

By: Senator(s) DeBar

To: Education

SENATE BILL NO. 2487

1 AN ACT TO PROVIDE CERTAIN INTERVENTION AND IMPLEMENTATION
2 STRATEGIES FOR LITERACY PROFICIENCY AMONG STUDENTS IN GRADES 4-8;
3 TO DEFINE TERMINOLOGY; TO REQUIRE THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF
4 EDUCATION TO PROVIDE A SYSTEM OF SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT
5 INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS, CONTENT AREA TEACHERS, LITERACY COACHES,
6 DYSLEXIA THERAPISTS, INTERVENTIONISTS, TUTORS, AND OTHER
7 IDENTIFIED PERSONNEL TO ENSURE THEY HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS
8 TO SUPPORT STUDENTS IN GRADES 4-8 WITH READING DIFFICULTIES; TO
9 PRESCRIBE WHAT THE SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS SHALL ENTAIL; TO REQUIRE
10 THAT ANY STUDENT IN GRADES 4-8 EXHIBITING DEFICIENCIES IN READING
11 SHALL RECEIVE AN INDIVIDUAL READING PLAN (IRP) NO LATER THAN 30
12 DAYS AFTER THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE READING DEFICIENCY; TO
13 SPECIFY THAT THE IRP SHALL BE CREATED BY THE TEACHER,
14 INTERVENTIONIST, PRINCIPAL, OTHER PERTINENT SCHOOL PERSONNEL, AND
15 PARENT AND SHALL DESCRIBE THE SCIENTIFICALLY RESEARCHED AND
16 EVIDENCED-BASED READING INTERVENTION SERVICES THE STUDENT SHALL
17 RECEIVE TO REMEDY THE READING DEFICIT; TO REQUIRE WRITTEN
18 NOTIFICATION OF THE PARENT OF ANY STUDENT IN GRADES 4-8 WITHIN 10
19 BUSINESS DAYS OF THE IDENTIFICATION OF A READING DEFICIENCY; TO
20 REQUIRE THAT ANY INCOMING STUDENT IN GRADES 4-8 IDENTIFIED WITH A
21 READING DEFICIENCY BE PROVIDED WITH SUPPLEMENTAL OR INTENSIVE
22 INTERVENTIONS DEPENDENT UPON THE SEVERITY OF THE DEFICIT SKILLS TO
23 ADDRESS THE SPECIFIC DEFICIENCY; TO SET OUT THE RESPONSIBILITIES
24 OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS, THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, AND
25 EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS; TO PROVIDE THAT THE STATE BOARD OF
26 EDUCATION SHALL HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO ENFORCE THIS ACT AND MAY
27 PROMULGATE RULES AND REGULATIONS AS NECESSARY FOR THE
28 IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS ACT; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

29 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

30 **SECTION 1. Legislative intent.** (1) It is the intent of the
31 Legislature that:



32 (a) Each student's progression from one grade to
33 another be determined, in part, upon proficiency in reading and
34 writing;

35 (b) District school board policies facilitate reading
36 instruction and intervention services to address student reading
37 and writing needs; and

38 (c) Each student and his or her parent or guardian be
39 informed of that student's progress.

50 **SECTION 2. Definitions.** As used in this act, the following
51 terms shall have the meanings ascribed in this section unless a
52 contrary meaning is clearly evident from the context:

53 (a) "Accommodations" means measures taken to allow a
54 student to complete the same assignment or test as other students,
55 but with a change in the timing, formatting, setting, scheduling,
56 response, or presentation. Accommodation is provided for both



57 testing and instruction and changes the way students access
58 information and demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and abilities
59 without lowering learning or performance expectations and without
60 changing academic standards or what is being measured. The
61 purpose is to ensure equal access to the full school experience
62 for students with dyslexia or other learning disabilities.
63 Accommodation does not change the content of instruction, give
64 students an unfair advantage, or change the skills or knowledge
65 that a test measures.

