

AN ACT concerning education.

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,
represented in the General Assembly:**

Section 1. Findings. The General Assembly makes all of the following findings:

(1) Literacy is not only critical for individuals' ability to earn income, secure housing, participate in their health care, support their children's education, pursue happiness, and navigate the world but also collectively foundational to our community and democracy.

(2) The World Literacy Foundation found that low literacy is a major contributor to inequality and increases the likelihood of poor physical and mental health, workplace accidents, misuse of medication, participation in crime, and welfare dependency, all of which have substantial additional social and economic costs.

(3) Fifty percent of Illinois' third graders met, exceeded, or approached learning standards in English language arts according to the Illinois Assessment of Readiness with the other half of students not meeting or partially meeting standards; this represents a 10 percentage-point swing from the 2019 prepandemic rates when 60% of students met, exceeded, or approached learning

standards.

(4) Thirty-three percent of Illinois' fourth graders achieved proficient or advanced reading scores on the 2022 National Assessment of Educational Progress with another 29% meeting basic reading proficiency and the remaining 38% scoring below basic reading proficiency.

(5) Research from the Annie E. Casey Institute found that students who are not proficient readers in third grade are 4 times more likely not to finish high school; if those students are from low-income families, they are more than 6 times more likely not to finish high school.

(6) Research consistently finds that a diverse, well-trained, and expanding pool of teachers, in conjunction with curricula responsive to the strengths and needs of diverse student populations, improves educational outcomes for all students.

(7) An appropriate curriculum considers the learning needs of students with their developmental needs and increases in complexity with every new stage of childhood.

(8) Oral language development is a prerequisite for reading and writing that is nurtured from birth through talking, reading, story-telling, singing, nursery rhymes, and other language exposure and, as younger children develop, through intentional dialogue with rich vocabulary, home visiting programs, access to books, high-quality child care and preschool, and lived

experiences that strengthen students' opportunity to build oracy skills, vocabulary, and background knowledge, leading to higher-level cognitive thinking.

(9) Reading builds new neural pathways in the brain as people, usually children, learn to connect the sounds in language to letters on a page to the meaning of the text; however, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to literacy, as learners will require differentiated strategies or methods and dosages within different areas of literacy instruction to meet their individual needs.

(10) Reading, writing, and oracy have a reciprocal relationship, as each strengthens the other, and students benefit when their instruction is closely intertwined.

(11) English learners benefit from a comprehensive literacy approach that recognizes the value of multilingualism by enveloping all areas of literacy instruction with a deep focus on oral language development and encouraging students to make connections between English and their home language.

(12) Teachers deserve the tools to be knowledgeable about the cultural practices and language system of the children they serve, including those children who speak language variations of English, such as African-American English (AAE); AAE has a linguistic structure that is a systematic and rule-governed variation of General American English.

(13) Research shows that direct, systematic, cumulative, and explicit reading instruction that is focused on the foundational reading skills of phonemic awareness, phonics or decoding, spelling or encoding, vocabulary development that includes morphology, oral language development, reading fluency, and reading comprehension that includes syntax and building background or content knowledge, is highly effective in teaching young children to read.

(14) High literacy achievement across all demographic groups is an essential indicator of educational equity within this State; strengthening early literacy instruction and support for students in Illinois will pay dividends in the future by empowering students, providing them with the skills they will need to graduate, find fulfilling careers, and be productive members of their communities and of our democracy.

(15) Ensuring that every child has access to high-quality, research-aligned, developmentally appropriate reading instruction implemented using a comprehensive approach is a foundational component of this State's public education system and a responsibility shared among federal, State, and local education agencies.

Section 90. The School Code is amended by adding Section 2-3.196 and by changing Sections 21B-30 and 21B-35 and as

follows:

(105 ILCS 5/2-3.196 new)

Sec. 2-3.196. State Board of Education literacy assistance.

(a) The State Board of Education shall adopt and make available all of the following to each publicly funded school district by July 1, 2024:

(1) A rubric by which districts may evaluate curricula and select and implement evidence-based, culturally inclusive core reading instruction programs aligned with the comprehensive literacy plan for the State described in subsection (c).

(2) A template to support districts when developing comprehensive, district-wide literacy plans that include support for special student populations, including, at a minimum, students with disabilities, multilingual students, and bidialectal students.

