

S.4689, READ Act

Section 1. Short Title.

This section designates the Act as the “Reading Excellence and Achievement for Development Act” or the “READ Act.”

Section 2. Purposes.

This section establishes the purpose of the Act: to strengthen literacy instruction and improve reading outcomes for students from early childhood through grade 12 by supporting the implementation of science of reading-aligned practices, improving educator preparation and professional learning, and expanding access to high-quality instructional materials and interventions aligned with the science of reading.

Section 3. Findings.

This section sets forth findings regarding the national literacy crisis and the importance of evidence-based literacy instruction.

Sec. 3(2)(A) cites results from the 2024 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) showing that only 35 percent of eighth-grade students were proficient in reading. Sec. 3(6) recognizes the interdisciplinary body of research known as the science of reading, which demonstrates the effectiveness of structured, evidence-based literacy strategies.

Section 4. Definitions.

This section defines key terms used throughout the Act.

The term “*evidence-based*” adopts the definition provided in section 8101(21) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 but excludes the category of “promising evidence,” limiting the definition to activities supported by strong or moderate evidence.

The term “*science of reading*” is defined as an interdisciplinary body of research supporting explicit and systematic instruction in foundational literacy components including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, language structure, vocabulary, background knowledge, and literacy knowledge. The definition specifies that instructional approaches relying primarily on contextual guessing strategies such as the three-cueing system or “balanced literacy” do not meet this definition.

Section 5. Literacy improvement grants.

This section amends section 2222 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, which authorizes the Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) grant program, to encourage states to invest in evidence-based literacy instruction aligned with the science of

reading. While grants remain primarily competitive, Sec. 5(g)(2) establishes a 10% set-aside for States that rank within the lowest quintile of fourth-grade reading achievement for two consecutive assessment cycles on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

Reservation

Sec. 5(a)(2) modifies the reservation structure of the current CLSD program and creates a new Federal reservation for States with persistently low NAEP performance.

The bill establishes a new 10 percent reservation of appropriated funds to provide grants to eligible low-performing States. Eligible States are defined as those ranking within the lowest quintile for two consecutive NAEP assessment cycles based on the percentage of students performing at or above the NAEP Basic achievement level in fourth-grade reading. Funds reserved for eligible States are allotted in proportion to the student population, with a minimum award of 0.5 percent of the reserved funds.

States receiving funds under this set-aside must, within one year of receiving funds, conduct a statewide literacy needs assessment and complete a comprehensive literacy instruction plan based on that assessment.

Sec. 5(a)(2) also modifies the national reservation. The current CLSD program sets aside 5% of appropriated funds for national activities, including a national evaluation. This bill would allow the national reservation to go towards building national research capacity for literacy, including comprehensive centers and Regional Education Laboratories through the Institute of Education Sciences.

Duration of grants

Sec. 5(a)(3) retains existing CLSD grant duration requirements, including the five-year grant term and optional two-year renewal period based on demonstrated progress.

State applications

Sec. 5(a)(4) retains existing CLSD application requirements, including requirements for a statewide needs assessment and comprehensive literacy plan.

Priority

This subsection retains the existing priority for evidence-based activities and adds a new priority requiring the Secretary to give preference to States that demonstrate, based on the statewide needs assessment, that they have not yet implemented a comprehensive statewide approach to the required activities described in subsection 5(a)(6)

Required State uses of funds

Sec. 5(a)(6) requires states to: ensure pre-service and in-service training are aligned with the science of reading, which may include creating literacy coaching networks, evaluating teacher preparation programs, and updating state licensure or certification standards; implement evidence-based interventions aligned with the science of reading, which may include high impact tutoring and summer learning programs; provide early literacy screening, including for dyslexia, at least once before third grade; assess and support the implementation of evidence-based practices, including high-quality instructional materials; convene and solicit input from educators; and collect and publicly report implementation data.

Subgrants to Local Educational Agencies

Sec. 5(a)(6) establishes that States must allocate not less than 75 percent of grant funds for subgrants to local educational agencies to support local literacy improvement activities. Allowable activities include strengthening literacy instruction through professional learning, employing instructional coaches and interventionists, purchasing and implementing instructional materials aligned with the science of reading, conducting universal early literacy screenings, conducting interventions such as high-impact tutoring and summer learning programs, supporting home literacy through family engagement initiatives, supporting evidence-based bilingual literacy instruction, and convening and soliciting input from educators.

Grantee requirements

Sec. 5(a)(6) requires States receiving grants to comply with a program evaluation and to ensure that funds are used to supplement, and not supplant, any State or local funds that would otherwise be used for literacy instruction, teacher preparation, or interventions.

Teacher preparation requirements

Sec. 5(a)(6) requires states receiving grants to conduct evaluations of teacher preparation programs to ensure alignment with the science of reading. This subsection also requires states receiving grants to update or establish licensure or certification requirements demonstrating that teachers who teach in kindergarten through grade 8 demonstrate competency in literacy instruction grounded in the science of reading.

Definitions

The term “high-impact tutoring” is defined as a form of teaching that supplements classroom instruction and is conducted one-on-one or in small groups that includes: sustained tutoring time, strong tutor-student relationships, alignment with school curriculum, monitoring of student progress, and oversight to ensure quality instruction.

The term “universal early literacy screening” is defined as the systematic and periodic assessment of all students’ foundational reading skills to identify those at risk for reading difficulties and to provide timely, evidence-based interventions.

Authorization of appropriations

This subsection authorizes such sums as may be necessary for fiscal years 2026 through 2035 to carry out the Act and the amendments made by the Act.

Section 6. Parent Reporting.

This section requires schools serving students in kindergarten through grade 8 to notify parents or guardians when a child is identified as at risk of reading difficulties or performing below grade level at the beginning of the year and following any through-year literacy screening.

Notifications shall include the results of the assessment or screening, the supports that will be provided to reach proficiency, and ways that the parent or guardian can support learning at home.