

House Bill 537

By: Representatives Evans of the 89th, Ballard of the 147th, Cooper of the 45th, Paris of the 142nd, Mainor of the 56th, and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to education, so as to
2 require the Department of Early Care and Learning to provide for age-appropriate evidence
3 based literacy instruction training requirements for certain child care providers; to provide
4 for the Professional Standards Commission to require that teacher education programs
5 include mandatory coursework in age-appropriate evidence based literacy instruction; to
6 require the Professional Standards Commission to revise standards for acquiring and
7 maintaining teacher certification in all teaching fields to include requirements regarding
8 age-appropriate evidence based literacy instruction; to provide for definitions; to provide for
9 legislative findings; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other
10 purposes.

11 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

12 style="text-align:center">**SECTION 1.**

13 The General Assembly finds that:

- 14 (1) Creating a literate, workforce ready citizenry is the responsibility of the State of
15 Georgia;
- 16 (2) Literacy instruction is an entire pipeline that extends from birth to retirement;

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17 (3) Georgia educators need to be empowered with tools to enable Georgia students to
18 become literate, workforce ready citizens;

19 (4) Reading proficiency at age seven is the best indicator for high school graduation,
20 regardless of poverty or the education status of a parent or other primary caregiver; and

21 (5) For approximately 20 years, only one-third of Georgia fourth graders have been
22 reading at or above proficient as measured by the National Assessment of Educational
23 Progress.

24 **SECTION 2.**

25 Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to education, is amended in
26 Article 1 of Chapter 1A, relating to general provisions regarding early care and learning, by
27 revising subsection (c) of Code Section 20-1A-10, relating to regulation of early care and
28 education programs, as follows:

29 "(c) All early care and education programs that care for children shall be licensed or
30 commissioned annually, and all licenses and commissions issued by the department shall
31 be subject to annual renewal by the department in accordance with procedures, standards,
32 rules, and regulations to be established by the board. Beginning July 1, 2025, such
33 standards shall include a requirement that at least 20 percent of annual training
34 requirements for all new and existing child care learning centers and family child care
35 learning home providers shall be focused on age-appropriate evidence based literacy
36 instruction as defined in Code Section 20-2-984."

37 **SECTION 3.**

38 Said title is further amended in Part 10 of Article 17 of Chapter 2, relating to professional
39 standards for teachers and other school personnel in elementary and secondary education, by
40 revising Code Section 20-2-984, relating to the Professional Standards Commission's
41 authority to create and implement standards and procedures for certifying educational

42 personnel, recommending standards and procedures for certification, continuation of teaching
43 certificates, and restrictions, as follows:

44 "20-2-984.

45 (a) As used in this Code section, the term:

46 (1) 'Differentiated instruction' means instruction that demonstrates a teacher's recognition
47 of students as individuals in terms of their abilities, achievement, learning styles, and
48 needs, including, but not limited to, at-risk students, English language learners, students
49 with special needs, and gifted students, and that gives greater emphasis to
50 individualization in teaching by making adjustments to curricula, materials, learning
51 activities, and assessment techniques to ensure that all students in a mixed-ability
52 classroom can have equal access to appropriate avenues for processing new information
53 and developing skills.

54 (2) 'Evidence based literacy instruction' means education practices that address all of the
55 following: the acquisition of language, phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics
56 and spelling, fluency, vocabulary, oral language, comprehension, the intersection of
57 writing and reading, and utilization of literacy instruction methods in other subjects such
58 as science and history.

59 (3) 'Fluency' means the ability to read text accurately, quickly, and expressively.

60 (4) 'Phonemes' means the smallest units of sound that can differentiate meaning.

61 (5) 'Phonemic awareness' means the ability to hear, identify, manipulate, and substitute
62 phonemes in spoken words.

63 (6) 'Phonics' means the association of written letters with the sounds of spoken language.