(3) Guidance on evidence-based practices for effective structures for training and deploying literacy coaches to support teachers and close opportunity gaps among student demographic groups.

(b) On or before January 1, 2025, the State Board of Education shall develop and make available training opportunities for educators in teaching reading that are aligned with the comprehensive literacy plan described in

subsection (c) and consistent with State learning standards.

This support may include:

(1) the development of a microcredential or a series of microcredentials in literacy instruction aligned with the comprehensive literacy plan described in subsection (c) to be affixed to educator licenses upon successful demonstration of the skill or completion of the required coursework or assessment, or both, or online training modules on literacy instruction, aligned with the comprehensive literacy plan described in subsection (c) and consistent with State learning standards, accepted for continuing professional development units; and

(2) the creation and dissemination of a tool that school districts, educators, and the public may use to evaluate professional development and training programs related to literacy instruction.

(c) In consultation with education stakeholders, the State Board of Education shall develop and adopt a comprehensive literacy plan for the State on or before January 31, 2024. The comprehensive literacy plan shall consider, without limitation, evidence-based research and culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogical approaches to meet the needs of all students and shall, at a minimum, do all of the following:

(1) Consider core instructional literacy practices and practices related to the unique needs of and support for

specific student populations, including, at a minimum, students with disabilities, multilingual students, and bidialectal students, and the resources and support, including professional learning for teachers, needed to effectively implement the literacy instruction.

(2) Provide guidance related to screening tools, the administration of such screening tools, and the interpretation of the resulting data to identify students at risk of reading difficulties in grades kindergarten through 2. This guidance shall outline instances in which dyslexia screenings and other universal screeners are appropriate for use with English learners.

(3) Provide guidance related to early literacy intervention for students in grades kindergarten through 2 for schools to implement with students at risk of reading difficulties, as well as literacy intervention for students in grades 3 through 12 demonstrating reading difficulties.

(4) Consider the impact of second language acquisition and bilingual education on reading instruction in the student's native language and English.

(5) Define key terminology, such as "evidence-based".

(6) Contextualize the interaction between elements of the plan and existing laws and regulations that have overlapping components, such as a multi-tiered system of support.

(7) Focus on a comprehensive range of elements of literacy, including phonological awareness; decoding (phonics); encoding (spelling); vocabulary development, including morphology, oracy, and reading fluency; and reading comprehension, including syntax and background and content knowledge.

(105 ILCS 5/21B-30)

Sec. 21B-30. Educator testing.

(a) (Blank).

(b) The State Board of Education, in consultation with the State Educator Preparation and Licensure Board, shall design and implement a system of examinations, which shall be required prior to the issuance of educator licenses. These examinations and indicators must be based on national and State professional teaching standards, as determined by the State Board of Education, in consultation with the State Educator Preparation and Licensure Board. The State Board of Education may adopt such rules as may be necessary to implement and administer this Section.

(c) (Blank).

(c-5) The State Board must adopt rules to implement a paraprofessional competency test. This test would allow an applicant seeking an Educator License with Stipulations with a paraprofessional educator endorsement to obtain the endorsement if he or she passes the test and meets the other

requirements of subparagraph (J) of paragraph (2) of Section 21B-20 other than the higher education requirements.

(d) All applicants seeking a State license shall be required to pass a test of content area knowledge for each area of endorsement for which there is an applicable test. There shall be no exception to this requirement. No candidate shall be allowed to student teach or serve as the teacher of record until he or she has passed the applicable content area test.

(d-5) The State Board shall consult with any applicable vendors within 90 days after the effective date of this amendatory Act of the 103rd General Assembly to develop a plan to transition the test of content area knowledge in the endorsement area of elementary education, grades one through 6, by July 1, 2026 to a content area test that contains testing elements that cover bilingualism, biliteracy, oral language development, foundational literacy skills, and developmentally appropriate higher-order comprehension and on which a valid and reliable language and literacy subscore can be determined. The State Board shall base its rules concerning the passing subscore on the language and literacy portion of the test on the recommended cut-score determined in the formal standard-setting process. Candidates need not achieve a particular subscore in the area of language and literacy. The State Board shall aggregate and publish the number of candidates in each preparation program who take the test and the number who pass the language and literacy portion.

