

# Comment Report

SSB 3155

A bill for an act relating to elementary literacy by modifying teacher preparation program requirements and teacher licensing requirements, requiring personalized reading plans for certain students, and providing parent and guardian discretion for their students to be retained at grade level.

Subcommittee Members: Rozenboom-CH, Cournoyer, Quirmbach

Date: 02/13/2024

Time: 01:00 PM

Location: Room 217 Conference Room

**Name:** Katie Greving

**Comment:** The part of this bill that requires new graduates of Iowa teacher preparation programs to take the Foundations of Reading test is excellent. Requiring this is an efficient way to make sure that our colleges and universities are training teachers in the science of reading, which is best practice for ALL students. If current teachers are required to take the test, please allocate funds for training! The retention section of this bill is unnecessary and should be removed. Parents can already talk with their child's school about retention at any time. In addition, the research is very clear that retention does not benefit a child academically or emotionally! Regarding the personalized reading plans, what accountability measures are going to be in place for these? It seems strange to write a new section of law about this. It would make more sense to revise the current Early Literacy Law code. Right now that law only requires grades K3 to be screened. Please expand that to grades K6. Then add these written reading plans to what must happen when a student doesn't pass the required screening twice in a row.

**Name:** Bambi Boggs

**Comment:** We currently have a teacher shortage in Iowa. I fear that by requiring all teachers who teach reading in elementary school to pass this test we will have a huge onset of tenure teacher early retirement. In contrast, I agree with the Foundations of Reading test for all graduates of Iowa Teacher Preparation programs. I am not in favor of the retention components of this bill. Retention policies are not just about Assessment Scores. I have seen NO data evidence that early grade retention results in higher graduation or college enrollment rates. A third grade retention may have substantially increased assessment scores up through 6th grade. It is just that a score. What about higher dropout rates, risk of behavioral issues, and social and emotional health of these retained students? Lastly, I would like to address the written personal plans idea for those who are not proficient. I currently create, gather, and make recommendations through an Individual Learning Plan for several students in our District. Teachers and Administration do not understand the parameters of what digging into the data means and how to use the action plan and monitoring to support each learner. We as a state will need to build a professional understanding of how the school system systemically creates some of these hindering action plans. For example: The environment, instruction, and curriculum, should be looked at first, then the learner. We start with the learner as the reason for the deficit when oftentimes, the underlying cause of a problem is systemic. Using this as a framework to increase confidence both in the quality of data that is collected and the findings that emerge from that data. This is a common misunderstanding that schools often make. They assume that student learning problems or deficits exist primarily in the learner and underestimate the degree to which a teacher's instructional strategies, curriculum demands, and environmental influences impact the learner's academic performance.

**Name:** Carrie Johnsen

**Comment:** I am in agreement with having new teachers successfully complete a reading assessment prior to graduation. I am also in agreement to having higher education institutes held accountable for their programs and assuring they are sending new teachers into the classrooms prepared to teach reading. I am a bit concerned with holding current teachers accountable for taking these assessments. My fear is that many teachers will retire or leave the profession. I believe current teachers should be given the knowledge on best teaching methods based on SOR but I am wondering who is going to provide this knowledge and how will it be paid for? In regard to holding a child back if they are not reading on level by third grade, I am not in favor of this. There is no proof that holding a child back will help them be more successful the following year. A child should not be punished for either having reading difficulties or be punished if a school district isn't providing a curriculum that fosters them to become a reader. Schools should be looking at how they can provide teaching methods and a curriculum that will foster this student's needs not holding them back and using the same unsuccessful curriculum the following year. Also, third grade is a little late to be noticing that students are failing to become a successful reader. There are a lot of signs and scores that begin in kindergarten that will point to reading concerns.

**Name:** Brooke Lantz

**Comment:** I am in favor of having new teachers complete a reading assessment prior to graduation. Having this test in place ensures higher education is doing what is needed to create teachers that are able to teach kids how to read. I don't agree with holding current teachers accountable for passing these assessments without funding for them to take training. The portion of the bill concerning retention I am not in favor of. There is no research showing holding a child back will create a successful student in the future. This should be removed from the bill in my opinion. Instead of looking at holding kids back we need to have better curriculum in schools and further training for teachers in the science of reading.

**Name:** Megan Hunemuller

**Comment:** As a mother of a child that has severely suffered the consequences of our district using a three-cueing method, I am 100% on board for this bill to pass so that all Iowa students and teachers have access to the Science of Reading, evidence-based instruction. I am not a fan of the retention part, and I will touch on that later. My daughter was marked as 'not proficient' in 1st grade, all the interventions they did with her were three-cueing methods. When she got on her IEP they started a dyslexia curriculum with her YAY!! Right?! But no, because on the side, they were still teacher her to look at the pictures to figure out the words. It is only now, while she is in 7th grade, that we were successfully able to get the school to agree to an encoding goal (learning the specific sounds each letter and letter team can make) to not only sound out the words but also spell them. 7th grade and she is finally learning what she should have learned in 1st and 2nd grade PLEASE PASS THIS BILL the three-cueing methods are detrimental to many students while the SOR can be highly beneficial for ALL!! As I mentioned, the retention part of this bill is worrisome. Honestly, even if my daughter was held back, I don't think it would have mattered because they still wouldn't have been using the correct methods with her and it would have hindered her already minimal confidence when it comes to her peers. I also don't like how it stresses 3rd grade scientific studies as well as "boots on the ground" research in schools show that children in Kindergarten can have signs of being a struggling reader. 1st and 2nd is certainly not uncommon why wait until 3rd when it's almost too late? I would love to see an amendment to the retention part as well as making parent notification sooner (1st or 2nd) or, leave it as it is currently I believe it is similar to 'when your child tests not proficient 2x in a row we let the parents know'. Thank you all for your time on this and all the other bills these seasons I appreciate you putting students first.

**Name:** Renee Saarloos

**Comment:** I agree with the portion of this proposed bill requiring passage of the exam for new graduates prior to obtaining an Iowa teaching license. Our colleges and university instruction in preservice classes must be held accountable for adequately preparing new teachers. However, I have reservations about this requirement for currently licensed educators. What funding and training will be made available in order to ensure the passing of this exam? If that piece is not firmly in place, my concern is that there will be additional teachers leaving the profession. I am not in favor of retaining 3rd grade students not proficient in reading. I know of no research proving retention is beneficial for students to close achievement gaps. The focus should be on how we can improve teacher knowledge in addition to requiring research proven curriculum and intervention supports rather than how the student failed. The current systems are failing the students. Again, personalized plans could be beneficial, but why wait until 3rd grade? Could we modify the current literacy code to include grades 4-6?

**Name:** Sandy Wilson

**Comment:** Citizen Engagement declares IN FAVOR of SSB 3155. Please advance the bill.

**Name:** Casey Condon-Yu

**Comment:** As a parent and as a teacher, I support the portion of this bill that modifies teacher preparation programs to include preparing graduates to take the Foundations of Reading test. I also would agree that current educators should take the same test, with an opportunity to receive appropriate training that does not create a financial burden to the teacher. I also find the personalized reading plan to be very vague. There's a long list of questions that come to mind with this language. What kind of curriculum or reading philosophy will be used? How often? Lead by the what teacher? Who will be monitoring the fidelity of this plan? Will all students receive the same instruction? It is my hope that this bill will be discussed further, with clarification on these items.

**Name:** Kerri Schwemm

**Comment:** The retention portion of this bill should be removed. There is no evidenced based practice that would support this.