

ADOPTED

Senator Tillery of the 19th offered the following amendment #1:

1 *Amend the Senate Committee on Appropriations substitute to HB 1193 (LC 49 2847S) by*
2 *replacing lines 1 through the end with the following:*
3 To amend Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to education, so as to
4 promote and advance state-wide literacy and reading education efforts; to provide for funding
5 for school based literacy coaches in all public schools in this state with students in any of
6 grades kindergarten through three; to provide for regional literacy coaches employed by
7 regional educational service agencies; to provide for literacy coaching endorsements for
8 certificated professional personnel; to substantially revise the "Georgia Early Literacy and
9 Dyslexia Act"; to include legislative intent; to provide for a definition; to revise provisions
10 of said Act relative to the selection of and requirements for universal reading screeners; to
11 revise provisions for professional learning; to require local school systems and other public
12 schools to have unified literacy plans; to revise provisions for educator preparation programs
13 and the evaluation of such programs by the Professional Standards Commission; to provide
14 for certification of and funding for high-quality instructional materials; to establish within
15 the Office of Student Achievement the Georgia Literacy Coordinating Committee; to provide
16 for the State Literacy Director; to provide for the Georgia Coordinator of Literacy Coaches;
17 to provide for a position description and minimum qualifications and duties for school based
18 literacy coaches and regional literacy coaches; to establish the Georgia Literacy Task Force;
19 to provide for appointment, qualifications, duties, and compensation of members of such task
20 force; to provide for recommendations of such task force; to provide for consideration of
21 such recommendations by the State Board of Education; to provide for a comprehensive
22 state-wide promotional campaign for literacy awareness; to provide for the termination of the
23 Georgia Council on Literacy; to encourage families to have their children attend school or

24 a home study program beginning at age five; to provide for the placement of newly enrolled
25 students; to provide for parents and guardians of students who are eligible for initial public
26 school enrollment in first grade to elect for their children to be enrolled in kindergarten rather
27 than first grade; to provide for parents and guardians to elect for their children who are either
28 four or five years old to be enrolled in a voluntary pre-kindergarten program provided and
29 operated as part of Georgia's Pre-K Program; to provide for first grade readiness assessments;
30 to require annual reports regarding first grade readiness; to revise provisions relative to grade
31 placement, promotion, and retention; to provide a short title; to provide for an effective date;
32 to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

33 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

34 **PART I**
35 **SECTION 1-1.**

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

37 **SECTION 1-2.**

38 Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to education, is amended in Part
39 5 of Article 6 of Chapter 2, relating to program weights and funding requirements under the
40 "Quality Basic Education Act," by adding a new Code section to read as follows:

41 "20-2-186.1.

42 (a) As used in this paragraph, the term 'eligible school' means a school with any of grades
43 kindergarten through three.

44 (b) Subject to appropriations by the General Assembly, the State Board of Education shall
45 provide grants to local units of administration with eligible schools for the purpose of
46 reimbursing such units of administration for expenditures sufficient to pay the beginning

47 salary and benefits of one school based literacy coach per eligible school, except that any
48 such school with 200 or fewer full-time equivalent students shall earn 50 percent of such
49 amount.

50 (c)(1) The State Board of Education, in collaboration with the Office of Student
51 Achievement, shall establish the minimum qualifications and duties for school based
52 literacy coaches.

53 (2) The minimum qualifications for school based literacy coaches shall include, but shall
54 not be limited to:

55 (A) Certification by the Professional Standards Commission;

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

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

60 (3) The minimum duties for school based literacy coaches shall include, but shall not be
61 limited to:

62 (A) Coaching educators using nonevaluative, evidence based practices, including
63 modeling instruction, analyzing instructional practice and data, providing actionable
64 feedback, and delivering side-by-side classroom support;

65 (B) Collaborating with the school principal to create a strategic plan for literacy
66 coaching;

67 (C) Spending no less than 70 percent of the school day in classrooms working directly
68 with students and teachers;

69 (D) Prioritizing time for those teachers, activities, and roles that will have the greatest
70 impact on student reading achievement, such as coaching and mentoring in classrooms;

71 (E) Analyzing student data, including screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring
72 data, to inform instruction, grouping, and intervention within a multi-tiered system of
73 supports framework;

- 74 (F) Synthesizing student performance data and educator practice data to establish
75 coaching goals and design targeted, needs based support for educators;
- 76 (G) Supporting the implementation and monitoring of evidence based literacy curricula
77 and instructional materials with fidelity, ensuring alignment to the science of reading;
78 and
- 79 (H) Demonstrating competency through approved, periodic, practice based assessment
80 that verifies his or her ability to apply the science of reading, learning science, and
81 instructional science to deliver explicit, systematic, evidence based literacy instruction
82 directly with students.
- 83 (4) A school based literacy coach shall not be:
- 84 (A) Authorized or required to perform administrative functions or duties, including, but
85 not limited to, performing any rotating duty assignments or serving as an evaluator,
86 substitute teacher, assessment coordinator, or school administrator;
- 87 (B) Invited, required, or permitted to attend placement committee meetings; or
- 88 (C) Designated as a teacher of record.
- 89 (d) By August 1, 2026, the State Board of Education shall establish policies, rules, and
90 regulations necessary for the implementation of this Code section, including, but not
91 limited to, the process by which local units of administration shall request and receive such
92 grant funds.
- 93 (e) Nothing in the Code section shall be construed to prohibit local units of administration
94 from hiring or contracting with school based literacy coaches using other funds available
95 for such purpose."