66 (b) "Comprehensive dyslexia evaluation" is the process
67 of gathering information to identify factors contributing to a
68 student's difficulty learning to read and spell. An evaluation
69 encompasses identification, screening, testing, diagnosis, and all
70 the other information-gathering involved when the student, his or
71 her family, and a team of professionals work together to determine
72 why the student is having difficulty.

73 (c) "Content-area teacher" includes all subject-area
74 teachers.

75 (d) "Department" means the State Department of
76 Education.

77 (e) "Dyslexia" means a specific learning disability
78 that is neurobiological in origin. Dyslexia is characterized by
79 difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and poor
80 spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically
81 result from a deficit in the phonological component of language



82 that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities
83 and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary
84 consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and
85 reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary
86 and background knowledge.

87 (f) "Dyslexia diagnosis" means a clear diagnostic
88 statement included in a written evaluation report to document the
89 presence of dyslexia. The evaluation is conducted by a
90 professional psychologist, psychometrist, or speech-language
91 pathologist.

92 (g) "Dyslexia screening" is a brief assessment
93 measuring critical skills and identifying potential risks and is a
94 predictor of future reading success.

95 (h) "Educator preparation program" or "EPPs" means any
96 program that prepares individuals for certification as educators,
97 school administrators, or other school personnel.

98 (i) "Evidence-based" references instructional
99 strategies or practices with clear and convincing proof from
100 scientifically based research studies which have been
101 peer-reviewed.

102 (j) "High-quality instructional materials" or "HQIMs"
103 means instructional curricula and intervention programs,
104 including, but not limited to, textbooks, teacher guides, and
105 supplemental materials, that are grounded in the science of
106 reading and evidenced-based research approaches that help all



107 students achieve grade-level learning goals. HQIMs incorporate
108 best practices for building skills essential to reading, follow a
109 sequential order of lessons that are explicit, systematic, and
110 cumulative, contain challenging texts that build student
111 background knowledge, support academic language development and
112 critical thinking skills across core content areas, and are
113 aligned to a state's academic standards. These materials are
114 rigorous, comprehensive, and regularly reviewed and updated to
115 align to research and best practices. They also provide
116 curriculum-specific professional development that prepares
117 teachers to effectively plan and prepare lessons and assessments,
118 differentiate instruction, and monitor student progress.

119 (k) "Individual reading plan" or "IRP" means an
120 individually designed reading intervention for a student required
121 under Section 5 of this act.

122 (l) "Multilingual students" include newcomers or
123 students with limited or interrupted education.

124 (m) "Multi-tiered system of support" or "MTSS" means a
125 framework for supporting and increasing academic, behavioral, and
126 social-emotional outcomes for all students.

127 (n) "Reading intervention" includes evidence-based
128 strategies from scientifically-based reading research frequently
129 used to improve reading where deficiencies exist and includes, but
130 is not limited to, individual instruction, multisensory

131 approaches, dyslexia therapy, tutoring, mentoring, or the use of
132 technology that targets specific reading skills and abilities.

133 (o) "Science of reading" means the large body of
134 evidence that informs how proficient reading and writing develop,
135 why some students have difficulty, and how educators can most
136 effectively assess, teach, and improve student outcomes through
137 prevention of and intervention for reading difficulties.

138 (p) "Scientifically-based reading research" applies
139 rigorous, systematic, and objective methods to gain knowledge from
140 multiple disciplines to understand how children learn to read,
141 together with strategies and methods that can be used to teach
142 children to read and how they can overcome reading difficulties.

143 (q) "Structured literacy" is an evidence-based approach
144 to teaching oral and written language aligned to the science of
145 reading. It is based on the science of how kids learn to read and
146 is characterized by direct, explicit, systematic, sequential,
147 cumulative, and diagnostic instruction in phonology, phonemic
148 awareness, sound-symbol association, syllable instruction,
149 morphology, syntax, and semantics.

