the scope of the reading curriculum models or programs from grades pre-kindergarten to three to kindergarten to three; and
5. requires SDE's Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success to review issues related to the boards' implementation of the reading curriculum models or programs.

Additionally, the bill specifies that the reading curriculum models or programs be comprehensive. It also repeals the law that requires SDE to have a director of reading initiatives and makes conforming and technical changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

READING CURRICULUM MODELS OR PROGRAMS

Partial Implementation for School Board Without Waivers

The law requires SDE's Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success director to review and approve at least five reading curriculum models or programs for boards by July 1, 2022. The models or programs must be (1) evidence- and scientifically-based and (2) focused on competency in the following reading areas: oral language, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, rapid automatic name or letter name fluency, and reading comprehension. A board may request a waiver to use an alternative reading curriculum model or program, and the commissioner, in consultation with the literacy center director, must grant the waiver if she finds that the alternative otherwise meets the criteria described above.

The bill requires boards that have not been granted a waiver and have not fully implemented one of the SDE-approved reading models or programs by the 2023-24 school year to begin partially implementing one of the models or programs as long as the board fully implements it for the school year starting July 1, 2025 (the 2025-26 school year) and each following year.

Notice to SDE on Chosen Model or Program

Beginning July 1, 2023, current law requires each school board to

notify the literacy center every two years about which model or program it is implementing. The bill extends this deadline to July 1, 2025.

It correspondingly extends the deadline, from September 1, 2023, to September 1, 2025, for the literacy center to receive and publicly report on the models and programs that school boards have reported they are implementing.

REVIEW OF ISSUES RELATED TO IMPLEMENTING THE READING MODEL OR PROGRAM

The bill requires the literacy center to review issues related to the boards' implementation of the comprehensive reading curriculum models or programs. The review must include:

1. an examination of providing technical assistance to boards that have been denied a waiver;
2. an examination of the impact of SDE's science of reading master class (see BACKGROUND) that uses all of the components of reading, such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension; and
3. upon completion of the SDE's independent impact evaluation, a determination of how to scale it for use to develop educators who are ready and able to support individual student learning and the science of reading.

BACKGROUND

Science of Reading Masterclass

SDE's science of reading masterclass offers professional learning for educators from participating districts. The first masterclass began last year with 11 participating districts and was funded with American Rescue Plan funds. The masterclass is a statewide professional learning program, co-created with the Connecticut Association of School Superintendents to develop local capacity for science of reading and components of comprehensive K-3 literacy instruction. Components include phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 42 Nay 2 (03/24/2023)