96 **SECTION 1-3.**

97 Said title is further amended in Part 11 of Article 6 of Chapter 2, relating to regional
98 educational service agencies, by adding a new Code section to read as follows:

99 "20-2-270.3.

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

104 (b) In collaboration with the State Literacy Director and the Georgia Literacy Coach
105 Coordinator, the board of control of each RESA shall assign regional literacy coaches to
106 the local school systems and public schools of the RESA service area, and at least one
107 regional leadership literacy coach shall be assigned to serve as the primary point of contact
108 with local school system and school leaders.

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

112 (d) Each regional literacy coach, regional leadership literacy coach, and RESA director
113 shall work in full cooperation with the Georgia Literacy Coordinating Committee, the State
114 Literacy Director, and the Georgia Literacy Coach Coordinator.

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

118 (f)(1) The State Board of Education, in collaboration with the Office of Student
119 Achievement, shall establish the minimum qualifications and duties for regional literacy
120 coaches.

121 (2) The minimum qualifications for regional literacy coaches shall include, but shall not
122 be limited to:

123 (A) Certification by the Professional Standards Commission;

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

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

128 (3) The minimum duties for regional literacy coaches shall include, but shall not be
129 limited to:

130 (A) Coaching educators using nonevaluative, evidence based practices, including
131 modeling instruction, analyzing instructional practice and data, providing actionable
132 feedback, and delivering side-by-side classroom support;

133 (B) Collaborating with school principals, school based literacy coaches, and
134 representatives of the Department of Education and the Office of Student Achievement;

135 (C) Providing ongoing support to local school systems and public schools for effective
136 implementation and continuous improvement of comprehensive literacy programs;

137 (D) Providing ongoing professional learning activities and materials for teachers and
138 literacy coaches that include research on the science of reading and curriculum based
139 professional learning to support them in applying such training and research into
140 instructional practices; and

141 (E) Analyzing student data, including screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring
142 data, to inform instruction, grouping, and intervention within a multi-tiered system of
143 supports framework.

144 (g)(1) The State Board of Education, in collaboration with the Office of Student
145 Achievement, shall establish the minimum qualifications and duties for regional
146 leadership literacy coaches.

147 (2) The minimum qualifications for regional leadership literacy coaches shall include,
148 but shall not be limited to:

149 (A) Certification by the Professional Standards Commission;

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

- 152 (C) A knowledge of scientifically based reading research, special expertise in quality
153 reading instruction and intervention, dyslexia specific interventions, and data analysis;
154 (D) Successful experience in leading a school, a school district, or a regional literacy
155 program to include the role of principal, curriculum director, superintendent, or
156 state-level literacy specialist;
157 (E) Extensive knowledge of the implementation of a structured literacy program that
158 is founded in the science of reading;
159 (F) Successful experience in working with adult learners;
160 (G) Exceptional interpersonal skills;
161 (H) Exceptional communication skills; and
162 (I) Successful experience in leading educational programs and/or initiatives.
163 (3) The minimum duties for regional leadership literacy coaches shall include, but shall
164 not be limited to:
165 (A) Attending and participating in professional learning related to literacy
166 improvement and coaching within the RESA network;
167 (B) Collaborating with local school superintendents and school principals to create a
168 literacy rich environment within the local school system, with priority given to schools
169 that include kindergarten through third grade;
170 (C) Joining local school superintendents and school principals in side-by-side
171 classroom observations to support teachers and paraprofessionals in applying the
172 science of reading into instructional practices;
173 (D) Assisting regional literacy coaches to prioritize the needs of the local school
174 system based on student data and communication with local school system leaders;
175 (E) Facilitating communication and collaboration between the local school system and
176 regional literacy coaches;
177 (F) Providing guidance to local school systems in the development and implementation
178 of the local unified literacy plan;

- 179 (G) Facilitating collaboration between the local school system and the local community
180 to support literacy development for children from birth to age five;
181 (H) Facilitating collaboration between the local school system and the local and
182 regional postsecondary educational institutions; and
183 (I) Collaborating with other regional leadership literacy coaches.

184 **SECTION 1-4.**

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

187 "20-2-208.2.

188 (a) No later than December 31, 2026, the Professional Standards Commission shall
189 establish a literacy coaching endorsement for teachers and other certificated professional
190 personnel trained in an evidence based approach to teaching oral and written language
191 aligned to the science of reading founded on the science of how children learn to read and
192 characterized by explicit, systematic, cumulative, and diagnostic instruction in phonology,
193 sound-symbol association, syllable instruction, morphology, syntax, and semantics.

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

198 **PART II**

199 **SECTION 2-1.**

200 Said title is further amended in Part 3 of Article 6 of Chapter 2, relating to educational
201 programs under the "Quality Basic Education Act," by repealing and reserving paragraph (2)
202 and repealing and replacing paragraph (6) of subsection (b), redesignating paragraph (16) of

203 subsection (b) as paragraph (17), adding a new paragraph to subsection (b), revising
204 subsection (c), paragraph (2) of subsection (d), subsection (d.1), and subsection (e), and
205 adding new subsections to Code Section 20-2-153.1, the "Georgia Early Literacy and
206 Dyslexia Act," to read as follows:

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

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

209 (A) Comprehensive;

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

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

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

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

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

219 "(6) 'Dyslexia' shall have the same meaning as the definition adopted and amended from
220 time to time by the International Dyslexia Association and approved by the board and
221 posted on the websites of the department and the Office of Student Achievement."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

241 (B) Establish a procedure for each public school and local school system to annually
242 certify to the department that such school or school system's locally approved
243 instructional materials and content, as defined in subsection (a) of Code
244 Section 20-2-1017, constitute high-quality instructional materials aligned to the science
245 of reading.

