

Senate Bill 459

By: Senators Hickman of the 4th, Walker III of the 20th, Anavitarte of the 31st, Still of the 48th, Payne of the 54th 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 promote and advance state-wide literacy and reading education efforts; to include Quality
3 Basic Education funding for school based literacy coaches in each public school in this state
4 with students in any of grades kindergarten through three; to require all children to attend
5 kindergarten prior to enrolling in first grade, subject to exception; to encourage families to
6 have their children attend school or a home study program beginning at age five; to provide
7 for first grade readiness assessments; to require annual reports regarding first grade
8 readiness; to revise provisions relative to grade placement, promotion, and retention; to
9 provide for literacy coaching endorsements for certificated professional personnel; to
10 substantially revise the "Georgia Early Literacy and Dyslexia Act"; to include legislative
11 intent; to provide for a definition; to revise provisions of said act relative to the selection of
12 and requirements for universal reading screeners; to revise provisions for professional
13 learning; to require local school systems and other public schools to have unified literacy
14 plans; to revise provisions for educator preparation programs and the evaluation of such
15 programs by the Professional Standards Commission; to provide for regional literacy coaches
16 employed by regional educational service agencies; to provide for certification of and
17 funding for high-quality instructional materials; to establish within the Office of Student
18 Achievement the Georgia Literacy Coordinating Committee; to provide for the Georgia
19 Director of Literacy; to provide for the Georgia Coordinator of Literacy Coaches; to repeal

20 the Georgia Literacy Coach; to provide for a position description and minimum qualifications
21 and duties for school based literacy coaches and regional literacy coaches; to establish the
22 Georgia Literacy Task Force; to provide for appointment, qualifications, duties, and
23 compensation of members of such task force; to provide for recommendations of such task
24 force; to provide for consideration of such recommendations by the State Board of
25 Education; to provide for a comprehensive state-wide promotional campaign for literacy
26 awareness; to provide a short title; to provide for an effective date; to provide for related
27 matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

28 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

29 **SECTION 1.**

30 This Act shall be known and may be cited as the "Georgia Early Literacy Act of 2026."

31 **SECTION 2.**

32 Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to education, is amended in
33 Article 4 of Chapter 1, relating to the Council on Literacy, by revising subsection (e) of Code
34 Section 20-1-42, relating to membership, terms, cooperation, and Literacy Coach, as follows:

35 "(e) The council shall be attached for administrative purposes only to the Office of Student
36 Achievement. The Office of Student Achievement shall provide staff support for the
37 council and shall hire an individual to serve as Georgia ~~Literacy Coach~~ Director of Literacy
38 who shall be responsible for coordination of such staff support and for working in
39 coordination with the literacy related efforts of the Alliance of Education Agency Heads.
40 The Office of Student Achievement shall use any funds specifically appropriated to support
41 the work of the council for such purpose."

42 **SECTION 3.**

43 Said title is further amended in Part 3 of Article 6 of Chapter 2, relating to educational
44 programs under the "Quality Basic Education Act," by revising subsection (c) of Code
45 Section 20-2-150, relating to eligibility for enrollment for educational programs, as follows:
46 "(c) All children enrolled for 20 school days or more in the public schools of this state
47 prior to their ~~seventh~~ fifth birthday shall become subject to all of the provisions of this
48 article, the provisions of Code Sections 20-2-690 through 20-2-701, and the rules and
49 regulations of the State Board of Education relating to compulsory school attendance even
50 though they have not attained ~~seven~~ five years of age."

51

SECTION 4.

52 Said title is further amended in said part by revising paragraphs (1) and (2) of subsection (b)
53 of Code Section 20-2-151, relating to general and career education programs, purpose, and
54 authorized programs, as follows:

55 "(1)(A) All local school systems ~~may~~ shall offer a full-day kindergarten program. As
56 used in ~~For purposes of~~ this subsection, the term 'full-day kindergarten program' means
57 a student is provided classroom instruction for a minimum of four and one-half hours
58 daily for a 180 day school year, or the equivalent thereof as determined in accordance
59 with State Board of Education guidelines.

60 (B) It is the policy of this state that all children shall attend a full-day kindergarten
61 program prior to enrolling in first grade and that the purposes of the kindergarten such
62 program shall be to provide all children with an equal opportunity to become prepared
63 for a successful first grade experience and to acquire the foundation for academic
64 progress throughout the students' educational careers. This subparagraph shall not be
65 construed or applied to require a child to complete a full school year of kindergarten
66 prior to enrolling in first grade. A child who has been assessed as ready for first grade,
67 as provided for in paragraph (2) of this subsection, and who meets the age eligibility
68 requirement may be placed in or promoted to first grade.

69 (C) To be eligible for enrollment in a state supported kindergarten program, a child
 70 ~~must~~ shall attain the age of five by September 1, except as otherwise provided by
 71 subsection (b) of Code Section 20-2-150.

72 (D) No student shall remain in kindergarten for more than two years.

73 (E) At the discretion of the school principal, a student who meets the age eligibility
 74 requirement for enrollment in the first grade may be assessed for first grade readiness
 75 as provided for in paragraph (2) of this subsection;

76 (2)(A) It is the policy of this state that the purpose of the primary grades program shall
 77 be mastery by enrolled students of the essential basic skills and knowledge which will
 78 enable them to achieve more advanced skills and knowledge offered at the higher grade
 79 levels. For purposes of funding under this article, the primary grades program shall
 80 include grades one, two, and three.

81 (B) To be eligible for enrollment in the first grade of a state supported primary grades
 82 program, a child ~~must~~ shall:

83 (i) Be assessed for readiness by teachers and other personnel of the local school
 84 system or public school. Such assessment shall include:

85 (I) The use of assessments, screeners, and other instruments approved for such
 86 purpose by the State Board of Education, including, but not limited to:

87 (a) The first grade readiness assessment adopted by the State Board of Education
 88 pursuant to Code Section 20-2-281; and

89 (b) A universal reading screener adopted by the State Board of Education
 90 pursuant to Code Section 20-2-153.1;

91 (II) Consideration of teacher input and recommendations; and

92 (III) Other relevant information, which shall include, but shall not be limited to, the
 93 preference of such child's parent or guardian; and

94 (ii) Attain ~~attain~~ the age of six by September 1, except as otherwise provided by
 95 subsection (b) of Code Section 20-2-150. ~~The State Board of Education shall adopt~~

96 ~~an instrument or instruments, procedures, and policies necessary to assess the first~~
97 ~~grade readiness of children enrolled in Georgia's public school kindergarten programs~~
98 ~~pursuant to Code Section 20-2-281. Readiness information obtained by the~~
99 ~~instrument or instruments adopted by the state board shall be used by local school~~
100 ~~systems in concert with teacher recommendations and other relevant information to~~
101 ~~make appropriate student grade placement decisions.~~

102 (C) If, upon being assessed for first grade readiness pursuant to this paragraph, a child
103 is identified as significantly at risk of not attaining grade level reading proficiency, as
104 provided for in Code Section 20-2-153.1:

105 (i) A tiered reading intervention plan shall be immediately developed and
106 implemented for such child; and

107 (ii) The parent or guardian of the student shall be notified in writing by first-class
108 mail by the school principal or the principal's designee regarding the determination
109 that the student has been identified as significantly at risk of not attaining grade level
110 reading proficiency prior to beginning the first grade, the student's tiered reading
111 intervention plan, and the possibility that the student might not be placed or promoted
112 to the first grade.

