

The House Committee on Education offers the following substitute to HB 200:

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

1 To amend Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to
2 elementary and secondary education, so as to require that each new elementary school
3 constructed on or after July 1, 2027, shall include a playground meeting certain standards;
4 to provide playground design standards and minimum guidelines; to provide for the State
5 Board of Education to establish a three-year pilot immersive writing program for eligible
6 public elementary schools; to provide for eligibility; to provide for grant funds for eligible
7 public elementary schools to develop and implement immersive writing programs for
8 students in grades two through five; to provide for applications and selection to participate
9 in the pilot program; to provide for assessment and reporting on the impacts of the pilot
10 program; to authorize the State Board of Education to promulgate rules and regulations to
11 implement the pilot program; to provide for automatic repeal; to provide for related matters;
12 to provide for an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

13 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

SECTION 1.

Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to elementary and secondary education is amended in Code Section 20-2-261, relating to common minimum facility requirements, by revising subsection (a) as follows:

"(a) The State Board of Education shall establish common minimum facility requirements which each public school facility ~~must~~ shall meet in order to be certified for use in any component of the educational or recreational program of ~~that~~ such school. Such minimum requirements shall:

(1) Include such ~~include those~~ provisions of law or state board policy on matters that relate to;

(A) Fire ~~fire~~ and physical safety;

(B) Sanitation ~~sanitation~~ and health, including temperature and ventilation;

(C) Minimum ~~minimum~~ space, size, and configuration for the various components of the instructional program; and

(D) Construction ~~construction~~ stability, quality, and suitability for intended uses; ~~Such minimum requirements shall not~~

(2) Not prohibit wood construction that is otherwise in compliance with state minimum standard codes as they existed on January 1, 2014. ~~As used in this subsection, the term 'state minimum standard codes' shall have the same meaning as in paragraph (9) of Code Section 8-2-20; and~~

(3) Provide that the construction of each new elementary school commenced on or after July 1, 2027, shall include a playground which meets the following design standards:

(A) Provides a sensory-diverse environment that enables children of all abilities to develop physically, socially, and emotionally;

(B) Provides an engaging play space with age and ability-appropriate levels of challenge and offers opportunities for children of all abilities to succeed, regardless of physical and intellectual attributes;

41 (C) Enables all students to benefit from state mandated recess time for elementary
42 students;

43 (D) Capable for use as an outdoor classroom that is open to all students; and

44 (E) Meets the following minimum guidelines:

45 (i) Playground is accessible via a sidewalk or pathway from the school;

46 (ii) Playground is a minimum of 10,000 square feet in area;

47 (iii) Fencing surrounds and encloses the entire playground area;

48 (iv) A minimum of 20 percent of the total playground area shall be shaded; provided,
49 however, that such shaded area may comprise more than one area so long as the total
50 shaded area meets or exceeds 20 percent of the total playground area; and, provided,
51 further, that such shading may be provided by natural means, such as existing mature
52 trees, or man-made means, such as sun canopies;

53 (v) Unitary surfacing shall be used throughout at least 80 percent of the playground
54 area. Examples of unitary surfacing include, but are not limited to, turf, bonded
55 rubber, and poured in place rubber; and

56 (vi) Components that are installed on a portion of the playground with the unitary
57 surfacing and accessible for all users that address the physical, sensory, cognitive,
58 social, emotional, imaginative, and communication needs of those who will visit the
59 playground, including, but not limited to:

60 (I) One communication board;

61 (II) One learning American Sign Language (ASL) alphabet panel or one learning
62 Braille alphabet panel;

63 (III) One roller slide;

64 (IV) A minimum of two pieces of equipment that make music, such as chimes,
65 drums, and bells;

66 (V) A minimum of two adaptive or accessible swings;

(VI) A minimum of one play piece accessible to a child remaining in a wheelchair that allows such child to play with other children;
(VII) A minimum of four sensory panels; and
(VIII) A minimum of one wheelchair accessible raised structure or wheelchair accessible slide."

SECTION 2.

Said title is further amended by designating Code Sections 20-2-330 through 20-2-334 as Part 1 and by adding a new part to read as follows:

"Part 2

20-2-335.

(a)(1) The State Board of Education shall establish a pilot immersive writing program for students in grades two through five in order to:

(A) Provide funding for all public school students in grades two through five to participate in programs that provide for immersive writing experiences that are aligned with writing standards established by the State Board of Education and can be integrated into existing curricula;

(B) Improve literacy skills of elementary school students and motivate them to engage in writing projects; and

(C) Study the impacts of such pilot writing program.

(2) Subject to appropriations by the General Assembly, the pilot program shall include funding for up to \$2 million in grants each school year, for up to three school years beginning with the 2026-2027 school year, to participating public elementary schools.

(3) To be eligible to participate in the pilot program, a public elementary school shall:

(A) Serve students in any grades two through five; and

(B) By January 1, 2026, submit an application to participate in the pilot program, which application shall include such school's statement of intent for the use of grant funds.

(4) The State Board of Education shall establish pilot program requirements and criteria for selecting eligible public schools to participate in the pilot program in accordance with the provisions of this Code section.

(5) The State Board of Education shall be authorized to establish reporting requirements for the public schools participating in the pilot program.

(6) The State Board of Education shall promulgate rules and regulations necessary to carry out the provisions of this Code section.

(b)(1) By October 1, 2025, the Department of Education shall develop an application process and seek applications from eligible public schools for the pilot program to be submitted no later than January 1, 2026.

(2)(A) The Department of Education shall monitor and annually assess the status of the pilot program with cooperation and input from the public schools and local school systems participating in the pilot program.

(B) Beginning no later than June 1, 2027, and by June 1 of each year thereafter, the Department of Education shall provide to the State Board of Education a report of the annual assessment provided for in subparagraph (A) of this paragraph.

(c) This Code section shall stand repealed in its entirety on July 1, 2029."

SECTION 3.

This Act shall become effective on July 1, 2025.

SECTION 4.

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