

Date of Hearing: July 12, 2017

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Patrick O'Donnell, Chair

SB 494 (Hueso) – As Amended May 26, 2017

SENATE VOTE: 31-8

SUBJECT: Language arts: reading: grant program

SUMMARY: Establishes the Golden State Reading grant program (program) for the purpose of assisting local educational agencies (LEAs) in ensuring that all students meet reading standards and language progressive skills by the end of grade 3. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Establishes the Golden State Reading Guarantee Grant Program for the purpose of assisting LEAs in ensuring that all students meet reading standards and language progressive skills by the end of grade 3.
- 2) Requires the California Department of Education (CDE) to administer the program and establish a process to provide professional development training to LEAs.
- 3) Requires an LEA that chooses to apply for a grant to submit an application to the CDE in a format and by a date determined by the CDE.
- 4) Requires an application submitted to the CDE by an LEA pursuant to include, at a minimum, all of the following:
 - a) information about student and school needs within the LEA
 - b) the activities the LEA will undertake with the grant funding
 - c) how the LEA will address language acquisition for English learners
 - d) how the LEA will measure outcomes associated with the activities undertaken with grant funding
- 5) States that an LEA is eligible for a grant if it enrolls students in grades 1 to 4, inclusive, and less than 50 percent of students in grade 4 score at Level 3 or 4 in the prior school year on the reading standards within the English language arts standards.
- 6) Requires an LEA that receives a grant to use the grant funds for specialists and activities that address the needs of students related to meeting reading standards and acquiring language progressive skills, including, but not limited to, any of the following:
 - a) literacy coaches
 - b) reading specialists
 - c) reading tutors

- d) coordinators to facilitate reading programs
 - e) collaboration with parents and guardians to increase participation of parents and guardians and their ability to support their children's literacy development
- 7) Requires the CDE to establish a process to provide professional development training to LEAs on all of the following:
- a) the existing diagnostic, formative, and interim assessment tools that are available from the state, including those that are appropriate for students who are English learners
 - b) how to evaluate the data from those assessment results, adjust instruction based on those assessment results, and create a system of continuous improvement
 - c) how to administer and score those assessments
- 8) Requires the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) to conduct an evaluation of reading intervention strategies to identify successful strategies and best practices, and report the results to the appropriate policy committees of the Legislature and the Governor on or before December 31, 2018. Repeals this evaluation requirement on January 1, 2022.
- 9) Makes implementation of the program contingent upon the appropriation of funds for purposes of the grant program in the annual Budget Act or other statute.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the State's assessment system as the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress and includes, beginning with the 2013-14 school year, a consortium summative assessment in English language arts for grades 3-8 and 11 that measures content standards adopted by the State Board of Education (SBE).
- 2) Requires the CDE to identify and make available to school districts information regarding existing assessments in language arts and mathematics that are aligned to the common core academic standards and appropriate for students in grade 2 for diagnostic use by classroom teachers. Existing law requires the CDE to ensure that the selected diagnostic assessments are valid for purposes of identifying particular knowledge or skills a student has or has not acquired in order to inform instruction and make educational decisions.
- 3) Requires the governing board of each school district to adopt a local control and accountability plan (LCAP) using a template adopted by the SBE. Existing law requires each LCAP, to include, for the school district and each school within the school district, both of the following:
 - a) A description of the annual goals, for all students and each subgroup, to be achieved for each of the state priorities and for any additional local priorities identified by the governing board of the school district.

- b) A description of the specific actions the school district will take during each year to achieve the goals, including the enumeration of any specific actions necessary for that year to correct any deficiencies in regard to the state priorities.

FISCAL EFFECT: According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

- 1) One-time Proposition 98 General Fund cost pressure of \$10 million to fund the grant program. This amount could be higher or lower depending on the grant amounts and the number of LEAs that can be funded.
- 2) The CDE estimates ongoing costs of approximately \$155,000 General Fund and 1.5 positions to administer the grant program and a range of between \$1 million to \$3 million to provide professional development training to LEAs. The costs for training will depend on how the training is conducted and whether a train-the-trainer model is utilized whereby CDE could administer training in fewer locations throughout the state.
- 3) The Legislative Analyst's Office indicates one-time costs of between \$25,000 and \$150,000 to conduct the required evaluation.

COMMENTS:

Need for the bill. According to the author, "California is currently facing a literacy crisis. According to 2016 statistics released by the Department of Education, 56% of all California fourth graders do not meet the proficiency standards for reading as set by the Smarter Balanced Test. This problem is magnified for low-income and minority students. Currently, 70% of all low-income fourth graders are not reading at grade level. Among minority demographic groups, 68% of all Hispanic fourth graders and 73% of all African American fourth graders are not meeting proficiency standards. To properly grasp the significance of these statistics, it is important to note that Hispanics and African Americans together account for approximately 45% of the state's total population.