150 (r) "System of assessments" means a comprehensive
151 system for use in a school district or charter school that
152 provides screening, diagnostic, and summative assessments of key
153 indicators of reading success, including word recognition,
154 vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

155 (s) "Three-cueing system" means a largely antiquated
156 and ineffective style of teaching students to read based on "MSV":
157 meaning, structure and syntax, and visual cues.

158 (t) "Universal screener" means an assessment that is
159 administered three (3) times per year (beginning, middle, and end)
160 to identify or predict students who may be at risk for reading
161 failure and is typically brief and conducted with all students at
162 a particular grade level.

163 **SECTION 3. System of support for educators.** The department
164 shall provide a system of support for school and district
165 instructional leaders, content area teachers, literacy coaches,
166 dyslexia therapists, interventionists, tutors, and other
167 identified personnel across content areas in grades 4-8 to ensure
168 that they have the knowledge and skills to support students with
169 reading difficulties. The system of support shall include:

170 (a) Professional learning for district instructional
171 leaders, principals, school-level literacy leaders, content-area
172 teachers, special-education teachers, literacy coaches, dyslexia
173 therapists, interventionists, tutors, ELL teachers, and other
174 identified personnel across content areas of students in grades
175 4-8 on the following:

176 (i) Comprehensive training grounded in the science
177 of reading to ensure all teachers have the knowledge and skills to
178 support a range of students with diverse needs, students with



179 reading difficulties, multilingual students, and students with
180 characteristics of or diagnosis of dyslexia, including:

187 2. Strategies to increase educator knowledge
188 of reading and writing basics for students in grades 4-8;

189 3. Evidence-based strategies for motivating
190 and engaging adolescent learners;

191 4. Scientifically researched and
192 evidenced-based reading strategies for accommodations and
193 scaffolding instruction for struggling readers and writers; and

194 5. Approaches to assist educators in
195 determining causes of reading difficulties, including dyslexia,
196 and other learning differences, for students in grades 4-8 and how
197 word reading, vocabulary, content knowledge, comprehension, and
198 writing are affected; and

199 (ii) The department-approved assessment system(s)
200 selected by school districts to ensure teachers have the knowledge
201 and skills to administer the assessment and use assessment data to
202 inform instruction based on student needs.



203 (b) Job-embedded coaching support for teachers of
204 grades 4-8 that shall include the following:

205 (i) Provide on-site teacher training on
206 evidence-based reading strategies and data-based decision-making;

207 (ii) Demonstrate lessons;

208 (iii) Co-teach and/or observe teaching;

209 (iv) Provide immediate feedback for improvement;

210 and

211 (v) Provide support to teachers and administrators
212 in data-based decision-making.

213 (c) Educator preparation programs that equip candidates
214 seeking certification for elementary, special education, and
215 secondary education with training and instruction to:

216 (i) Effectively teach reading aligned to

217 scientifically researched and evidenced-based reading instruction,
218 including explicit and systematic instruction in phonological
219 awareness, the alphabetic principle, decoding, encoding, fluency,
220 morphology (including etymology), syntax, vocabulary,
221 comprehension, and building content knowledge;

222 (ii) Implement reading instruction using
223 high-quality instructional materials;

224 (iii) Provide training on the identification of
225 students not reading on grade level, the selection of appropriate
226 interventions, and effective instruction and interventions for a
227 range of students with diverse needs, including multilingual



228 students and students with characteristics of dyslexia or
229 diagnosed with dyslexia;
230 (iv) Understand and use student data to make
231 instructional decisions; and
232 (v) Incorporate literacy instruction across
233 content areas.

234 **SECTION 4. Reading instruction and intervention.** (1) It is
235 the ultimate goal of the Legislature that every student become a
236 skilled reader. State standards for literacy in grades K-8 shall
237 align with evidence-based strategies and scientifically based
238 reading research, and all students shall have access to
239 high-quality Tier 1 core instruction that is differentiated to
240 meet students' diverse needs. Evidence-based reading instruction
241 has been proven to accelerate the progress of all students,
242 including those exhibiting a reading deficiency.

