



Literacy

Tennessee Literacy Success Act *for Districts and School Board Members*

On January 21, 2021, the Tennessee General Assembly enacted the Tennessee Literacy Success Act (SB7003/HB7002), marking an important point in history for Tennessee students and families. The act outlines a bold policy framework that engages different stakeholders to improve literacy rates in Tennessee. Recognizing the important role that school districts and local boards of education play in education, the act outlines new expectations for how schools and districts will measure and report on efforts to improve literacy rates, and new measures to ensure that teachers are prepared and supported to deliver instruction grounded in foundational literacy skills.

Transparency and Planning

Improving Tennessee's literacy rates will require continuing to engage in detailed planning and effective implementation at the school district level. The act requires school districts to develop a Foundational Literacy Skills Plan to articulate locally driven solutions to improve literacy outcomes for students. These plans will be submitted to the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) for approval and reported publicly to provide transparency. Recognizing that many school districts across the state may already provide literacy instruction rooted in foundational literacy skills, the act allows for plans to be developed for and tailored to local contexts.

Measurement and Reporting

School districts will begin to administer a universal reading screener to all students in K-3rd grades three times each year to identify students with a significant reading deficiency and measure literacy rates across schools. The act provides flexibility for school districts to use a reading screener they already possess or use the Tennessee Universal Reading screener that will be provided free of charge. Recognizing the importance of instructional time, the Tennessee Universal Reading Screener can be used by school districts to satisfy multiple testing requirements including dyslexia screening, RtI² screening, and as an approved alternative to portfolio assessment.



Student Interventions and Support

To support student literacy in the classroom and at home, school districts will provide tailored reading supports and interventions for each student identified as having a significant reading deficiency. These tailored supports include notifying parents if students are identified as having a reading deficiency, providing personalized literacy reports after each administered screener, and providing interventions and activities that parents may use at home to support reading proficiency.

Teacher Training and Professional Development

Ensuring that current and future teachers receive adequate training and support in foundational literacy skills instruction is crucial for the success of this new act. Current teachers in K-5th grades must complete at least one professional development course on foundational literacy skills approved by the TDOE to advance or renew their teaching licenses. This can be done as part of the currently required professional development points needed to renew teaching licenses in the state. To assist teachers in this endeavor, the TDOE will develop at least one professional development course to fulfill this requirement and provide it at no cost.

Finally, this act contains requirements for teacher preparation programs to ensure that new educators are also properly trained in delivering foundational literacy skills instruction. All educator preparation programs will provide teacher candidates with training on foundational literacy skills, beginning in 2022, and new teachers seeking to teach in K-5th grades will be required to pass a reading instruction assessment.