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

251 ~~(B)~~(3) By April 1, 2028, and by April 1 every third year thereafter, upon the
252 recommendation of the Office of Student Achievement a list of no less than two and ~~As~~
253 ~~soon as practicable but not later than May 15, 2025,~~ the board shall approve the
254 memorandum of agreement between the council and the department, as provided for in

255 ~~subparagraph (B) of paragraph (4) of this subsection, for a list of no more than five~~
256 ~~universal reading screeners, one of which shall be a free universal reading screener, for~~
257 ~~use by public schools and local school systems as part of their comprehensive literacy~~
258 ~~programs which meet the following criteria shall be approved by the board. Each such~~
259 ~~universal reading screener shall:~~

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

281 (i) Student;

- 282 (ii) Student subgroups based on grade level, educational program, demographic
283 characteristics, and other criteria identified by the Georgia Literacy Task Force;
284 (iii) School; and
285 (iv) Local school system.

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

292 ~~(B) The council, in collaboration with the center and the Office of Planning and~~
293 ~~Budget, shall identify a free universal reading screener that meets the criteria~~
294 ~~established by the board as provided in subparagraph (B) of paragraph (3) of this~~
295 ~~subsection. The council shall enter into a memorandum of agreement with the~~
296 ~~department to make such universal reading screener available for use free of charge to~~
297 ~~public schools and local school systems.~~

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

304 (A) Evidence based practices designed specifically for students with characteristics of
305 dyslexia;

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

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

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

312 (6) The department shall, in consultation with the University System of Georgia, the
313 Professional Standards Commission, the Office of Student Achievement, the Georgia
314 Literacy Coordinating Committee, Georgia's regional ~~education~~ educational service
315 agencies, and literacy experts, develop or procure one or more training professional
316 learning programs for kindergarten through third grade teachers on the science of reading,
317 structured literacy, and foundational literacy skills that enable students to develop reading
318 skills required to meet state standards in literacy. Such programs shall emphasize the
319 importance of applying research about the science of reading to instructional practices
320 and of using high-quality instructional materials. Such training programs shall be
321 developed or procured to promote teachers' knowledge and skills for teaching all students
322 to read, including students with dyslexia, and to ensure teachers and literacy coaches have
323 the knowledge and skills necessary to use approved universal reading screeners and to
324 use assessment data to inform instruction based on student needs. One such program
325 shall be a state-wide comprehensive curriculum based professional learning program in
326 structured literacy that is aligned to and includes research on the science of reading to
327 support teachers and literacy coaches in applying such research into instructional
328 practices for kindergarten through grade three teachers and literacy coaches. Such
329 program shall be recommended by the Georgia Literacy Task Force, as provided for in
330 Code Section 20-14-202. Beginning no later than the 2027-2028 school year, such
331 comprehensive program shall be made available free of charge to public school
332 kindergarten through third grade teachers.

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

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

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

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

343 (B) Such report shall also include analyses of the impact of use of universal reading
344 screeners, the use of high-quality instructional materials, and instructional practices
345 ~~grounded in~~ aligned to the science of reading. Such report shall be provided to the
346 Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the
347 ~~chairperson~~ chairpersons of the House Committee on Education, the Senate Education
348 and Youth Committee, the House Committee on Higher Education, the Senate Higher
349 Education Committee, the House Committee on Appropriations, and the Senate
350 Appropriations Committee, and the board, and shall be made available on the
351 department's ~~public~~ website for access by the public."

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

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

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

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

361 (D) School based literacy coaches working directly with individual students and small

362 groups of students as time permits; and

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

364 ~~(B)(i) Any public school or local school system claiming that a lack of sufficient~~

365 ~~funding prevents such public school or local school system from providing~~

366 ~~instructional support as required in subparagraph (A) of this paragraph shall promptly~~

367 ~~and in writing notify the department and shall describe all efforts such school or~~

368 ~~school system has undertaken to secure sufficient funding from local, state, federal,~~

369 ~~and private sources.~~

370 ~~(ii) The department shall provide technical assistance and other guidance to public~~

371 ~~schools and local schools systems in identifying local, state, federal, and private~~

372 ~~funding sources to provide for instructional support as required in subparagraph (A)~~

373 ~~of this paragraph."~~

374 "(d.1)(1) The Professional Standards Commission shall adopt rules which establish criteria

375 for core curricula for each state approved educator preparation program. Such rules shall

376 include, but shall not be limited to, ~~the following:~~

377 ~~(1)(A)~~ The use of content standards established by the ~~State Board of Education~~ board

378 that are aligned to the science of reading to guide curricula and instruction;

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

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

381 ~~(B)(ii)~~ Prepare teachers to provide explicit, systematic, sequential, diagnostic, and

382 cumulative approaches to teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary,

383 fluency, and text comprehension; and

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

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

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

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

388 ~~(6)(F)~~ Strategies ~~to~~ including, but not limited to, the use of assessment results, to
 389 identify student strengths and weaknesses and differentiate instruction based on student
 390 needs;

391 ~~(7)(G)~~ Strategies and practices to support research based content aligned to state
 392 standards and grading practices;

