

What Special Educators Need to Know About the Reading Bill (SB681)
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We have a new reading bill in Missouri taking effect on January 1, 2023 that follows the pedagogy and research over numerous years to effectively teach children to read. This research is commonly referred to as the “science of reading”. The *National Reading Panel Report* (2000), has been validated based on a thorough rigorous review of scientific research completed between 2000 and 2016 for foundational skills to support reading for understanding in kindergarten through third grade. There have been many researchers including the *Institute of Educational Science/What Works Clearinghouse*. Based on this research, we know all students need systematic and explicit reading instruction in each of the essential elements of reading.

Senate Bill 681 defines reading instruction for Missouri and aligns with the research. The focus is for all students to develop appropriate reading skills by receiving explicit instruction in each of the following components: phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, morphology, syntax, and semantics.

There are various requirements related to the implementation of reading instruction included in the law. These requirements include the following.

1. Assessment - all students in kindergarten through third grade (and newly enrolled K-5) will be assessed on their reading skills at the beginning and end of each school year to obtain their current reading levels. The assessment utilized must be on the state approved reading assessment list.
2. Reading Success Plans will be developed and implemented with any student who has a substantial deficiency in reading based on the reading assessment score, teacher observation, is at-risk for dyslexia on the required dyslexia screener, or has a formal diagnosis of dyslexia. A student is considered to have a significant deficiency if they are one or more grade levels behind in reading.
3. There must be an annual parent notification for any student who has a reading deficiency. This parent notice must include: the child has been identified as having a substantial deficiency in reading, a description of the services currently provided to the child, and a description of the proposed supplemental instructional services and supports that the school district will provide to the child that are designed to remediate the identified area of reading deficiency. If the child is either at-risk for or diagnosed with dyslexia, the district must provide an explanation that the instruction used to teach reading is explicit, systematic, and diagnostic based on phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, morphology, syntax, and semantics.
4. In addition to the parent notification, strategies will be provided for parents and guardians to use at home to help the child succeed in reading. This information must include but is not limited to parent-guided home reading.
5. If there is a summer reading program, the family must be notified of the opportunity for the child to attend this program.
6. The consideration of retention must be discussed between school staff and the parent or guardian at the end of third grade if the student has a reading deficiency.

7. Provide the identified students with intensive instructional services and supports specified in a reading success plan. These services must be based on student need, free of charge, and include scientific, evidence-based reading instruction and other strategies in addition to the general education classroom reading content. Other strategies may include but are not limited to small group or individual instruction, reduced teacher-student ratios, more frequent progress monitoring, tutoring or mentoring, extended school day, week, or year, and a summer reading program.
8. Evidence-based reading instruction must be explicit, cumulative, systematic, and use diagnostic methods for each of these areas.
 - a. Phonology: relationships of speech sounds
 - b. Sound-Symbol Association: connections between letter and sounds, must teach the code, visual to auditory (reading), and auditory to visual (spelling)
 - c. Syllable Instruction: teach the ability to divide words into parts and the meaning of the parts
 - d. Morphology: how words are put together (root words and affixes)
 - e. Syntax: arrangement of words to create meaning
 - f. Semantics: meaning of content
9. Progress reports must be provided to parents or guardians at least 4 times per year.
10. Each district must ensure that intensive reading instruction through a reading development initiative is provided to all kindergarten through fifth grade students who have a substantial deficiency in reading. This instruction must also comply with the explicit and systematic instruction in all components of reading.
11. District must report the reading proficiency data to the department of elementary and secondary education.
12. Districts must also include reading proficiency as part of the Comprehensive School Improvement Program.

The specific details of this law can be found in the actual bill starting on approximately page 89 which [is linked here](#).

The department of education has developed this [Literacy-Based Quick Reference Guide](#) to support districts in the implementation of these requirements. This guide has a detailed breakdown of each requirement and the responsibilities for DESE, Districts, Schools, and Teachers. The department of education is working through the implementation of this work and currently plans 5 phases. The quick reference guide is the beginning of the phases.

Please take advantage of the numerous professional development opportunities for your teachers with the focus on literacy through the Regional Professional Development Centers. The LETRS training as well as the training through the special education improvement consultants on the Components of Effective Literacy each align with the requirements of this new law and the science of reading.