

HOUSE BILL NO. 262

INTRODUCED BY L. REKSTEN, M. NIKOLAKAKOS, L. BENNETT, E. TILLEMAN, D. BEDEY, M.

BERTOGLIO, L. JONES, C. KEOGH, M. ROMANO

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT ESTABLISHING STATE POLICY ON READING INSTRUCTION;  
REQUIRING THAT EARLY LITERACY INSTRUCTION BE EVIDENCE-BASED AND INCLUDE  
SCIENTIFICALLY SUPPORTED COMPONENTS; ~~DISALLOWING INEFFECTIVE APPROACHES TO~~  
~~READING INSTRUCTION~~; PROVIDING A DEFINITION; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE."

WHEREAS, THERE IS A GROWING CONVERGENCE OF EVIDENCE REGARDING THE SCIENCE OF READING; AND

WHEREAS, THE SCIENCE OF READING IS GROUNDED IN RIGOROUS RESEARCH THAT ENCOMPASSES COGNITIVE  
PSYCHOLOGY, NEUROSCIENCE, AND EDUCATION; AND

WHEREAS, EFFECTIVE READING INSTRUCTION INVOLVES PHONEMIC AWARENESS, PHONICS, VOCABULARY,  
FLUENCY, AND COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES, ALL OF WHICH ARE ESSENTIAL FOR LITERACY DEVELOPMENT; AND

WHEREAS, SYSTEMATIC PHONICS INSTRUCTION IS CRITICAL FOR TEACHING CHILDREN HOW TO DECODE  
WORDS AND UNDERSTAND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LETTERS AND SOUNDS; AND

WHEREAS, SUCCESSFUL COMPREHENSION STEMS FROM THE ABILITY TO INTEGRATE BACKGROUND  
KNOWLEDGE WITH THE TEXT, NECESSITATING STRATEGIES THAT BUILD THIS CONNECTION; AND

WHEREAS, STUDIES SHOW THAT IMPLEMENTING SCIENCE-BASED READING INSTRUCTION SIGNIFICANTLY  
IMPROVES LITERACY RATES AMONG ALL STUDENTS, ESPECIALLY THOSE AT RISK FOR READING DIFFICULTIES; AND

WHEREAS, EDUCATORS MUST BE EQUIPPED WITH KNOWLEDGE OF THE SCIENCE OF READING TO EFFECTIVELY  
TEACH THESE FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS AND SUPPORT DIVERSE LEARNERS; AND

WHEREAS, EVIDENCE SUGGESTS THAT ACCESS TO QUALITY READING INSTRUCTION BASED ON THE SCIENCE  
OF READING CAN REDUCE ACHIEVEMENT GAPS AMONG STUDENTS FROM VARIOUS BACKGROUNDS; AND

WHEREAS, THE STATE HAS BEEN AUTHORIZED TO DEFINE THE BASIC SYSTEM OF FREE QUALITY SCHOOLS  
UNDER ARTICLE X OF THE MONTANA CONSTITUTION; AND

WHEREAS, THE LEGISLATURE WISHES TO EXPRESS ITS INTENT AS A FULL PARTNER WITH THE BOARD OF  
PUBLIC EDUCATION AND ELECTED SCHOOL BOARDS IN ENSURING A BASIC SYSTEM OF FREE QUALITY SCHOOLS AND

BELIEVES THAT PROFICIENT READING SKILLS ARE LINKED TO BETTER ACADEMIC OUTCOMES, ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES,  
AND OVERALL SOCIETAL ENGAGEMENT THROUGHOUT AN INDIVIDUAL'S LIFE.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

**NEW SECTION. Section 1. Early literacy instruction -- policy -- instructional requirements. (1)**

Affirming that reading and language skills are generally the foundation on which a person's educational potential is developed, the legislature declares that it is the policy of this state that reading instruction is based on literacy strategies that are scientifically researched.

(2) ~~Textbooks, THE DEVELOPMENT OF ACCREDITATION STANDARDS BY THE BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION, THE ADOPTION OF POLICY BY SCHOOL DISTRICTS, AND THE LOCAL PROCESS OF CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING THE SELECTION OF TEXTBOOKS AND instructional materials, and THE DEVELOPMENT OF~~ teaching methods for reading instruction in the public schools of this state, ~~may not include instruction related to strategies or approaches that teach students to read based on meaning drawn from context, structure, syntax, visual cues and pictures, or memory, including the instructional model commonly known as the three-cueing system~~ MUST MEET OR EXCEED THE MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS OF SUBSECTION (3).

(3) Early literacy instruction in the public schools of this state must AT A MINIMUM:

- (a) be evidence-based AND SUPPORTED BY RESEARCH;
- (b) follow a scope and sequence;
- (c) be direct, systematic, explicit, and responsive; and
- (d) include all of the following:
  - (i) phonics, including decoding and encoding and instruction in writing;
  - (ii) phonemic awareness and phonological awareness;
  - (iii) fluency, including oral language development;
  - (iv) vocabulary; and
  - (v) comprehension, including building background knowledge.

(4) As used in this section, "evidence-based" means demonstrating a rationale based on high-quality research findings or positive evaluation that the activity, strategy, or intervention is likely to improve

1 student outcomes or other relevant outcomes and includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of the activity,  
2 strategy, or intervention.

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4 NEW SECTION. **Section 2. Codification instruction.** [Section 1] is intended to be codified as an  
5 integral part of Title 20, chapter 7, part 1, and the provisions of Title 20, chapter 7, part 1, apply to [section 1].

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7 NEW SECTION. **Section 3. Effective date.** [This act] is effective July 1, 2025.

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