113 (D) When a child who meets the age eligibility requirement for enrollment in the first
114 grade has been identified as significantly at risk of not attaining grade level reading
115 proficiency and, after a tiered reading intervention plan has been implemented, the child
116 continues to be significantly at risk of not attaining grade level reading proficiency, the
117 following shall occur:

118 (i) The school principal or the principal's designee shall determine the child is not
119 ready for placement in or promotion to the first grade program except as otherwise
120 provided in this paragraph;

121 (ii) The school principal or the principal's designee shall notify in writing by
122 first-class mail the parent or guardian of the child regarding the determination that the

123 child is not ready for placement in or promotion to the first grade program. The
124 notice shall describe the option of the parent or guardian to appeal such determination
125 and shall further describe the composition and functions of the placement committee
126 as provided for in this paragraph, including the requirement that a decision to place
127 the child in or promote the child to the first grade must be a unanimous decision of
128 the committee;

129 (iii) If the parent or guardian appeals the determination that his or her child is not
130 ready for placement in or promotion to the first grade program, then the school
131 principal or the principal's designee shall establish a placement committee composed
132 of the school principal or the principal's designee, the student's parent or guardian, and
133 the student's teacher, and shall notify in writing by first-class mail the parent or
134 guardian of the time and place for convening the placement committee;

135 (iv) The placement committee shall:

136 (I) Review the child's overall readiness for placement in or promotion to the first
137 grade program and his or her progress toward grade level reading proficiency;

138 (II) Decide whether the child shall be placed in or promoted to the first grade
139 program; provided, however, that a decision to place the child in or promote the
140 child to the first grade program shall be a unanimous decision; and

141 (III) Prescribe for the child such accelerated, differentiated, or additional instruction
142 as needed to perform at grade level by the conclusion of the subsequent school year,
143 prescribe such additional assessments as may be appropriate in addition to
144 assessments administered to other students at the grade level during the year, and
145 provide for a plan of continuous assessment during the subsequent school year in
146 order to monitor the progress of the child;

147 (v) For children who are eligible to receive special education or related services, the
148 child's Individualized Education Plan Committee shall serve as the placement
149 committee; and

150 (vi) The decision of the placement committee may be appealed only as provided for
151 by the local board of education or other public school governing body.

152 (E) By July 1, 2026, the State Board of Education shall:

153 (i) Adopt policies and procedures necessary to implement the requirements of this
154 paragraph; and

155 (ii) Approve one or more assessments, screeners, and other instruments for assessing
156 the first grade readiness of children. The State Board of Education shall consider for
157 approval any assessment, screener, or other instrument recommended by the Office
158 of Student Achievement.

159 (F) By July 15, 2026, the ~~The~~ Department of Education, in collaboration with the
160 Office of Student Achievement, shall develop guidelines for utilization of ~~the~~
161 instrument or instruments such assessments, screeners, and other instruments approved
162 by the State Board of Education in grade placement decisions and shall provide such
163 guidelines and technical assistance to local school systems and public schools. The
164 guidelines shall include information pertinent to consideration of the placement of
165 students who have been identified as being disabled or limited-English-proficient.

166 (G) Whenever the decision is made not to place a child in or promote a child to the first
167 grade, the local school system or public school shall document the reasons for the such
168 decision not to promote, according to policies, procedures, and guidelines established
169 by the board State Board of Education and shall provide such reasons in writing to the
170 parent or guardian of the child.

171 (H) By November 1 each year, the Office of Student Achievement shall ~~The State~~
172 School Superintendent may annually provide a report summarizing the results of the
173 readiness of first grade Georgia public school kindergarten children. No student shall
174 remain in kindergarten for more than two years the readiness of Georgia children for
175 placement in or promotion to the first grade program. Such report shall include, but
176 shall not be limited to, information on the grade level reading proficiency of such

177 children. Such report shall be submitted to the Governor; the President of the Senate;
 178 the Speaker of the House of Representatives; the chairpersons of the House Committee
 179 on Education, the Senate Education and Youth Committee, the House Committee on
 180 Higher Education, the Senate Higher Education Committee, the House Committee on
 181 Appropriations, and the Senate Appropriations Committee; and the State Board of
 182 Education.

183 (I)(i) The provisions of subparagraphs (C) and (D) of this paragraph shall apply
 184 beginning with the 2027-2028 school year and continue thereafter.

185 (ii) By July 1, 2027, the State Board of Education and the Department of Education
 186 shall update the policies, procedures, guidelines required in subparagraphs (E) and (F)
 187 of this paragraph;"

188 **SECTION 5.**

189 Said title is further amended in said part by redesignating paragraph (16) of subsection (b)
 190 as paragraph (17), adding a new paragraph to subsection (b), revising subsection (c),
 191 paragraph (2) of subsection (d), and subsection (d.1), repealing and replacing subsection (e),
 192 and adding a new subsection to Code Section 20-2-153.1, the "Georgia Early Literacy and
 193 Dyslexia Act," as follows:

194 "(a.1) It is the intent of the General Assembly that:

195 (1) Early literacy instruction in this state shall be:

196 (A) Comprehensive;

197 (B) Focused on structured literacy and foundational literacy skills;

198 (C) Aligned to the science of reading; and

199 (D) Anchored by high-quality instructional materials that are aligned to the science of
 200 reading;

201 (2) Educators shall have access to and be provided with research on the science of
 202 reading and receive comprehensive curriculum based professional learning to support
 203 them in applying such research in instructional practices; and

204 (3) The ongoing involvement of parents and guardians in comprehensive state-wide
 205 literacy efforts shall be encouraged and integrated into their children's educations."

206 "(16) 'Unified literacy plan' means a comprehensive, evidence based framework to ensure
 207 coherent, aligned, and continuous literacy development for learners from birth through
 208 career readiness. Such plan shall, as appropriate according to grade levels served:

209 (A) Establish measurable literacy goals for all tested grade levels, using state-wide
 210 assessment results and approved universal reading screener data to monitor student
 211 progress, guide instructional decision making, and evaluate program effectiveness;

212 (B) Include explicit strategies for collaboration with early learning providers for
 213 learners from birth to age five to support school readiness and early language
 214 development; and

215 (C) Establish literacy transition plans for the transition from kindergarten to elementary
 216 school."

217 "(c)(1) The board, in consultation with the department and the Office of Student
 218 Achievement, shall establish such policies, rules, and regulations as necessary to
 219 implement uniform grade-appropriate metrics for measuring literacy.

220 (2) ~~By March 1, 2027~~ As soon as practicable but not later than January 1, 2024, the
 221 board shall:

222 (A) ~~Upon the recommendation of the Office of Student Achievement, approve~~
 223 ~~Approve~~ high-quality instructional materials aligned to the science of reading to be
 224 used for teaching students in kindergarten through third grade to read; and

225 (B) Establish a procedure for each public school and local school system to annually
 226 certify to the department that such school or school system's locally approved
 227 instructional materials and content, as defined in subsection (a) of Code

228 Section 20-2-1017, constitute high-quality instructional materials aligned to the science
229 of reading.

230 ~~(3)(A) Every three years beginning in 2027, the center shall review and update, as~~
231 ~~appropriate, qualifications, timelines, and submission procedures for education service~~
232 ~~providers to submit one or more universal reading screeners to be considered for~~
233 ~~inclusion on the board's list of approved universal reading screener providers provided~~
234 ~~for in subparagraph (B) of this paragraph.~~

235 ~~(B)(3) By April 1, 2028, and by April 1 every third year thereafter, upon the~~
236 ~~recommendation of the Office of Student Achievement a list of no less than two and As~~
237 ~~soon as practicable but not later than May 15, 2025, the board shall approve the~~
238 ~~memorandum of agreement between the council and the department, as provided for in~~
239 ~~subparagraph (B) of paragraph (4) of this subsection, for a list of no more than five~~
240 ~~universal reading screeners, one of which shall be a free universal reading screener, for~~
241 ~~use by public schools and local school systems as part of their comprehensive literacy~~
242 ~~programs which meet the following criteria shall be approved by the board. Each such~~
243 ~~universal reading screener shall:~~