393 ~~(8)(H)~~ Strategies appropriate for the early identification of a student with a reading
 394 deficiency; and

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

396 (2) Beginning January 1, 2027, the Professional Standards Commission shall undertake
 397 an ongoing review of each state approved educator preparation program's compliance
 398 with the rules provided for in paragraph (1) of this subsection, with a particular emphasis
 399 on subparagraphs (B) and (F) of paragraph (1) of this subsection. The Executive Director
 400 shall have the discretion to determine the order and priority of reviews; provided,
 401 however, that all educator preparation programs shall be reviewed no less often than
 402 every four years. By November 1 each year, the Professional Standards Commission
 403 shall provide a report of its review and significant findings to the Chancellor of the Board
 404 of Regents of the University System of Georgia, the governing body of each state
 405 approved educator preparation program that is not an institution of the University System
 406 of Georgia, the State Board of Education, the Office of Student Achievement, the Georgia
 407 Council on Literacy, and the chairpersons of the House Committee on Higher Education,
 408 the Senate Higher Education Committee, the House Committee on Education, and the
 409 Senate Education and Youth Committee.

410 "(e)(1) There is established within the Office of Student Achievement the Georgia
 411 Literacy Coach Coordinating Committee. Such committee shall comprise, at a minimum,
 412 the Georgia Literacy Coach, the Coordinator of Georgia Literacy Coaching, State
 413 Literacy Director, the Georgia Literacy Coach Coordinator, a representative of the

414 ~~Department of Education~~ department, at least one representative of Georgia's regional
415 ~~education services~~ educational service agencies, ~~a representative~~ representatives of a
416 research based education ~~organization~~ organizations with subject matter expertise
417 identified by the ~~Georgia Council on Literacy~~ department and the Office of Student
418 Achievement, and other subject matter experts identified by the ~~Georgia Literacy Coach~~
419 ~~or the Georgia Council on Literacy~~ department and the Office of Student Achievement.
420 In collaboration with the board, the department, the Department of Early Care and
421 Learning, the Department of Public Health, the University System of Georgia, the
422 Technical College System of Georgia, and other appropriate stakeholders as determined
423 by the Office of Student Achievement, the Georgia Literacy Coordinating Committee
424 shall:

425 (A) Maintain and amend as needed the Georgia Literacy Plan originally created by the
426 Georgia Council on Literacy;

427 (B) Review to ensure oversight, accountability, and effectiveness of implementation
428 of this Code section and other literacy efforts supporting schools and school systems,
429 children and families, and adult learners provided for in the Georgia Literacy Plan;

430 (C) Support the coordination of the efforts of all state-wide literacy and reading
431 education programs across state, regional, and local agencies, systems, and initiatives;

432 (D) Review the conditions, needs, issues, and problems related to state literacy
433 outcomes, and make recommendations for legislation and appropriations to support
434 improving such outcomes;

435 (E) Review and make recommendations for local unified literacy plans;

436 (F) Review state-wide birth to age five initiatives and suggest policy and appropriation
437 changes; and

438 (G) Review best practices for community based literacy programs and make
439 recommendations for improvement.

440 (2) The Office of Student Achievement shall employ the State Literacy Director and the
441 Georgia Literacy Coach Coordinator, whose duties and responsibilities shall be provided
442 for in Article 4 of Chapter 14 of this title.:

443 ~~(A) The Georgia Literacy Coach; and~~

444 ~~(B) The Coordinator of Georgia Literacy Coaching, who shall be responsible for:~~

445 ~~(i) Serving as the chairperson of the Georgia Literacy Coach Coordinating~~
446 ~~Committee;~~

447 ~~(ii) Coordinating state-wide literacy coaching efforts;~~

448 ~~(iii) Serving as the primary liaison with the Department of Education with respect to~~
449 ~~state-wide literacy coaching efforts;~~

450 ~~(iv) Direction and oversight of literacy coaches affiliated with the Department of~~
451 ~~Education or a regional education service agency whose positions are supported with~~
452 ~~state or federal funds; and~~

453 ~~(v) Coordinating with designated organizations affiliated with the Georgia Council~~
454 ~~on Literacy with respect to research, best practices, and proactive intervention~~
455 ~~strategies for birth to adult language and literacy learning."~~

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

458 (2) Beginning January 1, 2027:

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

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

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

471 **SECTION 2-2.**

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

475 "20-2-1010.

476 (a) The State Board of Education ~~is authorized to~~ shall prescribe, by regulation, the
477 definition of the term 'instructional materials and content' to include but not be limited to
478 systematically designed material in any medium, including digital instructional materials
479 and content and any computer hardware, software, and technical equipment necessary to
480 support such instructional materials and content, that constitutes the principal source of
481 study for a state funded course to be used in the various grades in the public schools of this
482 state, including ~~the elementary grades and high school grades~~ kindergarten through
483 grade 12. The state board may provide, by regulation, for multiple listings of instructional
484 materials and content for use in the various grades and may, in its discretion, authorize the
485 local school ~~superintendents~~ systems and other public schools to exercise a choice as
486 between various instructional materials and content so listed or adopted for any particular
487 grade.