243 (2) The department shall:

244 (a) Develop a list of HQIM core literacy curricula,
245 interventions, and supplemental materials aligned with
246 scientifically researched and evidence-based reading instruction
247 and state standards for use in districts for students in grades
248 4-8. Standards as well as HQIM should address word recognition
249 and language comprehension skills, build background knowledge and
250 expand students' knowledge across content areas. Balanced
251 literacy, including, but not limited to, the three-cueing systems
252 model, which research shows is inconsistent with scientifically



253 based reading instruction and the science of reading, shall not be
254 used to teach reading in Mississippi public schools or state
255 agencies or by anyone who receives state funding. The list shall
256 be approved by the State Board of Education; and

257 (b) Provide an approved list of one or more reliable
258 and valid reading assessment systems for school district use for
259 screening and monitoring student progress toward becoming a
260 skilled reader. The reading assessment system shall:

261 (i) Provide a screener to be administered three
262 (3) times per year (beginning, middle, and end) with progress
263 monitoring capabilities and a diagnostic tool to support teachers
264 with targeting instruction based on student needs;

265 (ii) Measure, at a minimum, fluency and
266 comprehension; and

267 (iii) For students who demonstrate difficulty with
268 these skills, provide additional diagnostic screening in
269 foundational skills (phonological awareness and phonics) to
270 identify specific skill deficits.

271 (c) Consider, at a minimum, the following factors in
272 determining which assessment systems to approve for use by school
273 districts:

274 (i) The time required to conduct the assessment,
275 with the intention of minimizing the impact on instructional time;
276 (ii) The availability of accommodation for
277 students with specialized plans;

282 (3) School districts shall offer reading intervention
283 services to each student in grades 4-8 who exhibits deficiencies
284 in reading based upon the approved literacy screener administered
285 within the first thirty (30) days of school, middle of the year,
286 and end of the year and subsequently administered diagnostics to
287 inform targeted interventions. Determination for the need for
288 intervention will be made by the examination of multiple data
289 points, including a diagnostic assessment, within the first thirty
290 (30) days of school. Reading intervention shall be provided to
291 struggling students, in addition to core reading instruction that
292 is provided to all students in the general education classroom.
293 School districts shall adhere to the MTSS guidance process for
294 Mississippi and shall consider multiple data points. These
295 services shall:

296 (a) Provide appropriate interventions to all students
297 in grades 4-8 who are identified with reading deficiencies, as
298 determined by the department, including students who meet the
299 approved assessments system cut scores, fourth-grade students
300 promoted from third grade with a good-cause exemption, students
301 receiving special education services, students diagnosed with or
302 showing characteristics of dyslexia, and multilingual learners;



303 (b) Provide explicit and systematic instruction in age
304 and developmentally appropriate phonological awareness, phonics
305 (including decoding and encoding), fluency, vocabulary,
306 morphology, and comprehension, as applicable;

307 (c) Utilize explicit and systematic reading strategies
308 to develop phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and
309 comprehension, with more extensive opportunities for guided
310 practice, error correction, and feedback;

311 (d) Monitor the reading progress of each student's
312 reading skills throughout the school year and provide
313 differentiated instruction based on screening, diagnostic, and
314 progress monitoring to adjust instruction to meet students'
315 specific needs;

316 (e) Be implemented during regular school hours in
317 addition to any offerings provided before, during, or after school
318 with a trained educator;

319 (f) Be implemented by a reading specialist, dyslexia
320 therapist or interventionist, or school-based coach who shall have
321 training in scientifically researched and evidenced-based reading
322 instruction, fidelity to the selected intervention, and
323 evidence-based literacy instruction practices; and

324 (g) Be delivered primarily by a trained educator using
325 age and developmentally appropriate interventions, with any
326 technology used to serve as supplemental support.