Nearly 90% of students who fail to earn a high school diploma were struggling readers in third grade. This statistic is troubling but should not be surprising since research has found that a child's early education (K-3rd grade) is absolutely critical in the cognitive development of a child. A student's performance in the fourth grade is a critical benchmark that provides valuable insights into the ability of that child to go on to be successful academically and find gainful employment in the workplace.

Senate Bill 494 would establish The Golden State Reading Guarantee Grant Program. This program would assist local educational agencies in ensuring that all students meet reading standards and language progressive skills by the end of grade 3. SB 494 is needed to close the reading gap and provide struggling readers in the 1-3 years with the tools they need in order to be successful."

English language arts scores improving, but overall proficiency is low and achievement gaps persist. According to the CDE, in the second year of the state's Common Core-aligned assessment in English Language Arts (which includes assessment of reading skills), students' performance improved over the prior year. But overall performance remains low and achievement gaps remain.

In the 2015-16 academic year about 49 percent of students met or exceeded grade-level achievement standards in English Language Arts (37 percent met the standards in Mathematics). 37 percent of Latinos and 31 percent of African American students meet or exceeded standards in English language arts compared with 64 percent of White students. Compared to the prior year, average scores for Latino students in English language arts increased 5 percent, while scores for African Americans and Whites rose 3 percent.

What does research say about how to improve reading skills? The U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES) maintains the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), which reviews the existing research on different programs, products, and practices, and policies in education, with the goal of providing educators information they need to make evidence-based decisions. The WWC identifies interventions in different content and skills areas, including literacy.

In 2009 the WWC published a practice guide entitled "Assisting Students Struggling with Reading: Response to Intervention (RtI) and Multi-Tier Intervention in the Primary Grades." This guide shared five recommendations to help educators identify struggling readers and implement evidence-based strategies to promote their reading achievement:

- 1) Screen all students for potential reading problems at the beginning of the year and again in the middle of the year. Regularly monitor the progress of students who are at elevated risk for developing reading disabilities.
- 2) Provide differentiated reading instruction for all students based on assessments of students' current reading levels.
- 3) Provide intensive, systematic instruction on up to three foundational reading skills in small groups to students who score below the benchmark on universal screening. Typically these groups meet between three and five times a week for 20–40 minutes.
- 4) Monitor the progress of tier 2 students at least once a month. Use these data to determine whether students still require intervention. For those still making insufficient progress, school-wide teams should design a tier 3 intervention plan.
- 5) Provide intensive instruction daily that promotes the development of various components of reading proficiency to students who show minimal progress after reasonable time in tier 2 small group instruction.

Of these practices, the IES found minimal evidence for three of these practices, found moderate evidence for the first (screen for potential reading problems), and strong evidence for the third (provide intensive, systematic instruction in a small group setting).

The CDE also maintains a webpage devoted to research-based intervention programs and tools to support students to achieve proficiency on the Common Core State Standards.

Training on the state's new assessments. This bill calls for the CDE to establish a process for providing professional development on the use of the state's summative, interim, and formative assessments.

In the first year of administration of the state's Common Core aligned assessment, the CDE held a two-part training for school district teams. It provided an overview of the CAASPP system of assessments and provided dedicated time for LEA teams to plan for implementing all components of the CAASPP System to improve teaching and learning. CDE has posted the

training materials from the CAASSP Institute as video professional development modules for independent or small group learning on its website.

Recommended amendments. Staff recommends that the bill be amended as follows:

1. Delete the requirement that the LAO to conduct an evaluation of reading intervention strategies to identify successful strategies and best practices. As noted above, there is an existing analysis of effective reading interventions which could serve this purpose.
2. Add, in the provisions on professional development on assessments, professional development on the appropriate use of primary language assessments in reading and language arts for students instructed in bilingual, language immersion, and dual language immersion programs.
3. Add, in the provision of the bill which specifies allowable uses of funding, authorization to use funds, when a grant is intended to include activities to address the literacy needs of students enrolled in bilingual, language immersion, or dual language immersion programs, for certificated employees who hold bilingual authorizations or who have demonstrated experience and expertise in serving students enrolled in such programs.
4. Broaden the reference to the literacy needs of English learners to include English learners who are enrolled in bilingual, language immersion, and dual language immersion programs, and change “language acquisition” to “literacy needs.”

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Children Now (Co-sponsor)
Reading Partners (Co-sponsor)
#cut50
Anti-Recidivism Coalition
California Federation of Teachers
California Teachers Association
Parent Revolution
Reality Changers
Sacramento County District Attorney
SIATech
South Bay Union School District
1 individuals

Opposition

Californians Together

Analysis Prepared by: Tanya Lieberman / ED. / (916) 319-2087