244 ~~(i) Capable of providing relevant information to assist teachers with targeting~~
245 ~~instruction based on student needs;~~

246 ~~(ii) Capable of measuring foundational literacy skills;~~

247 ~~(iii) Capable of identifying students who are significantly at risk of not attaining~~
248 ~~grade level reading proficiency, including, but not limited to, identifying students with~~
249 ~~characteristics of dyslexia;~~

250 ~~(iv) Prescribed parameters on the time required to administer a universal reading~~
251 ~~screener with the primary objective of such prescription being to minimize impacts~~
252 ~~on instructional time; and~~

253 ~~(v) Capable of progress monitoring.~~

254 ~~(A) Provide screening and diagnostic capabilities for monitoring student progress;~~

255 (B) Measure, at a minimum, a student's foundational reading skills, including, but not
256 limited to, a student's phonological awareness, oral language, the alphabetic principle,
257 including letter naming, letter sound, and sound letter correspondences, decoding,
258 encoding, accuracy, vocabulary, and comprehension;

259 (C) Identify students who are significantly at risk of not attaining grade level reading
260 proficiency, including, but not limited to, identifying students with characteristics of
261 dyslexia; and

262 (D) Have robust reporting capabilities, including, but not limited to, the capability to
263 generate and provide directly to the department and the Office of Student Achievement
264 reports of screener results by:

265 (i) Student;

266 (ii) Student subgroups based on grade level, educational program, demographic
267 characteristics, and other criteria identified by the Georgia Literacy Task Force;

268 (iii) Teacher;

269 (iv) School; and

270 (v) Local school system.

271 ~~(4)(A) The By July 15 each year, the department shall publish and regularly update on~~
272 ~~its public website the free universal reading screener and the list of other approved~~
273 ~~universal reading screeners provided for in paragraph (3) of this subsection, one of which~~
274 ~~each public school and local school system shall adopt and administer in order to comply~~
275 ~~with the requirements of subparagraph (B) of paragraph (3) of this subsection as part of~~
276 ~~their comprehensive literacy programs.~~

277 ~~(B) The council, in collaboration with the center and the Office of Planning and~~
278 ~~Budget, shall identify a free universal reading screener that meets the criteria~~
279 ~~established by the board as provided in subparagraph (B) of paragraph (3) of this~~
280 ~~subsection. The council shall enter into a memorandum of agreement with the~~

281 ~~department to make such universal reading screener available for use free of charge to~~
282 ~~public schools and local school systems.~~

283 (5) The department shall publish on its public website and distribute by ~~July 15~~ July 1
284 each year by electronic means to each local school system and public school in this state
285 a dyslexia informational handbook that includes guidance, technical assistance, and
286 training to assist all schools in the implementation of evidence based practices for
287 instructing students with characteristics of dyslexia. Such handbook shall include, but
288 shall not be limited to, ~~the following information:~~

289 (A) Evidence based practices designed specifically for students with characteristics of
290 dyslexia;

291 (B) Guidance on developing support plans for students with characteristics of dyslexia;

292 (C) A list and brief description of the dyslexia related training programs accredited by
293 the International Dyslexia Association and any other nationally or internationally
294 recognized accrediting organization; and

295 (D) A list of dyslexia endorsement programs approved by the Professional Standards
296 Commission in collaboration with the Office of Student Achievement.

297 (6) The department shall, in consultation with the University System of Georgia, the
298 Professional Standards Commission, the Office of Student Achievement, the Georgia
299 Literacy Coordinating Committee, Georgia's regional ~~education~~ educational service
300 agencies, and literacy experts, develop or procure one or more training professional
301 learning programs for kindergarten through third grade teachers on the science of reading,
302 structured literacy, and foundational literacy skills that enable students to develop reading
303 skills required to meet state standards in literacy. Such programs shall emphasize the
304 importance of applying research about the science of reading to instructional practices
305 and of using high-quality instructional materials. Such ~~training~~ programs shall be
306 developed or procured to promote teachers' knowledge and skills for teaching all students
307 to read, including students with dyslexia, and to ensure teachers and literacy coaches have

308 the knowledge and skills necessary to use approved universal reading screeners and to
 309 use assessment data to inform instruction based on student needs. One such program
 310 shall be a state-wide comprehensive curriculum based professional learning program in
 311 structured literacy that is aligned to and includes research on the science of reading to
 312 support teachers and literacy coaches in applying such research into instructional
 313 practices for kindergarten through grade three teachers and literacy coaches. Beginning
 314 no later than the 2027-2028 school year, such comprehensive program shall be made
 315 available free of charge to public school kindergarten through third grade teachers.

316 (7) The department shall provide technical assistance to aid public schools and local
 317 school systems in implementing the provisions of this Code section.

318 (8)(A) By November 1 each year ~~Beginning April 1, 2026~~, the department shall
 319 provide an annual report on the impacts of the implementation of the provisions of this
 320 Code section, including, but not limited to, reporting the results by school and school
 321 system of:

322 (i) The comprehensive summative assessment program for third grade students
 323 provided for in subsection (a) of Code Section 20-2-281; and

324 (ii) The formative reading assessments for first and second grade students provided
 325 for in Code Section 20-2-280.

326 (B) Such report shall also include analyses of the impact of use of universal reading
 327 screeners, the use of high-quality instructional materials, and instructional practices
 328 ~~grounded in~~ aligned to the science of reading. Such report shall be provided to the
 329 Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the
 330 ~~chairperson~~ chairpersons of the House Committee on Education, the Senate Education
 331 and Youth Committee, the House Committee on Higher Education, the Senate Higher
 332 Education Committee, the House Committee on Appropriations, and the Senate
 333 Appropriations Committee, and the board, and shall be made available on the
 334 department's ~~public~~ website for access by the public."

335 ~~“(2)(A) Utilizing school based literacy coaches and other available resources, each~~ Each
 336 public school and local school system shall provide instructional support for kindergarten
 337 through third grade teachers that shall include:

338 ~~(i)(A) Onsite teacher training~~ professional learning and research materials on the
 339 science of reading, structured literacy, foundational literacy skills, and evidence based
 340 decision making;

341 ~~(ii)(B) Demonstrated lessons to support teachers in applying such professional learning~~
 342 and research materials in instructional practices;

343 (C) School based literacy coaches working side-by-side with teachers in classrooms;

344 (D) School based literacy coaches working directly with individual students and small
 345 groups of students as time permits; and

346 ~~(iii)(E) Prompt feedback for improving instruction.~~

347 ~~(B)(i) Any public school or local school system claiming that a lack of sufficient~~
 348 ~~funding prevents such public school or local school system from providing~~
 349 ~~instructional support as required in subparagraph (A) of this paragraph shall promptly~~
 350 ~~and in writing notify the department and shall describe all efforts such school or~~
 351 ~~school system has undertaken to secure sufficient funding from local, state, federal,~~
 352 ~~and private sources.~~

353 ~~(ii) The department shall provide technical assistance and other guidance to public~~
 354 ~~schools and local schools systems in identifying local, state, federal, and private~~
 355 ~~funding sources to provide for instructional support as required in subparagraph (A)~~
 356 ~~of this paragraph.”~~

357 ~~“(d.1)(1) The Professional Standards Commission shall adopt rules which establish~~
 358 ~~criteria for core curricula for each state approved educator preparation program. Such~~
 359 ~~rules shall include, but shall not be limited to, the following:~~

360 ~~(H)(A) The use of content standards established by the State Board of Education that~~
 361 ~~are aligned to the science of reading to guide curricula and instruction;~~

362 ~~(2)~~(B) Evidence based standards for the teaching of reading that:

363 ~~(A)~~(i) Are exclusively aligned ~~with~~ to the science of reading;

364 ~~(B)~~(ii) Prepare teachers to provide explicit, systematic, sequential, and cumulative

365 approaches to teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and text

366 comprehension; and

367 ~~(C)~~(iii) Employ multisensory and multimodal intervention strategies;

368 ~~(3)~~(C) Content based literacy and mathematics practices;

369 ~~(4)~~(D) Strategies appropriate for the instruction of English language learners;

370 ~~(5)~~(E) Strategies appropriate for the instruction of students with disabilities;

371 ~~(6)~~(F) Strategies ~~to~~ including, but not limited to, the use of assessment results, to

372 identify student strengths and weaknesses and differentiate instruction based on student

373 needs;

374 ~~(7)~~(G) Strategies and practices to support research based content aligned to state

375 standards and grading practices;

376 ~~(8)~~(H) Strategies appropriate for the early identification of a student with a reading

377 deficiency; and

378 ~~(9)~~(I) Strategies to support the use of technology in education and distance learning.

