



Literacy

Tennessee Literacy Success Act

for Legislative and Advocacy Partners

On January 21, 2021, the Tennessee General Assembly enacted the **Tennessee Literacy Success Act** (SB7003/HB7002), marking an important point in history for Tennessee students and families. The act outlines a bold policy framework that engages students and families, current classroom teachers, schools, school districts, and institutions of higher education to improve literacy rates in Tennessee. To ensure effective implementation, it is critical for legislators and advocates across the state to understand the main components in the new act.

Classroom Instruction

Classroom teachers in kindergarten through third grade will ground teaching in foundational literacy skills, with a phonics-based approach for literacy instruction—a method backed by research as the most effective way to teach reading in early grades.

Planning and Measurement

School districts will begin to administer a universal reading screener to all students in K-3rd grades three times each year to identify overall student progression in learning to read, as well as specifically identifying students with a significant reading deficiency. The Tennessee universal reading screener will not only be provided for optional use to school districts free of charge, but the screener can be used by school districts to satisfy multiple testing requirements including: dyslexia screening, RtI² screening, and as an approved alternative to portfolio assessment.

Additionally, school districts will develop a Foundational Literacy Skills Plan to articulate the school district's locally driven solutions to improve literacy outcomes for their students. These plans will be reported publicly to provide transparency but will be tailored to each local context.

Student Interventions and Support

To support student literacy in the classroom and at home, school districts will provide tailored reading supports and interventions for each student identified as having a significant reading deficiency. These tailored supports include notifying parents if students are identified as having a reading deficiency, providing personalized literacy reports after each administered screener, and providing interventions and activities that parents may use at home to support reading proficiency.



Teacher Training and Professional Development

In order to improve literacy outcomes, we must also improve how we train our teachers in literacy instruction. The new act contains requirements for current and future Tennessee educators to ensure they are prepared to teach students to read.

All educator preparation programs will provide teacher candidates with training on foundational literacy skills, and new teachers seeking to teach K-5th grades will be required to pass a reading instruction assessment. Current teachers in K-5th grade must complete at least one professional development course on foundational literacy skills approved by the Tennessee Department of Education to advance or renew their teaching licenses. The Tennessee Department of Education will develop at least one professional development course to fulfill all of these requirements, to be made available at no cost.