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

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

492 (1) Only high-quality instructional materials and content that are aligned to the science
493 of reading, as such terms are defined in Code Section 20-2-153.1, shall be used for
494 literacy and reading education in kindergarten through grade three; and
495 (2) Beginning with the 2029-2030 school year and continuing thereafter, no public
496 school that receives funds under Article 6 of this chapter shall use any portion of such
497 funds for the purchase or use of instructional materials and content for literacy and
498 reading education in kindergarten through grade three that are not approved for such
499 purpose by the State Board of Education upon the recommendation of the Georgia
500 Literacy Task Force."

501 **SECTION 2-3.**

502 Said title is further amended in said article of said chapter by adding a new Code section to
503 read as follows:

504 "20-2-1015.1.

505 (a) Local boards of education and other public school governing bodies shall approve
506 high-quality instructional materials for students in kindergarten through grade three as
507 required under Code Section 20-2-153.1.

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

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

517 **SECTION 2-4.**

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

520 "ARTICLE 4521 20-14-200.

522 (a) As provided for in Code Section 20-2-153.1, there is established within the Office of
523 Student Achievement the Georgia Literacy Coordinating Committee. The members and
524 responsibilities of such committee shall be as provided for in Code Section 20-2-153.1, the
525 'Georgia Early Literacy and Dyslexia Act.'

526 (b) Upon the recommendation of the State Literacy Director, the Office of Student
527 Achievement is authorized to engage individuals with subject matter expertise to work with
528 the Georgia Literacy Coordinating Committee.

529 20-14-201.

530 As provided for in Code Section 20-2-153.1, the Office of Student Achievement shall
531 employ:

532 (1) The State Literacy Director, who shall report to the director of the Office of Student
533 Achievement and shall be responsible for:

534 (A) Oversight of the maintenance, amendment, implementation, alignment, and
535 evaluation of the state-wide literacy plan in collaboration with other stakeholders as
536 provided for in Code Section 20-2-153.1;

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

540 (C) Serving as the primary liaison with the Department of Education, the Department
541 of Early Care and Learning, the Department of Public Health, the University System
542 of Georgia, the Technical College System of Georgia, Georgia's regional educational
543 service agencies, the Professional Standards Commission, and the Office of Student
544 Achievement with respect to state-wide literacy and reading education efforts;

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

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

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

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

554 (2) The Georgia Literacy Coach Coordinator, who shall report to the State Literacy
555 Director and shall be responsible for:

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

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

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

563 (D) Observing, evaluating, and providing feedback to literacy coaches and specialists
564 affiliated with the Department of Education or a regional educational service agency
565 whose positions are supported with state or federal funds, including, but not limited to,
566 regional literacy coaches; and

567 (E) Reviewing and collaborating on the development and implementation of state-wide
568 professional learning and professional development programs and training for literacy
569 and reading education.

570 20-14-202.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- 593 (iii) Identify students who are significantly at risk of not attaining grade level reading
594 proficiency, including, but not limited to, identifying students with characteristics of
595 dyslexia; and
- 596 (iv) Have robust reporting capabilities, including, but not limited to, the capability
597 to generate and provide directly to the department and the Office of Student
598 Achievement reports of screener results by:
- 599 (I) Student;
- 600 (II) Student subgroups based on grade level, educational program, demographic
601 characteristics, and other criteria identified by the Georgia Literacy Task Force;
- 602 (III) School; and
- 603 (IV) Local school system.
- 604 (C) In determining which universal reading screeners to recommend for use by local
605 school systems and public schools, the task force shall, at a minimum, consider:
- 606 (i) The time required to conduct the universal reading screener, with the intention of
607 minimizing the impact on instructional time;
- 608 (ii) The level of integration of universal reading screener results with instructional
609 support for teachers and students; and
- 610 (iii) The timeliness in reporting assessment results to teachers, administrators, and
611 parents.
- 612 (D) The task force shall recommend one universal reading screener to be made
613 available free of charge to local school systems and public schools.
- 614 (E) By April 1, 2028, and by April 1 every third year thereafter, the task force shall
615 submit to the State Board of Education the list of recommended universal reading
616 screeners, including the universal reading screener to be made available free of charge
617 to local school systems and public schools.
- 618 (F) No universal reading screener shall be approved by the State Board of Education
619 unless it has been recommended by the task force; and

- 620 (3)(A) A list of no less than two and no more than five of systematically designed
621 programs of high-quality instructional materials that are aligned to the science of
622 reading, as such terms are defined in Code Section 20-2-153.1, for students in
623 kindergarten through grade three for recommendation to the State Board of Education.
- 624 (B) By April 1, 2027, and by April 1 every fourth year thereafter, the task force shall
625 submit to the State Board of Education the list of recommended systematically designed
626 programs of high-quality instructional materials that are aligned to the science of
627 reading.
- 628 (c)(1) The State Literacy Director shall serve as chairperson of the task force.
- 629 (2) In addition to the State Literacy Director, the membership of the task force shall
630 include the following appointed members, each of whom shall have at least three years
631 of experience with scientifically based reading instruction:
- 632 (A) Three members appointed by the Governor, two of whom shall have significant
633 experience as a literacy or reading specialist, coach, or teacher or as a curriculum
634 specialist;
- 635 (B) Three members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, two of
636 whom shall have significant experience as a literacy or reading specialist, coach, or
637 teacher or as a curriculum specialist;
- 638 (C) Three members appointed by the President of the Senate, two of whom shall have
639 significant experience as a literacy or reading specialist, coach, or teacher or as a
640 curriculum specialist;
- 641 (D) One member who shall be a certified academic dyslexia therapist for a minimum
642 of three years appointed by the Office of Student Achievement; and
- 643 (E) One member appointed by the State Board of Education.
- 644 (3) The Office of Student Achievement shall verify that each appointed member of the
645 task force satisfies the credentials under which he or she was appointed.