379 (2) Beginning January 1, 2027, the Professional Standards Commission shall undertake

380 an ongoing review of each state approved educator preparation program's compliance

381 with the rules provided for in paragraph (1) of this subsection, with a particular emphasis

382 on subparagraphs (B) and (F) of paragraph (1) of this subsection. The Executive Director

383 shall have the discretion to determine the order and priority of reviews; provided,

384 however, that all educator preparation programs shall be reviewed no less often than

385 every four years. By November 1 each year, the Professional Standards Commission

386 shall provide a report of its review and significant findings to the Chancellor of the Board

387 of Regents of the University System of Georgia, the governing body of each state

388 approved educator preparation program that is not an institution of the University System

389 of Georgia, the State Board of Education, the Office of Student Achievement, the Georgia
390 Council on Literacy, and the chairpersons of the House Committee on Higher Education,
391 the Senate Higher Education Committee, the House Committee on Education, and the
392 Senate Education and Youth Committee.

393 (e)(1) Not later than January 1, 2027, each local board of education and other public
394 school governing body shall adopt a unified literacy plan.

395 (2) Beginning January 1, 2027:

396 (A) No local school system shall be eligible for any waiver or variance granted under
397 Code Section 20-2-244 or Article 4 of this chapter or to enter into or renew a charter
398 system contract or strategic waivers school system contract with the State Board of
399 Education unless such local school system has adopted a unified literacy plan;

400 (B) Neither the State Board of Education nor any local board of education shall
401 authorize a new charter petition or a renewal charter petition for a local charter school,
402 as such term is defined in Code Section 20-2-2062, unless such petition includes a
403 unified literacy plan for such local charter school; and

404 (C) Neither the State Board of Education nor the State Charter Schools Commission
405 shall authorize a new charter petition or a renewal charter petition for a state charter
406 school, as such term is defined in Code Section 20-2-2081, unless such petition includes
407 a unified literacy plan for such state charter school."

408

SECTION 6.

409 Said title is further amended in Part 5 of Article 6 of Chapter 2, relating to program weights
410 and funding requirements under the "Quality Basic Education Act," by deleting "and" at the
411 end of paragraph (4), by replacing the period at the end of paragraph (5) with "; and", and by
412 adding a new paragraph to subsection (b) of Code Section 20-2-186, relating to allocation
413 of funds for local education agencies to pay beginning salaries of superintendents,
414 secretaries, accountants, nurses, and certain other personnel and eligibility of failing schools
415 for funds, to read as follows:

416 "(6) Each local education agency shall earn funding sufficient to pay the beginning salary
417 of one full-time equivalent school based literacy coach for each school with any of grades
418 kindergarten through three, except that any such school with 200 or fewer full-time
419 equivalent students shall earn 50 percent of such funding. Such funding shall be based
420 on a contract length of 190 days. Each such school based literacy coach shall be a teacher
421 or other certificated professional personnel who meets the qualifications established by
422 the State Board of Education upon a recommendation from the Office of Student
423 Achievement, as provided for in Code Section 20-14-202. Such qualifications shall
424 include a preference for certificated professional personnel with a literacy coaching
425 endorsement established pursuant to Code Section 20-2-208.2. Each local education
426 agency shall be permitted to utilize one full-time school based literacy coach for each
427 qualifying school or a combination of part-time school based literacy coaches for each
428 qualifying school; provided, however, that each local education agency shall expend 100
429 percent of the funds earned pursuant to this paragraph for salaries and benefits for school
430 based literacy coaches; and provided, further, that no individual employed by a local
431 education agency as a full-time or part-time school based literacy coach shall be
432 employed by such local education agency in any other capacity or for any other purpose."

433

SECTION 7.

434 Said title is further amended in Subpart 1 of Part 6 of Article 6 of Chapter 2, relating to
435 certificated professional personnel, by adding a new Code section to read as follows:

436 "20-2-208.2.

437 (a) No later than December 30, 2026, the Professional Standards Commission shall
438 establish a literacy coaching endorsement for teachers and other certificated professional
439 personnel trained in an evidence based approach to teaching oral and written language
440 aligned to the science of reading founded on the science of how children learn to read and
441 characterized by explicit, systematic, cumulative, and diagnostic instruction in phonology,
442 sound-symbol association, syllable instruction, morphology, syntax, and semantics.

443 (b) The requirements to receive such literacy coaching endorsement shall include training
444 on the use of universal reading screeners to measure and monitor a student's progress in
445 foundational literacy skills, providing guidance to parents, and providing training or
446 guidance to other teachers and school personnel."

447

SECTION 8.

448 Said title is further amended in Part 11 of Article 6, relating to regional educational service
449 agencies, by adding a new Code section to read as follows:

450 "20-2-270.3.

451 (a) The board of control of each regional educational service agency (RESA) shall
452 authorize regional literacy coaches and regional leadership literacy coaches to provide
453 literacy coaching, support, and related services to local school systems and other public
454 schools in the RESA service area.

455 (b) In collaboration with the Georgia Director of Literacy and the Georgia Literacy Coach
456 Coordinator, the board of control of each RESA shall assign regional literacy coaches to
457 the local school systems and public schools of the RESA service area, and at least one

458 regional leadership literacy coach shall be assigned to serve as the primary point of contact
459 with local school system and school leaders.

460 (c) Each regional literacy coach and regional leadership literacy coach authorized by the
461 board of control of a RESA shall be employed by such RESA and shall report to the
462 director of the RESA.

463 (d) Each regional literacy coach, regional leadership literacy coach, and RESA director
464 shall work in full cooperation with the Georgia Literacy Coordinating Committee, the
465 Georgia Director of Literacy, and the Georgia Literacy Coach Coordinator.

466 (e) Each regional literacy coach and regional leadership literacy coach shall work in full
467 cooperation with any observation, evaluation, and feedback provided by the Georgia
468 Literacy Coach Coordinator or his or her designee."

469 **SECTION 9.**

470 Said title is further amended in Part 12 of Article 6 of Chapter 2, relating to effectiveness of
471 educational programs, by revising Code Section 20-2-283, relating to criteria, specific
472 requirements for students in grades three, five, and eight, and implementation, as follows:
473 "20-2-283.

474 (a) No later than ~~January 1, 2002~~ July 1, 2026, the State Board of Education shall adopt
475 criteria for the development of a placement and promotion policy by each local board of
476 education and other public school governing body consistent with the Georgia Academic
477 Placement and Promotion Policy.