327 (4) Local school boards, in collaboration with district
328 literacy leaders, shall develop and implement programs of
329 prevention, intervention, or remediation for students who are
330 educationally at risk, including, but not limited to, those who
331 fail to achieve a passing score on the English - Language Arts
332 State Summative Assessment in grades 3-8, multilingual students,
333 and students who show characteristics of or who are diagnosed with
334 dyslexia in middle grades. Such programs shall include strategies
335 and methods that are proven through scientifically researched and
336 evidence-based instruction. Local school boards shall also
337 implement programs in grades 4-8 to enhance success.

338 (5) Each school board shall employ at least one (1) reading
339 specialist, interventionist, or dyslexia therapist in any school
340 serving students in grades 4-8. Each such reading specialist
341 shall be required to participate in professional learning grounded
342 in the science of reading, to include:

343 (a) Training in the identification and use of
344 appropriate interventions, accommodations, and teaching techniques
345 for students with dyslexia or a related reading disorder;

346 (b) Service as an advisor on dyslexia and related
347 reading disorders; and

348 (c) State-approved training on the definition of
349 dyslexia and knowledge of:

350 (i) Techniques to help a student with dyslexia on
351 the continuum of skills;



352 (ii) Dyslexia characteristics that may manifest at
353 different ages and grade levels;
354 (iii) The basic foundational keys to reading,
355 including direct, explicit, sequential, systematic, and
356 multisensory/multimodal reading instruction; and
357 (iv) Appropriate interventions, accommodations,
358 and assistive technology support for students with dyslexia.

375 (2) The IRP shall follow the template provided by the
376 department and include documentation of reading intervention



377 services and strategies outlined within the MTSS guidance
378 document, at a minimum:

379 (a) The student's specific deficiencies in reading as
380 determined or identified by diagnostic assessment data or the
381 literacy screener provided or approved by the department;

382 (b) The goals and benchmark cut scores for student
383 growth in reading;

384 (c) A description of the specific measures that will be
385 used to evaluate and monitor the student's reading progress;

386 (d) The alignment to an Individualized Education Plan
387 (IEP) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act for
388 students who receive special education services;

389 (e) The specific evidence-based literacy instruction
390 the student will receive;

391 (f) The strategies, resources, and materials that will
392 be provided to the student's parent or guardian to support the
393 student at home in making reading progress;

394 (g) Any additional services the teacher deems available
395 and appropriate to accelerate the student's reading development;
396 and

397 (3) The IRP may include the following services for the
398 student:

399 (i) Instruction from a reading specialist, dyslexia
400 therapist, trained paraprofessional, or classroom teacher with
401 support from an aide; and



402 (ii) Extended instructional time in the school day or
403 school year or, for students in grades 6-8, a literacy course, in
404 addition to the required core English - Language Arts course, that
405 provides the specific evidence-based literacy instruction
406 identified in the student's reading plan.

407 **SECTION 6. Parent notification.** The parent of any student
408 in grades 4-8 who exhibits deficiencies in reading at any time
409 during the school year shall be notified in writing within ten
410 (10) business days after the identification of the reading
411 deficiency, and the written notification shall be made available
412 in the parent's home language, follow the template provided by the
413 department, and include the following:

414 (a) That his or her child has been identified as having
415 deficiencies in reading, and an IRP will be developed by the
416 teacher(s), interventionist, dyslexia therapist, principal, other
417 pertinent school personnel, and parent(s);

418 (b) A description of the current services that are
419 provided to the student;

420 (c) A description of the proposed interventions and
421 supplemental instructional services or dyslexia therapy that are
422 from scientifically researched and evidenced-based reading
423 instruction, and supports that will be provided to the child that
424 are designed to remedy the identified area(s) of reading
425 deficiency;



426 (d) Notification that the parents will be informed in
427 writing of their child's progress towards becoming a skilled
428 reader with each progress report; and

429 (e) Strategies for parents to use at home to help their
430 child succeed in reading.