64 (b) The commission shall create and implement standards and procedures for certifying
65 educational personnel as qualified for a certificate to practice in the public schools of
66 Georgia; provided, however, that such standards and procedures shall not require an
67 individual to participate in or complete any training program in which divisive concepts,

68 as such term is defined in Code Section 20-1-11, are advocated for; provided, further, that
69 such standards shall include the following:

70 (1) Procedures for limiting the number and types of certificates to the fewest possible
71 consistent with providing qualified teachers for Georgia's schools;

72 (2) In-service training and related requirements needed to renew or maintain
73 certification;

74 (3) Multiple or alternative routes to professional teacher certification, including, but not
75 limited to, the alternative and nontraditional teacher certification programs provided for
76 in Code Section 20-2-206; and

77 (4) Requirements, including appropriate examinations and assessments, for acquiring and
78 maintaining certification pursuant to Code Section 20-2-200, which requirements shall
79 include, but shall not be limited to, the following beginning July 1, 2025:

80 (A) Twenty-five percent of professional learning requirements shall be focused on
81 age-appropriate evidence based literacy instruction for renewal of a teacher certification
82 in the teaching fields designated by the commission as 'B-K' or 'P-5';

83 (B) Ten percent of professional learning requirements shall be focused on
84 age-appropriate evidence based literacy instruction for renewal of a teacher certification
85 in the teaching fields designated by the commission as 'P-12' or for grades four through
86 eight or grades six through 12; and

87 (C) The Georgia Assessments for Certification of Educators (GACE), or other
88 assessment required by the commission for teacher certification, shall be aligned with
89 age-appropriate evidence based literacy instruction.

90 ~~(b)~~(c) The commission shall recommend to the board of regents and private colleges and
91 universities standards and procedures for preparing educational personnel to qualify for
92 initial and renewable certification to practice in the public schools of Georgia, including
93 the following:

94 (1) Pre-service preparation;

- 95 (2) Approval of teacher education programs, both graduate and undergraduate, which
96 shall include, at a minimum, mandatory coursework in:
- 97 (A) Differentiated instruction, including the development and implementation of
98 explicit curricula to effectively support and deliver differentiated instruction to students:
99 ~~As used in this subparagraph, the term 'differentiated instruction' means instruction that~~
100 ~~demonstrates a teacher's recognition of students as individuals in terms of their abilities,~~
101 ~~achievement, learning styles, and needs, including but not limited to at-risk students,~~
102 ~~English language learners, students with special needs, and gifted students, and that~~
103 ~~gives greater emphasis to individualization in teaching by making adjustments to~~
104 ~~curricula, materials, learning activities, and assessment techniques to ensure that all~~
105 ~~students in a mixed-ability classroom can have equal access to appropriate avenues for~~
106 ~~processing new information and developing skills; and~~
- 107 (B) Instruction related to age-appropriate evidence based literacy instruction ~~the~~
108 ~~development of fundamental reading skills, including phonemic awareness, phonics,~~
109 ~~fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension;~~
- 110 (3) Approval of programs of alternative certification; and
- 111 (4) The creation of innovative programs designed to increase the number of minority
112 teachers entering the profession, including, but not limited to, programs designed to
113 promote increased student enrollment in and completion of teacher education programs
114 offered at historically black colleges and universities in this state.
- 115 ~~(c)~~(d) All certificates in force in this state which were issued by the state board prior to
116 July 1, 1991, shall continue in full force and effect, subject to all the terms and conditions
117 under which they were issued, until they expire by virtue of their own limitations or until
118 their terms or conditions are modified by action of the commission. All such certificates
119 issued by the state board prior to July 1, 1991, shall be deemed to have been issued by the
120 commission for purposes of any law or regulation relating to such certificates.

121 ~~(d)~~(e) The commission shall not have authority over the compensation, benefits, or
122 working conditions of educational personnel in the public schools of Georgia; provided,
123 however, that the commission shall have the authority to make recommendations to the
124 State Board of Education regarding compensation as it relates to certification.

125 ~~(e) Reserved.~~

126 (f) The commission shall have the authority to deny, revoke, or suspend certification or
127 renewal of a school system educator as provided for in Code Section 20-2-984.5.

128 (g) The commission shall have the authority to issue formal warnings, reprimands,
129 monitoring, or any combination thereof to educators as provided for in Code Section
130 20-2-984.5.

131 (h) The commission may provide consultative services pertaining to the teaching
132 profession to anyone who has a vested interest in education and make recommendations
133 to the state board or to local boards which will promote an improvement in the teaching
134 profession. The commission shall be authorized to hold meetings for the purposes of
135 determining recommendations pursuant to this subsection; and, at such meetings, the
136 commission may receive testimony from educators or other persons interested in the
137 improvement of the teaching profession; but the investigative powers of the commission
138 may not be exercised pursuant to the authority of this subsection."

139 **SECTION 4.**

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