478 (b) Such criteria as adopted by the State Board of Education shall require the following for
479 students in grades one, three, five, and eight:

480 (1) No student shall be promoted, except as provided in this Code section, to:

481 (A) The second grade program to which the student would otherwise be assigned if the
482 student is determined to be significantly at risk of not attaining grade level reading
483 proficiency, as determined in accordance with Code Section 20-2-153.1, by the end of

484 the first grade program and does not meet the promotional standards and criteria
485 established by the State Board of Education and by the local board of education or other
486 governing body for the school that the student attends;

487 ~~(A)~~(B) The fourth grade program to which the student would otherwise be assigned if
488 the student does not achieve grade level as defined by the Office of Student
489 Achievement in accordance with Code Section 20-14-31 on the third grade
490 end-of-grade reading assessment developed in accordance with subsection (a) of Code
491 Section 20-2-281 and meet the promotional standards and criteria established by the
492 State Board of Education and by the local ~~school~~ board of education or other governing
493 body for the school that the student attends;

494 ~~(B)~~(C) The sixth grade program to which the student would otherwise be assigned if
495 the student does not achieve grade level as defined by the Office of Student
496 Achievement in accordance with Code Section 20-14-31 on the fifth grade end-of-grade
497 mathematics assessment and fifth grade end-of-grade reading assessment developed in
498 accordance with subsection (a) of Code Section 20-2-281 and meet the promotional
499 standards and criteria established by the State Board of Education and by the local
500 ~~school~~ board of education or other governing body for the school that the student
501 attends; or

502 ~~(C)~~(D) The ninth grade program to which the student would otherwise be assigned if
503 the student does not achieve grade level as defined by the Office of Student
504 Achievement in accordance with Code Section 20-14-31 on the eighth grade
505 end-of-grade mathematics assessment and eighth grade end-of-grade reading
506 assessment developed in accordance with subsection (a) of Code Section 20-2-281 and
507 meet the promotional standards and criteria established by the State Board of Education
508 and by the local ~~school~~ board of education or other governing body for the school that
509 the student attends;

510 (2) When a student does not perform at grade level on any end-of-grade assessment
511 specified in subparagraph (B), (C), or (D) of paragraph (1) of this subsection, then the
512 following shall occur:

513 (A) The parent or guardian of the student shall be notified in writing by first-class mail
514 by the school principal or ~~such official's~~ the principal's designee regarding the student's
515 performance below grade level on the assessment instrument, the retest to be given the
516 student, the accelerated, differentiated, or additional instruction program to which the
517 student is assigned, and the possibility that the student might be retained at the same
518 grade level for the next school year;

519 (B) The student shall be retested with an end-of-grade assessment or an alternative
520 assessment instrument that is appropriate for the student's grade level as provided for
521 by the State Board of Education and the local board of education or school governing
522 body; and

523 (C) The student shall be given an opportunity for accelerated, differentiated, or
524 additional instruction in the applicable subject; ~~and~~

525 (3) When a student does not perform at grade level on any end-of-grade assessment
526 specified in subparagraph (B), (C), or (D) of paragraph (1) of this subsection and also
527 does not perform at grade level on a second additional opportunity as provided for in
528 paragraph (2) of this subsection, then the following shall occur:

529 (A) The school principal or the principal's designee shall retain the student for the next
530 school year except as otherwise provided in this subsection;

531 (B) The school principal or the principal's designee shall notify in writing by first-class
532 mail the parent or guardian of the student and the teacher regarding the decision to
533 retain the student. The notice shall describe the option of the parent, guardian, or
534 teacher to appeal the decision to retain the student and shall further describe the
535 composition and functions of the placement committee as provided for in this

536 subsection, including the requirement that a decision to promote the student must be a
537 unanimous decision of the committee;

538 (C) If the parent, guardian, or teacher appeals the decision to retain the student, then
539 the school principal or the principal's designee shall establish a placement committee
540 composed of the principal or the principal's designee, the student's parent or guardian,
541 and the teacher of the subject of the assessment instrument on which the student failed
542 to perform at grade level and shall notify in writing by first-class mail the parent or
543 guardian of the time and place for convening the placement committee;

544 (D) The placement committee shall:

545 (i) Review the overall academic achievement of the student in light of the
546 performance on the end-of-grade assessment and the standards and criteria as adopted
547 by the local board of education and make a determination to promote or retain. A
548 decision to promote must be a unanimous decision and must determine that if
549 promoted and given accelerated, differentiated, or additional instruction during the
550 next year, the student is likely to perform at grade level as defined by the Office of
551 Student Achievement in accordance with Code Section 20-14-31 by the conclusion
552 of the school year; and

553 (ii) Prescribe for the student, whether the student is retained or promoted, such
554 accelerated, differentiated, or additional instruction as needed to perform at grade
555 level by the conclusion of the subsequent school year, prescribe such additional
556 assessments as may be appropriate in addition to assessments administered to other
557 students at the grade level during the year, and provide for a plan of continuous
558 assessment during the subsequent school year in order to monitor the progress of the
559 student;

560 (E) For students receiving special education or related services, the Individualized
561 Education Plan Committee shall serve as the placement committee; and

562 (F) The decision of the placement committee may be appealed only as provided for by
563 the local board of education or other public school governing body; and

564 (4)(A) When a student is determined to be significantly at risk of not attaining grade
565 level reading proficiency, as specified in subparagraph (A) of paragraph (1) of this
566 subsection, then the following shall occur:

567 (i) The parent or guardian of the student shall be notified in writing by first-class mail
568 by the school principal or the principal's designee regarding the determination that the
569 student has been determined to be significantly at risk of not attaining grade level
570 reading proficiency by the end of the first grade program, the student's updated tiered
571 reading intervention plan, and the possibility that the student might be retained at the
572 same grade level for the next school year;

573 (ii) The student shall be reassessed to determine if he or she is to be significantly at
574 risk of not attaining grade level reading proficiency by the end of the first grade
575 program; and

576 (iii) The student shall receive intensive reading intervention in accordance with Code
577 Section 20-2-153.1.

578 (B) When a student is determined to be significantly at risk of not attaining grade level
579 reading proficiency, as specified in subparagraph (A) of paragraph (1) of this
580 subsection, and continues to be significantly at risk of not attaining grade level reading
581 proficiency after provisions of subparagraph (A) of this paragraph are implemented,
582 then the following shall occur:

583 (i) The school principal or the principal's designee shall retain the student for the next
584 school year except as otherwise provided in this paragraph;

585 (ii) The school principal or the principal's designee shall notify in writing by
586 first-class mail the parent or guardian of the student regarding the decision to retain
587 the student. The notice shall describe the option of the parent or guardian to appeal
588 the decision to retain the student and shall further describe the composition and

589 functions of the placement committee as provided for in this paragraph, including the
590 requirement that a decision to promote the student must be a unanimous decision of
591 the committee;

592 (iii) If the parent or guardian appeals the decision to retain the student, then the
593 school principal or the principal's designee shall establish a placement committee
594 composed of the school principal or the principal's designee, the student's parent or
595 guardian, and the student's teacher and shall notify in writing by first-class mail the
596 parent or guardian of the time and place for convening the placement committee;

597 (iv) The placement committee shall:

598 (I) Review the overall academic achievement of the student and his or her progress
599 toward grade level reading proficiency and make a determination to promote or
600 retain. A decision to promote must be a unanimous decision and must determine
601 that if promoted and given intensive reading intervention in accordance with Code
602 Section 20-2-153.1 during the next year, the student is likely to perform at grade
603 level as defined by the Office of Student Achievement in accordance with Code
604 Section 20-14-31 by the conclusion of the school year; and

605 (II) Prescribe for the student, whether the student is retained or promoted, such
606 accelerated, differentiated, or additional instruction as needed to perform at grade
607 level by the conclusion of the subsequent school year, prescribe such additional
608 assessments as may be appropriate in addition to assessments administered to other
609 students at the grade level during the year, and provide for a plan of continuous
610 assessment during the subsequent school year in order to monitor the progress of the
611 student;

612 (v) For students receiving special education or related services, the Individualized
613 Education Plan Committee shall serve as the placement committee;

614 (vi) The decision of the placement committee may be appealed only as provided for
615 by the local board of education or other public school governing body; and

616 (vii) No student shall remain in the first grade program for more than two years.

