

Date of Hearing: April 25, 2018

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Patrick O'Donnell, Chair

AB 2683 (Gipson) – As April 18 , 2018

SUBJECT: Literacy education: pupils from extremely low income communities: grant program

SUMMARY: Establishes the California Student Author Project, a grant program operated by the California State Library (CSL). Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Makes findings and declarations regarding the importance of literacy education.
- 2) Establishes the California Student Author Project, designed to accomplish all of the following for public school students from extremely low income communities:
 - a) Improve students' English language skills
 - b) Improve academic performance among students
 - c) Build healthy relationships between students and the community
 - d) Empower students with critical life skills
 - e) Promote positive life choices for students
 - f) Increase literacy, reading, and writing among students and the community
 - g) Reduce student truancy
 - h) Reduce student suspensions and expulsions
- 3) Requires a grant recipient to implement the educational program in the 2019–20 and 2020–21 school years.
- 4) Requires a grant recipient to provide the educational program described in this section to students in grades 6 to 12, inclusive, from housing developments with a median income level of 30 percent of area median income.
- 5) Requires a grant recipient to establish a student author book publishing program to provide participating students an opportunity to write, edit, and promote a short story.
- 6) Requires a grant recipient to operate weekly student author workshops that shall include the following educational phases:
 - a) Writing and editing, including instruction in the skills necessary for creative writing
 - b) Publishing an anthology

- c) Marketing, media, and community relations, including instruction in book brand development and entrepreneurship
 - d) A group presentation
 - e) A community-based book signing event
- 7) States that students participating in the student author book publishing program are expected to do all of the following:
- a) Engage in critical thinking
 - b) Practice effective problem solving
 - c) Devise a useful outline for their book
 - d) Develop promotional and advertising tools
 - e) Write a press release geared towards promotion of the book and the book signing event within the community
 - f) Gain knowledge and understanding of how to create an exciting literary character, and how to show, rather than tell, their story in a logical order
- 8) Requires, not later than January 1, 2022, the California State Library (CSL) to report to the Legislature on the outcomes of the California Student Author Project.
- 9) Requires the report to include all of the following information:
- a) The extent to which the project accomplished the desired outcomes of the project.
 - b) Demographic data about students participating in the project, disaggregated by race, gender, foster youth, and English learners.
 - c) The extent of parent engagement as a result of the project.
- 10) Appropriates the sum of one million dollars from the General Fund to the CSL in the 2018–19 fiscal year for purposes of providing these grant awards.
- 11) Requires the CSL to provide grant awards to nonprofit organizations that have demonstrated experience in providing similar educational programs to students in extremely low income communities.
- 12) Requires the CSL to grant recipients with the goal of providing access to the services provided by the California Student Author Project to a total of 1,000 students over the course of the 2019–20 and 2020–21 school years.
- 13) States that a nonprofit organization that receives a grant award shall use the funds awarded only for the purposes described in this article.

- 14) States that, for purposes of making the computations required by Section 8 of Article XVI of the California Constitution, which was approved by the voters as Proposition 98, the amount appropriated is deemed to be “General Fund revenues appropriated for school districts.”

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the California Civil Liberties Public Education Act, for the purpose of sponsoring public educational activities and development of educational materials to ensure that the events surrounding the exclusion, forced removal, and internment of citizens and permanent residents of Japanese ancestry are remembered, and so that the causes and circumstances of that and similar events is illuminated and understood. Requires that this program is administered by the California State Library. (EC 13000)
- 2) Requires the State Librarian to allocate grants on a competitive basis for the general purpose of establishing a legacy of remembrance as part of a continuing process of recovery from World War II exclusion and detention.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

Need for the bill. The author’s office states, “Children’s reading competency is strongly correlated with the home literacy environment and in order to effectively address functional illiteracy we must focus on improving literacy outcomes at home. Since low-income households have less access to learning materials and skill building lessons research shows that functional illiteracy is especially prevalent in public housing developments. Children who live in public housing perform worse in school than students who live in other types of housing and this disparity exists amongst children even when comparing students at the same schools who shared similar demographics, like race, gender, and poverty status. Children who live in public housing developments are also less likely to have experiences that encourage the development of reading acquisition skills and as a result enter high school with average literacy skills five years behind those of higher-income students. This suggests that children who reside in public housing developments face unique social and economic hurdles at home that affect their success in the classroom and illustrates the often-overlooked role that housing can play in education.

To help reverse this trend, AB 2683 will enhance the literacy skills of extremely low-income youth residing in public housing developments through a student author book publishing pilot program. Through this program students will learn to write a fiction genre short narrative as part of a published anthology. Participating students will also attend regular development workshops and receive coaching to execute their own community based book signing event. This type of experiential learning will help youth raise their literacy levels and better prepare them for postsecondary school success. This pilot will also serve as a data point for our urban housing centers. The outcomes will provide data on how to address literacy within our housing developments and how services can be leveraged to address this statewide need.”

Modeled after existing program. According to the author, this grant program proposed by this bill is modeled after an existing program run by a non-profit organization called Phabb5. This organization’s mission is “to reinvigorate, inspire, and unite communities at their core by

creating turnkey comprehensive book publishing programs that help students stand out during every phase of life.”

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 literacy? 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.

Proposition 98 eligible? This bill states that, for purposes of Proposition 98, the minimum funding guarantee provided for in the Constitution, funds appropriated by this bill are deemed “General Fund revenues appropriated for school districts.” However, the bill appropriates funding to the State Library for grants to non-profit organizations, not local education agencies or community college districts. **Staff recommends that the bill be amended** to remove this provision.

Definition of eligible students. This bill requires that the students served the grant program live in “housing developments with a median income level of 30 percent of area median income.” It appears that a list of housing developments meeting the specific requirements of the bill does not exist, making it difficult to judge whether a grant proposal has met the requirements of the bill. **Staff recommends** that this be changed to “a housing development under a city or county public housing program that is subsidized by the federal government and provides affordable housing.” **Staff also recommends**, consistent with the author’s stated intent, that this bill be amended to require that the programs supported by this program operate in public housing developments.

Related legislation. SB 494 (Hueso) of this Session would have established the Golden State Reading grant program for the purpose of assisting local educational agencies in ensuring that all students meet reading standards and language progressive skills by the end of grade 3. This bill was vetoed by the Governor, who stated:

This bill would establish the Golden State Reading grant program for the purpose of assisting local educational agencies to ensure that all students meet specified reading standards and language skills by the end of the third grade. Local educational agencies already have the flexibility under the Local Control Funding Formula to provide students the support they need to ensure that appropriate reading and language skills are achieved.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Apple10 Skincare, Inc.
 Base509
 Crenshaw United Methodist Church
 Foothill-De Anza Community College District
 Franklin Classical Middle School
 GR Public Relations
 Kaya South Incorporated
 Kern Community College District
 Kimble Gamble Brown Baggin It
 Los Rios Community College District
 San Diego Community College District
 Yuba Community College District
 An individual

Opposition

None on file

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