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

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

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

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

656 (6) Legislative members of the task force shall receive the allowances provided for in
657 Code Section 28-1-8. Nonlegislative members of the task force shall receive a daily
658 expense allowance in the amount specified in subsection (a) of Code Section 45-7-21 as
659 well as the mileage or transportation allowance authorized for state employees. Members
660 of the task force who are state officials, other than legislative members, or state
661 employees shall receive no compensation for their services on the task force, but shall be
662 reimbursed for expenses incurred by them in the performance of their duties as members
663 of the task force in the same manner as they are reimbursed for expenses in their
664 capacities as state officials or state employees. The funds necessary for the
665 reimbursement of the expenses of state officials, other than legislative members, and state
666 employees shall come from funds appropriated to or otherwise available to their
667 respective departments. All other funds necessary to carry out the provisions of this
668 article shall come from funds appropriated to the Office of Student Achievement.

669 (d) The task force shall endeavor to include multiple vendors in each annual list of
670 universal reading screeners and high-quality instructional materials provided for in
671 subsection (a) of this Code section. The task force shall make public all rubrics and

672 measurements used to determine eligibility and compliance for all universal reading
673 screeners and high-quality instructional materials accepted for consideration.

674 20-14-203.

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

677 (b) The State School Superintendent shall recommend that the State Board of Education
678 adopt recommendations received pursuant to subsection (a) of this Code section; provided,
679 however, that if the State School Superintendent disagrees with a recommendation received
680 pursuant to subsection (a) of this Code section, he or she shall submit to the State Board
681 of Education the reasons for such disagreement in writing. Irrespective of whether the
682 State School Superintendent submits any disagreement, the State Board of Education shall
683 timely vote to adopt or reject the recommendation from the Georgia Literacy Task Force.

684 20-14-204.

685 The Office of Student Achievement shall be responsible for developing and implementing,
686 in collaboration with the Department of Education, the Department of Early Care and
687 Learning, the Department of Public Health, the University System of Georgia, the
688 Technical College System of Georgia, Georgia's regional educational service agencies, and
689 local school systems and public schools, a comprehensive state-wide promotional
690 campaign to increase public awareness and education about the essential importance of
691 literacy in the lives of all Georgians and to urge all Georgia families and communities to
692 support and participate in literacy programs and other efforts, especially for children from
693 birth through fifth grade."

694 **SECTION 2-5.**

695 Said title is further amended by revising Code Section 20-1-45, relating to termination, as
696 follows:

697 "20-1-45.

698 The council shall be abolished and this article shall stand repealed on December 31, ~~2030~~
699 2026."

700 **PART III**701 **SECTION 3-1.**

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

706 "(b) Each child in this state shall be required to attend a public school, a private school, or
707 a home study program between his or her sixth and sixteenth birthdays; provided, however,
708 that it is the policy of this state that families are encouraged to have their children attend
709 a public school, a private school, or a home study program beginning at age five. Such
710 compulsory attendance shall not apply to any child who has successfully completed all
711 requirements for a high school diploma or state approved high school equivalency (HSE)
712 diploma."

713 **SECTION 3-2.**

714 Said title is further amended in Part 3 of Article 6 of Chapter 2, relating to educational
715 programs under the "Quality Basic Education Act," by revising subsection (c) of Code
716 Section 20-2-150, relating to eligibility for enrollment for educational programs, as follows:

717 "(c) All children enrolled for 20 school days or more in the public schools of this state
 718 prior to their ~~seventh~~ sixth birthday shall become subject to all of the provisions of this
 719 article, the provisions of Code Sections 20-2-690 through 20-2-701, and the rules and
 720 regulations of the State Board of Education relating to compulsory school attendance even
 721 though they have not attained ~~seven~~ six years of age."

722

SECTION 3-3.

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

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

731 (B)(i) It is the policy of this state that before any child is enrolled in the first grade
 732 of a state supported primary grades program, he or she shall attend a full-day
 733 kindergarten program unless he or she has been assessed as ready for first grade, as
 734 provided for in paragraph (2) of this subsection, and meets the age eligibility
 735 requirement for enrollment in the first grade.

736 (ii) ~~The~~ the purposes of the state supported kindergarten program shall be to provide
 737 all children with an equal opportunity to become prepared for a successful first grade
 738 experience and to acquire the foundation for academic progress throughout the
 739 students' educational careers.

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

743 (iv) This subparagraph shall not be construed or applied to require a child to
744 complete a full school year of kindergarten prior to enrolling in first grade.

745 (v) At the discretion of the school principal or at the request of the parent or guardian,
746 a child who meets the age eligibility requirement for enrollment in the first grade may
747 be assessed for first grade readiness as provided for in paragraph (2) of this
748 subsection.

749 (vi) A child who meets the age eligibility requirement for enrollment in the first
750 grade and who has been assessed as ready for first grade, as provided for in
751 paragraph (2) of this subsection, may be placed in or promoted to first grade.

752 (vii) No student shall remain in kindergarten for more than two years.