617 (c) This Code section does not preclude the retention by the school principal or the
618 principal's designee of a student who performs satisfactorily on the end-of-grade
619 assessments specified in subparagraph (B), (C), or (D) of paragraph (1) of subsection (b)
620 of this Code section as provided for by the local board of education or other public school
621 governing body.

622 (d) This Code section does not create a property interest in promotion.

623 (e) The State Board of Education shall establish policies and procedures for
624 implementation of this Code section."

625 **SECTION 10.**

626 Said title is further amended in said part by revising Code Section 20-2-284, relating to
627 criteria for local boards of education and model placement and promotion policy, as follows:
628 "20-2-284.

629 (a) No later than July 1, ~~2003~~ 2026, each local board of education and other public school
630 governing body shall develop and adopt a placement and promotion policy in accordance
631 with the criteria established by the State Board of Education as provided in Code
632 Section 20-2-283 and consistent with the Georgia Academic Placement and Promotion
633 Policy.

634 (b) Except for those end-of-grade assessments specified in Code Section 20-2-283, the
635 placement and promotion policy as developed and adopted by each local board of
636 education and other public school governing body shall state how the end-of-grade
637 assessments administered under Code Section 20-2-281 for grades one through eight, and
638 assessments administered to determine grade level reading proficiency for grade one, will
639 be weighted or otherwise utilized by the school principal or the principal's designee in
640 determining the overall academic achievement of a student and an appropriate plan of

641 accelerated, differentiated, or additional instruction, placement, promotion, or retention of
642 a student.

643 (c) To assist each local board of education and other public school governing body, the
644 State Board of Education shall develop a model placement and promotion policy ~~which~~
645 ~~may be utilized by a local board of education.~~"

646 **SECTION 11.**

647 Said title is further amended in said part by revising Code Section 20-2-285, relating to
648 timetable for implementation of policy, as follows:

649 "20-2-285.

650 The State Board of Education shall provide for a timetable of implementation of this Code
651 section and the Georgia Academic Placement and Promotion Policy which shall include:

652 (1) The third grade beginning with the 2003-2004 school year;

653 (2) The fifth grade beginning with the 2004-2005 school year; ~~and~~

654 (3) The eighth grade beginning with the 2005-2006 school year; and

655 (4) The first grade beginning with the 2026-2027 school year."

656 **SECTION 12.**

657 Said title is further amended in Subpart 2 of Part 1 of Article 16 of Chapter 2, relating to
658 compulsory attendance, by revising subsection (b) of Code Section 20-2-690.1, relating to
659 compulsory education for children between ages six and 16 and voluntary withdrawal, as
660 follows:

661 "(b) Each child in this state shall be required to attend a public school, a private school, or
662 a home study program between his or her sixth and sixteenth birthdays; provided, however,
663 that it is the policy of this state that families are encouraged to have their children attend
664 a public school, a private school, or a home study program beginning at age five. Such
665 compulsory attendance shall not apply to any child who has successfully completed all

666 requirements for a high school diploma or state approved high school equivalency (HSE)
667 diploma."

668 **SECTION 13.**

669 Said title is further amended in Article 19 of Chapter 2, relating to instructional materials and
670 content, by revising Code Section 20-2-1010, relating to instructional materials and content,
671 as follows:

672 "20-2-1010.

673 (a) The State Board of Education ~~is authorized to~~ shall prescribe, by regulation, the
674 definition of the term 'instructional materials and content' to include but not be limited to
675 systematically designed material in any medium, including digital instructional materials
676 and content and any computer hardware, software, and technical equipment necessary to
677 support such instructional materials and content, that constitutes the principal source of
678 study for a state funded course to be used in the various grades in the public schools of this
679 state, including ~~the elementary grades and high school grades~~ kindergarten through
680 grade 12. The state board may provide, by regulation, for multiple listings of instructional
681 materials and content for use in the various grades and may, in its discretion, authorize the
682 local school ~~superintendents~~ systems and other public schools to exercise a choice as
683 between various instructional materials and content so listed or adopted for any particular
684 grade.

685 (b) Nothing in this Code section shall be construed to exempt computer hardware or
686 related equipment acquired by the state from competitive bidding.

687 (c) Notwithstanding any provision of law, including, but not limited to, any provision of
688 this article to the contrary, it is the policy of this state that:

689 (1) Only high-quality instructional materials that are aligned to the science of reading,
690 as such terms are defined in Code Section 20-2-153.1, shall be used for literacy and
691 reading education in kindergarten through grade three; and

692 (2) Beginning with the 2029-2030 school year and continuing thereafter, no public
693 school that receives funds under Article 6 of this chapter shall use any portion of such
694 funds for the purchase or use of instructional materials for literacy and reading education
695 in kindergarten through grade three that are not approved for such purpose by the State
696 Board of Education upon the recommendation of the Georgia Literacy Task Force."

697 **SECTION 14.**

698 Said title is further amended in said article by adding a new Code section to read as follows:

699 "20-2-1015.1.

700 (a) Local boards of education and other public school governing bodies shall approve
701 high-quality instructional materials for students in kindergarten through grade three as
702 required under Code Section 20-2-153.1, the 'Georgia Early Literacy and Dyslexia Act.'

703 (b) Local boards of education and other public school governing bodies are strongly
704 encouraged to provide exclusively for the use of high-quality instructional materials that
705 are aligned to the science of reading, as such terms are defined in Code Section 20-2-153.1,
706 for literacy and reading instruction for students in kindergarten through grade three.

707 (c) The State Board of Education shall annually determine a reasonable level of funding
708 to assist local boards of education and other public school governing bodies in attaining
709 high-quality instructional materials pursuant to this Code section. Such level of funding
710 shall annually be presented to the General Assembly for its consideration in including
711 appropriations for such purposes."

712 **SECTION 15.**

713 Said title is further amended in Chapter 14, relating to education accountability, by adding
714 a new article to read as follows:

715 "ARTICLE 4716 20-14-200.

717 (a) There is established within the Office of Student Achievement the Georgia Literacy
718 Coordinating Committee. Such committee shall comprise, at a minimum, the Georgia
719 Director of Literacy, the Georgia Literacy Coach Coordinator, a representative of the
720 Department of Education, at least one representative of Georgia's regional educational
721 service agencies, at least one representative of an educator preparation program, other
722 subject matter experts identified by the Georgia Director of Literacy, and the director of
723 the Office of Student Achievement, or his or her designee. Each member of the Georgia
724 Literacy Coordinating Committee shall have knowledge of the science of reading and
725 expertise in quality reading instruction and intervention.

726 (b) The Georgia Literacy Coordinating Committee shall be responsible for:727 (1) Coordinating the efforts of all state-wide literacy and reading education programs
728 across state, regional, and local agencies, systems, and initiatives;729 (2) Developing a state-wide literacy plan; and730 (3) Reviewing and making recommendations for local unified literacy plans.

731 (c) Upon the recommendation of the Georgia Director of Literacy, the Office of Student
732 Achievement is authorized to engage individuals with subject matter expertise to work with
733 the Georgia Literacy Coordinating Committee.

