

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)

SYNOPSIS

Requires school districts to screen certain students for reading deficiencies.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 5/10/2024)

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

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

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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.

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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.

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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.

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STATEMENT

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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

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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.