431 SECTION 7. Successful progression of incoming students in
432 grades 4-8 identified with a reading deficiency. (1) Any

433 incoming student in grades 4-8 identified with a deficiency in
434 reading shall be provided with supplemental or intensive
435 interventions dependent upon the severity of the deficit skills to
436 address his or her specific deficiency. Intervention services
437 shall include effective instructional strategies to accelerate
438 student progress and shall be delivered by a reading teacher,
439 reading specialist, dyslexia therapist, or interventionist who has
440 received intensive training in remediation of reading difficulties
441 and fidelity to the selected intervention curriculum. The
442 district shall provide the following:

443 (a) Access to a reading teacher, reading specialist,
444 dyslexia therapist, or interventionist who has received intensive
445 training in remediation of reading difficulties; and

446 (b) Reading intervention services and supports from a
447 vetted and approved list to address the identified areas of
448 reading deficiency, including, but not limited to:

449 (i) Use of reading strategies or programs that are
450 verified by scientifically and evidenced-based research and have



451 proven results in accelerating student reading achievement within
452 the same school year;

453 (ii) Prescribed targeted small-group reading
454 intervention or dyslexia therapy based on student needs, including
455 explicit and systematic instruction with detailed explanations,
456 extensive opportunities for guided practice, and opportunities for
457 error correction and feedback; and

458 (iii) Scheduled progress monitoring throughout the
459 time in which the student is in intervention to adjust instruction
460 according to student needs.

461 (2) Summer school remediation programs, or other forms of
462 remediation appropriate to the academic needs of the students,
463 shall not be used to promote a student who failed the grade level
464 prior to summer school. Summer school remediation may be offered
465 to students based on the results of the universal screener,
466 diagnostic assessment, intervention progress monitoring data, or
467 ELA State Summative Assessment.

468 (3) A read-at-home plan shall be provided in the family's
469 home language by the district and shall include strategies for
470 parents to use at home to help their child succeed in reading.

471 **SECTION 8. District responsibilities.** (1) The school
472 district shall conduct an annual review of IRPs during the first
473 twenty (20) days of school for students who had a plan from the
474 last school year. The review shall assess the effectiveness of
475 prior interventions and any additional support and services needed

476 to address the identified areas of reading deficiency. This may
477 include supplemental, scientifically researched, and
478 evidence-based reading interventions provided before and/or after
479 school by a teacher or tutor with specialized reading training.
480 Current screener and diagnostic data shall be used to determine
481 continued reading intervention support.

482 (2) Each district school board shall annually report in
483 writing to the department and on their website by October 1 of
484 each year, the following information on the prior school year:

485 (b) By grade, the number and percentage of all students
486 in grades 4-8 performing below grade level on local or statewide
487 assessments.

488 (c) By grade, the number and percentage of students in
489 grades 4-8 who received supplemental or intensive reading
490 intervention the previous year.

491 (d) By grade, the number and percentage of students who
492 had an IRP no longer qualify for them.

493 (e) By grade, the number and percentage of students
494 retained in kindergarten-eighth grade.

495 (f) By grade, the number and percentage of students
496 retained in grades 4-8 who have an IRP.

497 **SECTION 9. Department responsibilities.** The department
498 shall provide, to each school district no later than ninety (90)
499 days before the annual due date, a uniform format for districts to
500 report the required information. The department shall provide



501 guidance and technical assistance to aid school districts in
502 implementing this act.

503 **SECTION 10. Educator preparation program responsibilities.**

504 All candidates graduating from educator preparation programs
505 (EPPs) in Mississippi in the areas of social studies, science, and
506 English - Language Arts Education for grades 4-8 shall be required
507 to successfully complete AIM Pathways to Proficient Reading
508 training, or an equivalent reading training program approved by
509 the department before certification.

510 **SECTION 11. State Board of Education authority.** The State
511 Board of Education shall have the authority to enforce this act
512 and may promulgate rules and regulations as necessary for the
513 implementation of this act.

514 **SECTION 12. Funding.** The Legislature shall provide
515 sufficient funding for the implementation of this act.

516 **SECTION 13.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
517 and after July 1, 2026.