734 20-14-201.735 The Office of Student Achievement shall employ:

736 (1) The Georgia Director of Literacy, who shall report to the director of the Office of
737 Student Achievement and shall be responsible for:

738 (A) Oversight of development, implementation, alignment, and evaluation of a
739 state-wide literacy plan;

740 (B) Evaluating and making recommendations for the continuous improvement and
741 alignment of state-wide literacy and reading education programs across state, regional,
742 and local agencies, systems, and initiatives;

743 (C) Serving as the primary liaison with the Department of Education, the Department
744 of Early Care and Learning, the Department of Public Health, the University System
745 of Georgia, Georgia's regional educational service agencies, the Professional Standards
746 Commission, and the Office of Student Achievement with respect to state-wide literacy
747 and reading education efforts;

748 (D) Making recommendations for effective implementation of and continuous
749 improvements to the 'Georgia Early Literacy and Dyslexia Act' and other legislation,
750 policies, rules, and regulations relative to literacy and reading instruction across all ages
751 and grades;

752 (E) Serving as chairperson of the Georgia Literacy Coordinating Committee;

753 (F) Serving as chairperson of the Georgia Literacy Task Force; and

754 (G) Supervision and evaluation of staff assigned to work with the Georgia Literacy
755 Coordinating Committee or the Georgia Literacy Task Force, including, but not limited
756 to, the Georgia Literacy Coach Coordinator; and

757 (2) The Georgia Literacy Coach Coordinator, who shall report to the Georgia Director
758 of Literacy and shall be responsible for:

759 (A) Serving on the Georgia Literacy Coordinating Committee;

760 (B) State-wide coordination of regional leadership literacy coaches, regional literacy
761 coaches, and school based literacy coaches;

762 (C) Collaboration with and coordination of literacy coaches and specialists affiliated
763 with the Department of Education or a regional educational service agency whose
764 positions are supported with state or federal funds, including, but not limited to,
765 regional literacy coaches;

766 (D) Observing, evaluating, and providing feedback to literacy coaches and specialists
767 affiliated with the Department of Education or a regional educational service agency
768 whose positions are supported with state or federal funds, including, but not limited to,
769 regional literacy coaches; and
770 (E) Reviewing and collaborating on the development and implementation of state-wide
771 professional learning and professional development programs and training for literacy
772 and reading education.

773 20-14-202.

774 (a) The Georgia Literacy Coordinating Committee shall develop and recommend to the
775 State Board of Education, local boards of education, and the regional educational service
776 agencies position descriptions and minimum qualifications and duties for school based
777 literacy coaches, regional literacy coaches, and regional leadership literacy coaches.

778 (b)(1) The minimum qualifications for school based literacy coaches shall include, but
779 shall not be limited to:

780 (A) Certification by the Professional Standards Commission;

781 (B) A minimum of five years of documented successful classroom teaching or literacy
782 intervention experience at assigned grade levels; and

783 (C) A knowledge of scientifically based reading research, special expertise in quality
784 reading instruction and intervention, dyslexia specific interventions, and data analysis.

785 (2) The minimum duties for school based literacy coaches shall include, but shall not be
786 limited to:

787 (A) Demonstrating competency through approved, periodic, practice based assessment
788 that verifies the literacy coach's ability to:

789 (i) Apply the science of reading, learning science, and instructional science to deliver
790 explicit, systematic, evidence based literacy instruction directly with students;

- 791 (ii) Analyze student data, including screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring
792 data, to inform instruction, grouping, and intervention within a multi-tiered system of
793 supports framework;
- 794 (iii) Synthesize student performance data and educator practice data to establish
795 coaching goals and design targeted, need based support for educators;
- 796 (iv) Coach educators using nonevaluative, evidence based practices, including
797 modeling instruction, analyzing instructional practice and data, providing actionable
798 feedback, and delivering side-by-side classroom support; and
- 799 (v) Support the implementation and monitoring of evidence based literacy curricula
800 and instructional materials with fidelity, ensuring alignment to the science of reading;
- 801 (B) Collaborating with the school principal to create a strategic plan for literacy
802 coaching;
- 803 (C) Spending no less than 70 percent of the school day in classrooms working directly
804 with students and teachers; and
- 805 (D) Prioritizing time for those teachers, activities, and roles that will have the greatest
806 impact on student reading achievement, such as coaching and mentoring in classrooms;
807 and
- 808 (3) A school based literacy coach shall not be:
- 809 (A) Authorized or required to perform administrative functions or duties, including, but
810 not limited to, performing any rotating duty assignments or serving as an evaluator,
811 substitute teacher, assessment coordinator, or school administrator;
- 812 (B) Invited, required, or permitted to attend placement committee meetings; or
- 813 (C) Designated as a teacher of record.
- 814 (c)(1) The minimum qualifications for regional literacy coaches shall include, but shall
815 not be limited to:
- 816 (A) Certification by the Professional Standards Commission;

- 817 (B) A minimum of five years of documented successful classroom teaching or literacy
818 intervention experience at assigned grade levels; and
- 819 (C) A knowledge of scientifically based reading research, special expertise in quality
820 reading instruction and intervention, dyslexia specific interventions, and data analysis.
- 821 (2) The minimum duties for regional literacy coaches shall include, but shall not be
822 limited to:
- 823 (A) Demonstrating competency through approved, periodic, practice based assessment
824 that verifies the literacy coach's ability to:
- 825 (i) Apply the science of reading, learning science, and instructional science to deliver
826 explicit, systematic, evidence based literacy instruction directly with students;
- 827 (ii) Analyze student data, including screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring
828 data, to inform instruction, grouping, and intervention within a multi-tiered system of
829 supports framework;
- 830 (iii) Synthesize student performance data and educator practice data to establish
831 coaching goals and design targeted, need based support for educators; and
- 832 (iv) Coach educators using nonevaluative, evidence based practices, including
833 modeling instruction, analyzing instructional practice and data, providing actionable
834 feedback, and delivering side-by-side classroom support;
- 835 (B) Supporting the implementation and monitoring of evidence based literacy curricula
836 and instructional materials with fidelity, ensuring alignment to the science of reading;
- 837 (C) Providing ongoing support to local school systems and public schools for effective
838 implementation and continuous improvement of comprehensive literacy programs;
- 839 (D) Collaborating with school principals, school based literacy coaches, and
840 representatives of the Georgia Literacy Coordinating Committee; and
- 841 (E) Providing ongoing professional learning activities and materials for teachers and
842 literacy coaches that include research on the science of reading and curriculum based

843 professional learning to support them in applying such training and research into
844 instructional practices.

845 (d)(1) The minimum qualifications for regional leadership literacy coaches shall include,
846 but shall not be limited to:

847 (A) Certification by the Professional Standards Commission;

848 (B) A minimum of five years of documented success as a literacy coach or as a
849 classroom teacher or administrator in kindergarten to grade three;

850 (C) A knowledge of scientifically based reading research, special expertise in quality
851 reading instruction and intervention, dyslexia specific interventions, and data analysis;

852 (D) Successful experience in leading a school, a school district, or a regional literacy
853 program to include the role of principal, curriculum director, superintendent, or
854 state-level literacy specialist;

855 (E) Extensive knowledge of the implementation of a structured literacy program that
856 is founded in the science of reading;

857 (F) Successful experience in working with adult learners;

858 (G) Exceptional interpersonal skills;

859 (H) Exceptional communication skills; and

860 (I) Successful experience in leading educational programs and/or initiatives.

861 (2) The minimum duties for regional leadership literacy coaches shall include, but shall
862 not be limited to:

863 (A) Attending and participating in professional learning related to literacy
864 improvement and coaching within the RESA network;

865 (B) Collaborating with local school superintendents and school principals to create a
866 literacy rich environment within the local school system, with priority given to schools
867 that include kindergarten through third grade;

- 868 (C) Joining local school superintendents and school principals in side-by-side
869 classroom observations to support teachers and paraprofessionals in applying the
870 science of reading into instructional practices;
871 (D) Assisting regional literacy coaches to prioritize the needs of the local school
872 system based on student data and communication with local school system leaders;
873 (E) Facilitating communication and collaboration between the local school system and
874 regional literacy coaches;
875 (F) Providing guidance to local school systems in the development and implementation
876 of the local unified literacy plan;
877 (G) Facilitating collaboration between the local school system and the local community
878 to support literacy development for children from birth to age five;
879 (H) Facilitating collaboration between the local school system and the local and
880 regional postsecondary educational institutions; and
881 (I) Collaborating with other regional leadership literacy coaches.