(e) (Blank).

(f) Except as otherwise provided in this Article, beginning on September 1, 2015, all candidates completing teacher preparation programs in this State and all candidates subject to Section 21B-35 of this Code are required to pass a teacher performance assessment approved by the State Board of Education, in consultation with the State Educator Preparation and Licensure Board. A candidate may not be required to submit test materials by video submission. Subject to appropriation, an individual who holds a Professional Educator License and is employed for a minimum of one school year by a school district designated as Tier 1 under Section 18-8.15 may, after application to the State Board, receive from the State Board a refund for any costs associated with completing the teacher performance assessment under this subsection.

(g) The content area knowledge test and the teacher performance assessment shall be the tests that from time to time are designated by the State Board of Education, in consultation with the State Educator Preparation and Licensure Board, and may be tests prepared by an educational testing organization or tests designed by the State Board of Education, in consultation with the State Educator Preparation and Licensure Board. The test of content area knowledge shall assess content knowledge in a specific subject field. The tests must be designed to be racially neutral to ensure that no person taking the tests is discriminated against on the basis

of race, color, national origin, or other factors unrelated to the person's ability to perform as a licensed employee. The score required to pass the tests shall be fixed by the State Board of Education, in consultation with the State Educator Preparation and Licensure Board. The tests shall be administered not fewer than 3 times a year at such time and place as may be designated by the State Board of Education, in consultation with the State Educator Preparation and Licensure Board.

The State Board shall implement a test or tests to assess the speaking, reading, writing, and grammar skills of applicants for an endorsement or a license issued under subdivision (G) of paragraph (2) of Section 21B-20 of this Code in the English language and in the language of the transitional bilingual education program requested by the applicant.

(h) Except as provided in Section 34-6 of this Code, the provisions of this Section shall apply equally in any school district subject to Article 34 of this Code.

(i) The rules developed to implement and enforce the testing requirements under this Section shall include, without limitation, provisions governing test selection, test validation, and determination of a passing score, administration of the tests, frequency of administration, applicant fees, frequency of applicants taking the tests, the years for which a score is valid, and appropriate special

accommodations. The State Board of Education shall develop such rules as may be needed to ensure uniformity from year to year in the level of difficulty for each form of an assessment. (Source: P.A. 101-81, eff. 7-12-19; 101-220, eff. 8-7-19; 101-594, eff. 12-5-19; 102-301, eff. 8-26-21.)

(105 ILCS 5/21B-35)

Sec. 21B-35. Minimum requirements for educators trained in other states or countries.

(a) Any applicant who has not been entitled by an Illinois-approved educator preparation program at an Illinois institution of higher education applying for a Professional Educator License endorsed in a teaching field or school support personnel area must meet the following requirements:

(1) the applicant must:

(A) hold a comparable and valid educator license or certificate, as defined by rule, with similar grade level and content area credentials from another state, with the State Board of Education having the authority to determine what constitutes similar grade level and content area credentials from another state;

(B) have a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education; and

(C) (blank); or

(2) the applicant must:

(A) have completed a state-approved program for

the licensure area sought, including coursework concerning (i) methods of instruction of the exceptional child, (ii) methods of reading that align with all applicable standards set forth in Part 23 of Title 23 of the Illinois Administrative Code and reading in the content area, and (iii) instructional strategies for English learners;

(B) have a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education;

(C) have successfully met all Illinois examination requirements, except that:

(i) (blank);

(ii) an applicant who has successfully completed a test of content, as defined by rules, at the time of initial licensure in another state is not required to complete a test of content; and

(iii) an applicant for a teaching endorsement who has successfully completed an evidence-based assessment of teacher effectiveness, as defined by rules, at the time of initial licensure in another state is not required to complete an evidence-based assessment of teacher effectiveness; and

(D) for an applicant for a teaching endorsement, have completed student teaching or an equivalent experience or, for an applicant for a school service

personnel endorsement, have completed an internship or an equivalent experience.

(b) In order to receive a Professional Educator License endorsed in a teaching field or school support personnel area, applicants trained in another country must meet all of the following requirements:

(1) Have completed a comparable education program in another country.

(2) Have had transcripts evaluated by an evaluation service approved by the State Superintendent of Education.