753 (viii) Notwithstanding any part of this subsection or other provision of law to the
754 contrary:

755 (I) Each child enrolling in a state supported education program for the first time
756 who, by virtue of his or her age and date of birth, is eligible for enrollment in the
757 first grade of a state supported primary grades program pursuant to this Code
758 section or Code Section 20-2-150 shall be enrolled in a state supported kindergarten
759 program at the request of his or her parent or guardian; and

760 (II) Each child who attains the age of either four or five by September 1 shall be
761 eligible for enrollment in a voluntary pre-kindergarten program provided and
762 operated as part of Georgia's Pre-K Program, and each such child shall be enrolled
763 in such program at the request of his or her parent or guardian; provided, however,
764 that this paragraph shall not be construed or applied to require or permit a child to
765 be enrolled in such a program for more than one year; and, provided, further that
766 children ages four and five shall be treated on the same basis relative to selection
767 for available seats in such programs.

768 (2)(A) It is the policy of this state that the purpose of the primary grades program shall
769 be mastery by enrolled students of the essential basic skills and knowledge which will

770 enable them to achieve more advanced skills and knowledge offered at the higher grade
771 levels. For purposes of funding under this article, the primary grades program shall
772 include grades one, two, and three.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

786 (ii) Attain attain the age of six by September 1, except as otherwise provided by
787 subsection (b) of Code Section 20-2-150. The State Board of Education shall adopt
788 an instrument or instruments, procedures, and policies necessary to assess the first
789 grade readiness of children enrolled in Georgia's public school kindergarten programs
790 pursuant to Code Section 20-2-281. Readiness information obtained by the
791 instrument or instruments adopted by the state board shall be used by local school
792 systems in concert with teacher recommendations and other relevant information to
793 make appropriate student grade placement decisions.

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

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

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

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

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

813 (ii) The school principal or the principal's designee shall notify in writing by
814 first-class mail the parent or guardian of the child regarding the determination that the
815 child is not ready for placement in or promotion to the first grade program. The
816 notice shall describe the option of the parent or guardian to appeal such determination
817 and shall further describe the composition and functions of the placement committee
818 as provided for in this paragraph, including the requirement that a decision to place
819 the child in or promote the child to the first grade must be a unanimous decision of
820 the committee;

821 (iii) If the parent or guardian appeals the determination that his or her child is not
822 ready for placement in or promotion to the first grade program, then the school
823 principal or the principal's designee shall establish a placement committee composed

824 of the school principal or the principal's designee, the student's parent or guardian, and
825 the student's teacher, and shall notify in writing by first-class mail the parent or
826 guardian of the time and place for convening the placement committee;

827 (iv) The placement committee shall:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

863 (H) By November 1 each year, the Office of Student Achievement shall The State
864 School Superintendent may annually provide a report summarizing the results of the
865 readiness of first grade Georgia public school kindergarten children. No student shall
866 remain in kindergarten for more than two years the readiness of Georgia children for
867 placement in or promotion to the first grade program. Such report shall include, but
868 shall not be limited to, information on the grade level reading proficiency of such
869 children. Such report shall be submitted to the Governor; the President of the Senate;
870 the Speaker of the House of Representatives; the chairpersons of the House Committee
871 on Education, the Senate Education and Youth Committee, the House Committee on
872 Higher Education, the Senate Higher Education Committee, the House Committee on
873 Appropriations, and the Senate Appropriations Committee; and the State Board of
874 Education.

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

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

880 **SECTION 3-4.**

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

884 "20-2-283.

885 (a) No later than ~~January 1, 2002~~ January 1, 2027, the State Board of Education shall adopt
886 criteria for the development of a placement and promotion policy by each local board of
887 education and other public school governing body consistent with the Georgia Academic
888 Placement and Promotion Policy.

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

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

892 (A) The second grade program to which the student would otherwise be assigned if the
893 student is determined to be significantly at risk of not attaining grade level reading
894 proficiency, as determined in accordance with Code Section 20-2-153.1, by the end of
895 the first grade program and does not meet the promotional standards and criteria
896 established by the State Board of Education and by the local board of education or other
897 governing body for the school that the student attends;

898 ~~(A)~~(B) The fourth grade program to which the student would otherwise be assigned if
899 the student does not achieve grade level as defined by the Office of Student
900 Achievement in accordance with Code Section 20-14-31 on the third grade
901 end-of-grade reading assessment developed in accordance with subsection (a) of Code
902 Section 20-2-281 and meet the promotional standards and criteria established by the

903 State Board of Education and by the local ~~school~~ board of education or other governing
904 body for the school that the student attends;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

942 (B) The school principal or the principal's designee shall notify in writing by first-class
943 mail the parent or guardian of the student and the teacher regarding the decision to
944 retain the student. The notice shall describe the option of the parent, guardian, or
945 teacher to appeal the decision to retain the student and shall further describe the
946 composition and functions of the placement committee as provided for in this
947 subsection, including the requirement that a decision to promote the student must be a
948 unanimous decision of the committee;

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

955 (D) The placement committee shall:

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

964 (ii) Prescribe for the student, whether the student is retained or promoted, such
965 accelerated, differentiated, or additional instruction as needed to perform at grade
966 level by the conclusion of the subsequent school year, prescribe such additional
967 assessments as may be appropriate in addition to assessments administered to other
968 students at the grade level during the year, and provide for a plan of continuous
969 assessment during the subsequent school year in order to monitor the progress of the
970 student;

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

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

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

978 (i) The parent or guardian of the student shall be notified in writing by first-class mail
979 by the school principal or the principal's designee regarding the determination that the
980 student has been determined to be significantly at risk of not attaining grade level
981 reading proficiency by the end of the first grade program, the student's updated tiered