882 20-14-203.

883 (a) As used in this Code section, the term 'task force' means the Georgia Literacy Task
884 Force established pursuant to this Code section.

885 (b) There is established the Georgia Literacy Task Force, a standing task force which shall
886 be convened by the Office of Student Achievement by September 1, 2026, and which shall
887 be responsible for providing recommendations to the State Board of Education, the Office
888 of Student Achievement, the Georgia Literacy Coordinating Committee, and the Georgia
889 Director of Literacy for:

890 (1) Effective implementation of and continuous improvements to the 'Georgia Early
891 Literacy and Dyslexia Act' and other legislation, policies, rules, and regulations relative
892 to literacy and reading instruction across all ages and grades;

893 (2) The state-wide comprehensive curriculum based professional learning program in
894 structured literacy that is aligned to and includes research on the science of reading to
895 support teachers and literacy coaches in applying such research into instructional
896 practices for kindergarten through grade three teachers and literacy coaches to be made
897 available at no cost as provided for in Code Section 20-2-153.1;

898 (3)(A) A list of no less than two and no more than five universal reading screeners that
899 are valid and reliable reading screening, formative, and diagnostic assessment systems
900 for selection and use by local school systems and public schools.

901 (B) Each universal reading screener recommended by the task force shall:

902 (i) Provide screening and diagnostic capabilities for monitoring student progress;

903 (ii) Measure, at a minimum, a student's foundational reading skills, as such term is
904 defined in Code Section 20-2-153.1, including, but not limited to, a student's
905 phonological awareness, oral language, the alphabetic principle, including letter
906 naming, letter sound, and sound letter correspondences, decoding, encoding,
907 accuracy, vocabulary, and comprehension;

908 (iii) Identify students who are significantly at risk of not attaining grade level reading
909 proficiency, including, but not limited to, identifying students with characteristics of
910 dyslexia; and

911 (iv) Have robust reporting capabilities, including, but not limited to, the capability
912 to generate and provide directly to the department and the Office of Student
913 Achievement reports of screener results by:

914 (I) Student;

915 (II) Student subgroups based on grade level, educational program, demographic
916 characteristics, and other criteria identified by the Georgia Literacy Task Force;

917 (III) Teacher;

918 (IV) School; and

919 (V) Local school system.

- 920 (C) In determining which universal reading screeners to recommend for use by local
921 school systems and public schools, the task force shall, at a minimum, consider:
- 922 (i) The time required to conduct the universal reading screener, with the intention of
923 minimizing the impact on instructional time;
- 924 (ii) The level of integration of universal reading screener results with instructional
925 support for teachers and students; and
- 926 (iii) The timeliness in reporting assessment results to teachers, administrators, and
927 parents.
- 928 (D) The task force shall recommend one universal reading screener to be made
929 available free of charge to local school systems and public schools.
- 930 (E) By March 1, 2028, and by March 1 every third year thereafter, the task force shall
931 submit to the State Board of Education the list of recommended universal reading
932 screeners, including the universal reading screener to be made available free of charge
933 to local school systems and public schools.
- 934 (F) No universal reading screener shall be approved by the State Board of Education
935 unless it has been recommended by the task force; and
- 936 (4) An annual list of high-quality instructional materials that are aligned to the science
937 of reading, as such terms are defined in Code Section 20-2-153.1, for students in
938 kindergarten through grade three for recommendation to the State Board of Education.
- 939 (c)(1) The Georgia Director of Literacy shall serve as chairperson of the task force.
- 940 (2) In addition to the Georgia Director of Literacy, the membership of the task force shall
941 include the following appointed members, each of whom shall have at least three years
942 of experience with scientifically based reading instruction:
- 943 (A) Three members appointed by the Governor, two of whom shall have significant
944 experience as a literacy or reading specialist, coach, or teacher or as a curriculum
945 specialist;

946 (B) Three members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, two of
947 whom shall have significant experience as a literacy or reading specialist, coach, or
948 teacher or as a curriculum specialist;

949 (C) Three members appointed by the President of the Senate, two of whom shall have
950 significant experience as a literacy or reading specialist, coach, or teacher or as a
951 curriculum specialist;

952 (D) One member who shall be a certified academic dyslexia therapist for a minimum
953 of three years appointed by the Office of Student Achievement; and

954 (E) One member appointed by the State Board of Education.

955 (3) The Office of Student Achievement shall verify that each appointed member of the
956 task force satisfies the credentials under which he or she was appointed.

957 (4) Members appointed to the task force shall be appointed to serve a three-year term and
958 may be reappointed to serve one additional two-year term.

959 (5)(A) The task force shall be authorized to conduct meetings at such places and times,
960 either virtually or in-person, as it deems necessary or convenient to enable it to fully
961 and effectively perform its duties; provided, however, that it shall meet not less than
962 two times per year and shall hold meetings at the call of the chairperson.

963 (B) A quorum for transacting business of the task force shall be a majority of the
964 members.

965 (C) Meetings of the task force shall be exempt from the provisions of Chapter 14 of
966 Title 50 notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary.

967 (6) Legislative members of the task force shall receive the allowances provided for in
968 Code Section 28-1-8. Nonlegislative members of the task force shall receive a daily
969 expense allowance in the amount specified in subsection (a) of Code Section 45-7-21 as
970 well as the mileage or transportation allowance authorized for state employees. Members
971 of the task force who are state officials, other than legislative members, or state
972 employees shall receive no compensation for their services on the task force, but shall be

973 reimbursed for expenses incurred by them in the performance of their duties as members
974 of the task force in the same manner as they are reimbursed for expenses in their
975 capacities as state officials or state employees. The funds necessary for the
976 reimbursement of the expenses of state officials, other than legislative members, and state
977 employees shall come from funds appropriated to or otherwise available to their
978 respective departments. All other funds necessary to carry out the provisions of this
979 article shall come from funds appropriated to the Office of Student Achievement.

980 (d) The task force shall endeavor to include multiple vendors in each annual list of
981 universal reading screeners and high-quality instructional materials provided for in
982 subsection (a) of this Code section. The task force shall make public all rubrics and
983 measurements used to determine eligibility and compliance for all universal reading
984 screeners and high-quality instructional materials accepted for consideration.

985 20-14-204.

986 (a) Within 60 days of receiving any recommendation from the Georgia Literacy Task
987 Force, the State Board of Education shall vote to adopt or reject such recommendation.

988 (b) The State School Superintendent shall recommend that the State Board of Education
989 adopt recommendations received pursuant to subsection (a) of this Code section; provided,
990 however, that if the State School Superintendent disagrees with a recommendation received
991 pursuant to subsection (a) of this Code section, he or she shall submit to the State Board
992 of Education the reasons for such disagreement in writing. Irrespective of whether the
993 State School Superintendent submits any disagreement, the State Board of Education shall
994 timely vote to adopt or reject the recommendation from the Georgia Literacy Task Force.

995 20-14-205.

996 The Office of Student Achievement shall be responsible for developing and implementing,
997 in collaboration with the Department of Education, the Department of Early Care and

998 Learning, the Department of Public Health, the University System of Georgia, Georgia's
999 regional educational service agencies, and local school systems and public schools, a
1000 comprehensive state-wide promotional campaign to increase public awareness and
1001 education about the essential importance of literacy in the lives of all Georgians and to urge
1002 all Georgia families and communities to support and participate in literacy programs and
1003 other efforts, especially for children from birth through fifth grade."

1004 **SECTION 16.**

1005 This Act shall become effective upon its approval by the Governor or upon its becoming law
1006 without such approval.

1007 **SECTION 17.**

1008 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.