

House Bill 897

By: Representatives Freeman of the 140th, Keown of the 173rd, Tumlin of the 38th, Jamieson of the 28th, Benton of the 31st, and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Part 3 of Article 6 of Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia
2 Annotated, relating to educational programs under the "Quality Basic Education Act," so as
3 to change the provisions relating to the dates by which a child must reach a certain age in
4 order to be eligible for enrollment in certain educational programs; to provide for related
5 matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

7 **SECTION 1.**

8 Part 3 of Article 6 of Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated,
9 relating to educational programs under the "Quality Basic Education Act," is amended by
10 striking subsection (a) of Code Section 20-2-150, relating to eligibility for enrollment, and
11 inserting in lieu thereof the following:

12 "(a) Except as otherwise provided by subsection (b) of this Code section, all children and
13 youth who have attained the age of five years by July 1 ~~September 1~~ shall be eligible for
14 enrollment in the appropriate general education programs authorized in this part unless they
15 attain the age of 20 by July 1 ~~September 1~~ or they have received high school diplomas or
16 the equivalent. This shall specifically include students who have reenrolled after dropping
17 out and who are married, parents, or pregnant. Special education students shall also be
18 eligible for enrollment in appropriate education programs through age 21 or until they
19 receive high school or special education diplomas or the equivalent; provided, however,
20 they were enrolled during the preceding school year and had an approved Individualized
21 Education Program (IEP) which indicated that a successive year of enrollment was needed.
22 Other students who have not yet attained age 21 by July 1 ~~September 1~~ or received high
23 school diplomas or the equivalent shall be eligible for enrollment in appropriate education
24 programs, provided they have not dropped out of school for one quarter or more. Each local
25 unit of administration shall have the authority to assign students who are married, parents,
26 or pregnant or who have reenrolled after dropping out one quarter or more to programs of

1 instruction within its regular daytime educational program, provided that a local unit of
 2 administration may develop and implement special programs of instruction limited to such
 3 students within the regular daytime educational program or, at the option of the student, in
 4 an alternative program beyond the regular daytime program; provided, further, that such
 5 programs of instruction are designed to enable such students to earn course credit toward
 6 receiving high school diplomas. These programs may include instruction in prenatal care
 7 and child care. Each local unit of administration shall have the authority to provide
 8 alternative programs beyond the regular daytime educational program. Unless otherwise
 9 provided by law, the State Board of Education shall have the authority to determine the
 10 eligibility of students for enrollment. It is declared to be the policy of this state that general
 11 and occupational education be integrated into a comprehensive educational program which
 12 will contribute to the total development of the individual."

13 SECTION 2.

14 Said part is further amended in Code Section 20-2-151, relating to general and career
 15 education programs, by striking subsection (b) and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

16 "(b) The following general and career education programs are authorized for purposes
 17 of funding under this article:

18 (1)(A) All local school systems shall offer a full-day kindergarten program. For
 19 purposes of this subsection, the term 'full-day basis' means a student is provided
 20 classroom instruction for a minimum of four and one-half hours daily for a 180 day
 21 school year.

22 (B) It is the policy of this state that the purposes of the kindergarten program shall be
 23 to provide all children with an equal opportunity to become prepared for a successful
 24 first grade experience and to acquire the foundation for academic progress throughout
 25 the students' educational careers. To be eligible for enrollment in a state supported
 26 kindergarten program, a child must attain the age of five by July 1 ~~September 1~~, except
 27 as otherwise provided by subsection (b) of Code Section 20-2-150;

28 (2) It is the policy of this state that the purpose of the primary grades program shall be
 29 mastery by enrolled students of the essential basic skills and knowledge which will
 30 enable them to achieve more advanced skills and knowledge offered at the higher grade
 31 levels. For purposes of funding under this article, the primary grades program shall
 32 include grades one, two, and three. To be eligible for enrollment in the first grade of a
 33 state supported primary grades program, a child must attain the age of six by July 1
 34 ~~September 1~~, except as otherwise provided by subsection (b) of Code Section 20-2-150.
 35 The State Board of Education shall adopt an instrument or instruments, procedures, and
 36 policies necessary to assess the first grade readiness of children enrolled in Georgia's

1 public school kindergarten programs pursuant to Code Section 20-2-281. Readiness
 2 information obtained by the instrument or instruments adopted by the state board shall
 3 be used by local school systems in concert with teacher recommendations and other
 4 relevant information to make appropriate student grade placement decisions. The
 5 Department of Education shall develop guidelines for utilization of the instrument or
 6 instruments in grade placement decisions and shall provide such guidelines to local
 7 school systems. The guidelines shall include information pertinent to consideration of the
 8 placement of students who have been identified as being disabled or
 9 limited-English-proficient. Whenever the decision is made not to promote a child to the
 10 first grade, the local school system shall document the reasons for the decision not to
 11 promote, according to guidelines established by the board. The State School
 12 Superintendent shall annually provide a report summarizing the results of the readiness
 13 of first grade Georgia public school kindergarten children. No student shall remain in
 14 kindergarten for more than two years;

15 (3) It is the policy of this state that the primary purposes of the middle grades program
 16 shall be assuring the mastery of essential basic skills and knowledge, assisting students
 17 in the transition from childhood to adolescence, and preparing students for the selection
 18 of programs and courses consistent with their abilities and interests when they enter high
 19 school, as well as providing an opportunity for mastery of essential but more advanced
 20 skills and knowledge. For purposes of funding under this article, the middle grades
 21 program shall include grades four, five, six, seven, and eight; and

22 (4)(A) It is the policy of this state that the primary purposes of the high school
 23 programs shall be to prepare students for the continuation of their education beyond
 24 high school and for entry into their chosen career fields as well as to prepare them to
 25 take their places in society as young adults. The following high school programs for
 26 grades nine, ten, 11, and 12 are authorized for purposes of funding under this article:

27 (i) The high school education program; and

28 (ii) The vocational laboratory program.

29 (B) As a reflection of the reduced teacher-student ratios and more extensive material
 30 and equipment needed for effective laboratory courses compared to courses with no or
 31 only limited laboratory experiences, the vocational laboratory program shall be funded
 32 at a higher level than the high school general education program. The state board shall
 33 adopt criteria which courses must meet in order to qualify for the vocational laboratory
 34 program."

35 SECTION 3.

36 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.