



Acts
2012

CHAPTER 287 AN ACT RELATIVE TO THIRD GRADE READING PROFICIENCY.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same as follows:

SECTION 1. (a) There shall be an early literacy expert panel to develop recommendations to have all students in the commonwealth reading proficiently by the end of third grade. The panel shall consist of 9 members: the secretary of education, who shall serve as co-chair, and 8 persons appointed by the secretary, in collaboration with the commissioners of early education and care, elementary and secondary education and higher education, who shall be experts on children's early language and literacy development; provided, however, that 4 shall be selected from a list provided to the secretary from the chairs of the joint committee on education and the chairs of the joint committee on higher education. Panel members shall each be appointed for a term of 4 years. The panel shall designate a co-chair every new term. No member, with the exception of the secretary, shall serve for more than 2 consecutive terms. The members of the panel shall serve without compensation but may be reimbursed for expenses necessarily and reasonably incurred in the performance of their duties. Panel members shall not be, by virtue of their membership, state employees under chapter 268A of the General Laws.

The panel shall meet not less than 4 times annually for the first 4 years. After the first 4 years, the panel co-chairs shall determine the time period in which the panel shall continue to meet.

(b) The panel shall advise the departments of early education and care, elementary and secondary education and higher education and the executive office of education on the refinement and implementation of plans for early literacy development including, but not limited to, the Massachusetts Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Plan, the Early Learning Challenge Plan and Race to the Top, including the activities and programs offered by the district and school assistance centers and readiness centers to support language and literacy acquisition for children from birth to third grade, inclusive. The panel shall make recommendations to the secretary and the commissioners of early education and care, elementary and secondary education and higher education on the alignment, coordination and implementation of, including, but not limited to, the following areas:

- (1) strategies for evaluating the effectiveness of curricula on language and literacy development for children in early education and care programs and grades pre-kindergarten to third grade, inclusive, that (i) is anchored in rich content; (ii) uses a wide variety of types of text to support content under study; (iii) emphasizes the role of oral language and discussion in promoting early reading skills; and (iv) contains a balanced

instructional design focused on developing both meaning-based skills, such as comprehension, conceptual knowledge, vocabulary and code-based skills, such as letter knowledge, letter sounds and word reading;

(2) effective instructional practices to promote children's language and literacy development in early education and care programs and grades pre-kindergarten to third grade, inclusive, including tiered instructional strategies and materials;

(3) pre-service and in-service professional development and training for educators on language and literacy development, the administration of screenings and assessments, and the analysis of data gained through screenings and assessments to make instructional decisions to improve language and literacy acquisition in young children;

(4) developmentally appropriate screening and assessment to monitor and report on children's progress toward achieving benchmarks in language and literacy development across educational levels prior to third grade and measuring school readiness and children's reading proficiency from pre-kindergarten to third grade;

(5) family partnership strategies for improving the quality, frequency and efficacy of home-school interactions to support children's literacy and language development, as well as, for building community capacity to support family literacy practices; and

(6) action steps to implement the research-based recommendations contained in reports written by experts in early language and literacy development.

The panel shall also advise on leveraging existing and new federal grant opportunities and private funding to support language and literacy acquisition for children from birth to third grade, inclusive. Subject to appropriation, the secretary and commissioners of early education and care, elementary and secondary education and higher education may appoint personnel necessary to coordinate the activities of the panel and provide administrative support as needed.

SECTION 2. The secretary of education, in coordination with the early literacy expert panel co-chair and the commissioners of early education and care, elementary and secondary education and higher education, shall prepare and submit an annual report on the activities of the early literacy expert panel in advising the departments. The report shall include information on the alignment and collaboration between the 3 commissioners, as overseen by the secretary, on early language and literacy development for children from birth to third grade, inclusive, and on teacher training and professional development on early language and literacy, and all subject areas covered in clauses (1) to (6), inclusive, of subsection (b) of section 1. The report shall also include a description of all state and federal funding related to early literacy and the programs such funding supports. The secretary shall submit the report not later than June 30 to the clerks of the senate and the house of representatives, who shall forward the report to the senate and house chairs of the joint committee on education and the senate and house chairs of the joint committee on higher education. The report shall also be made available on the websites of the departments of early education and care, elementary and secondary education and higher education and on the website of the executive office of education.

SECTION 3. The early literacy expert panel shall conduct its first meeting not later than 60 days after the effective date of this act.

Approved, September 26, 2012.