- 982 reading intervention plan, and the possibility that the student might be retained at the
983 same grade level for the next school year;
- 984 (ii) The student shall be reassessed to determine if he or she is to be significantly at
985 risk of not attaining grade level reading proficiency by the end of the first grade
986 program; and
- 987 (iii) The student shall receive intensive reading intervention in accordance with Code
988 Section 20-2-153.1.
- 989 (B) When a student is determined to be significantly at risk of not attaining grade level
990 reading proficiency, as specified in subparagraph (A) of paragraph (1) of this
991 subsection, and continues to be significantly at risk of not attaining grade level reading
992 proficiency after provisions of subparagraph (A) of this paragraph are implemented,
993 then the following shall occur:
- 994 (i) The school principal or the principal's designee shall retain the student for the next
995 school year except as otherwise provided in this paragraph;
- 996 (ii) The school principal or the principal's designee shall notify in writing by
997 first-class mail the parent or guardian of the student regarding the decision to retain
998 the student. The notice shall describe the option of the parent or guardian to appeal
999 the decision to retain the student and shall further describe the composition and
1000 functions of the placement committee as provided for in this paragraph, including the
1001 requirement that a decision to promote the student must be a unanimous decision of
1002 the committee;
- 1003 (iii) If the parent or guardian appeals the decision to retain the student, then the
1004 school principal or the principal's designee shall establish a placement committee
1005 composed of the school principal or the principal's designee, the student's parent or
1006 guardian, and the student's teacher and shall notify in writing by first-class mail the
1007 parent or guardian of the time and place for convening the placement committee;
- 1008 (iv) The placement committee shall:

- 1009 (I) Review the overall academic achievement of the student and his or her progress
1010 toward grade level reading proficiency and make a determination to promote or
1011 retain. A decision to promote must be a unanimous decision and must determine
1012 that if promoted and given intensive reading intervention in accordance with Code
1013 Section 20-2-153.1 during the next year, the student is likely to perform at grade
1014 level as defined by the Office of Student Achievement in accordance with Code
1015 Section 20-14-31 by the conclusion of the school year; and
- 1016 (II) Prescribe for the student, whether the student is retained or promoted, such
1017 accelerated, differentiated, or additional instruction as needed to perform at grade
1018 level by the conclusion of the subsequent school year, prescribe such additional
1019 assessments as may be appropriate in addition to assessments administered to other
1020 students at the grade level during the year, and provide for a plan of continuous
1021 assessment during the subsequent school year in order to monitor the progress of the
1022 student;
- 1023 (v) For students receiving special education or related services, the Individualized
1024 Education Plan Committee shall serve as the placement committee;
- 1025 (vi) The decision of the placement committee may be appealed only as provided for
1026 by the local board of education or other public school governing body; and
- 1027 (vii) No student shall remain in the first grade program for more than two years.
- 1028 (c) This Code section does not preclude the retention by the school principal or the
1029 principal's designee of a student who performs satisfactorily on the end-of-grade
1030 assessments specified in subparagraph (B), (C), or (D) of paragraph (1) of subsection (b)
1031 of this Code section as provided for by the local board of education or other public school
1032 governing body.
- 1033 (d) This Code section does not create a property interest in promotion.
- 1034 (e) The State Board of Education shall establish policies and procedures for
1035 implementation of this Code section."

1036

SECTION 3-5.

1037 Said title is further amended in said part by revising Code Section 20-2-284, relating to
1038 criteria for local boards of education and model placement and promotion policy, as follows:

1039 "20-2-284.

1040 (a) No later than July 1, ~~2003~~ 2026, each local board of education and other public school
1041 governing body shall develop and adopt a placement and promotion policy in accordance
1042 with the criteria established by the State Board of Education as provided in Code
1043 Section 20-2-283 and consistent with the Georgia Academic Placement and Promotion
1044 Policy.

1045 (b) Except for those end-of-grade assessments specified in Code Section 20-2-283, the
1046 placement and promotion policy as developed and adopted by each local board of
1047 education and other public school governing body shall state how the end-of-grade
1048 assessments administered under Code Section 20-2-281 for grades one through eight, and
1049 assessments administered to determine grade level reading proficiency for grade one, will
1050 be weighted or otherwise utilized by the school principal or the principal's designee in
1051 determining the overall academic achievement of a student and an appropriate plan of
1052 accelerated, differentiated, or additional instruction, placement, promotion, or retention of
1053 a student.

1054 (c) To assist each local board of education and other public school governing body, the
1055 State Board of Education shall develop a model placement and promotion policy ~~which~~
1056 ~~may be utilized by a local board of education."~~

1057

SECTION 3-6.

1058 Said title is further amended in said part by revising Code Section 20-2-285, relating to
1059 timetable for implementation of policy, as follows:

1060 "20-2-285.

1061 The State Board of Education shall provide for a timetable of implementation of this Code

1062 section and the Georgia Academic Placement and Promotion Policy which shall include:

1063 (1) The third grade beginning with the 2003-2004 school year;

1064 (2) The fifth grade beginning with the 2004-2005 school year; ~~and~~

1065 (3) The eighth grade beginning with the 2005-2006 school year; ~~and~~

1066 (4) The first grade beginning with the 2027-2028 school year."

1067

PART IV

1068

SECTION 4-1.

1069 This Act shall become effective upon its approval by the Governor or upon its becoming law

1070 without such approval.

1071

SECTION 4-2.

1072 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.