(3) Have a degree comparable to a degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education.

(4) Have completed coursework aligned to standards concerning (i) methods of instruction of the exceptional child, (ii) methods of reading that align with all applicable standards set forth in Part 26 of Title 23 of the Illinois Administrative Code and reading in the content area, and (iii) instructional strategies for English learners.

(5) (Blank).

(6) (Blank).

(7) Have successfully met all State licensure examination requirements. Applicants who have successfully completed a test of content, as defined by rules, at the time of initial licensure in another country shall not be required to complete a test of content. Applicants for a

teaching endorsement who have successfully completed an evidence-based assessment of teacher effectiveness, as defined by rules, at the time of initial licensure in another country shall not be required to complete an evidence-based assessment of teacher effectiveness.

(8) Have completed student teaching or an equivalent experience.

(9) (Blank).

(b-5) All applicants who have not been entitled by an Illinois-approved educator preparation program at an Illinois institution of higher education and applicants trained in another country applying for a Professional Educator License endorsed for principal or superintendent must hold a master's degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education and hold a comparable and valid educator license or certificate with similar grade level and subject matter credentials, with the State Board of Education having the authority to determine what constitutes similar grade level and subject matter credentials from another state, or must meet all of the following requirements:

(1) Have completed an educator preparation program approved by another state or comparable educator program in another country leading to the receipt of a license or certificate for the Illinois endorsement sought.

(2) Have successfully met all State licensure examination requirements, as required by Section 21B-30 of

this Code. Applicants who have successfully completed a test of content, as defined by rules, at the time of initial licensure in another state or country shall not be required to complete a test of content.

(2.5) Have completed an internship, as defined by rule.

(3) (Blank).

(4) Have completed coursework aligned to standards concerning (i) methods of instruction of the exceptional child, (ii) methods of reading that align with all applicable standards set forth in Part 26 of Title 23 of the Illinois Administrative Code and reading in the content area, and (iii) instructional strategies for English learners.

(4.5) (Blank).

(5) Have completed a master's degree.

(6) Have successfully completed teaching, school support, or administrative experience as defined by rule.

(b-7) All applicants who have not been entitled by an Illinois-approved educator preparation program at an Illinois institution of higher education applying for a Professional Educator License endorsed for Director of Special Education must hold a master's degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education and must hold a comparable and valid educator license or certificate with similar grade level and subject matter credentials, with the State Board of

Education having the authority to determine what constitutes similar grade level and subject matter credentials from another state, or must meet all of the following requirements:

(1) Have completed a master's degree.

(2) Have 2 years of full-time experience providing special education services.

(3) Have successfully completed all examination requirements, as required by Section 21B-30 of this Code. Applicants who have successfully completed a test of content, as identified by rules, at the time of initial licensure in another state or country shall not be required to complete a test of content.

(4) Have completed coursework aligned to standards concerning (i) methods of instruction of the exceptional child, (ii) methods of reading that align with all applicable standards set forth in Part 26 of Title 23 of the Illinois Administrative Code and reading in the content area, and (iii) instructional strategies for English learners.

(b-10) All applicants who have not been entitled by an Illinois-approved educator preparation program at an Illinois institution of higher education applying for a Professional Educator License endorsed for chief school business official must hold a master's degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education and must hold a comparable and valid educator license or certificate with similar grade level

and subject matter credentials, with the State Board of Education having the authority to determine what constitutes similar grade level and subject matter credentials from another state, or must meet all of the following requirements:

(1) Have completed a master's degree in school business management, finance, or accounting.

(2) Have successfully completed an internship in school business management or have 2 years of experience as a school business administrator.

(3) Have successfully met all State examination requirements, as required by Section 21B-30 of this Code. Applicants who have successfully completed a test of content, as identified by rules, at the time of initial licensure in another state or country shall not be required to complete a test of content.

(4) Have completed modules aligned to standards concerning methods of instruction of the exceptional child, methods of reading and reading in the content area, and instructional strategies for English learners.

(c) The State Board of Education, in consultation with the State Educator Preparation and Licensure Board, may adopt such rules as may be necessary to implement this Section.

(Source: P.A. 101-220, eff. 8-7-19; 101-643, eff. 6-18-20; 102-539, eff. 8-20-21.)

Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon becoming law.