

LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE
SENATE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR
SENATE, Nos. 2644, 2645, and 2646
STATE OF NEW JERSEY
221st LEGISLATURE

DATED: JULY 3, 2024

SUMMARY

- Synopsis:** Requires DOE to establish working group on student literacy; mandates universal literacy screenings for kindergarten through grade three students; requires professional development for certain school district employees.
- Type of Impact:** Annual local school district expenditure increase; potential annual State expenditure increase.
- Agencies Affected:** Local school districts; Department of Education.

Office of Legislative Services Estimate

Annual Fiscal Impact	
Potential State Expenditure Increase	Indeterminate
Local School District Expenditure Increase	Indeterminate

- The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) determines that this bill will lead to an indeterminate increase in school district expenditures related to conducting, at least twice annually, literacy screenings of each student in kindergarten through grade three.
- While the OLS does not have access to information concerning the number of school districts that already conduct literacy screenings adhering to the provisions of the bill, the office assumes that many school districts already utilize a literacy screening tool of some kind. A school district's costs will be minimized to the extent that it already meets some or all of the requirements that will be promulgated by the Department of Education through guidance issued pursuant to the bill.
- The OLS also notes that the Department of Education may experience indeterminate administrative cost increases to implement certain requirements of the bill, including: developing and promulgating guidance concerning reading and literacy instruction; establishing an online resource center to support school districts in selecting literacy

instructional materials and data analysis tools; and establishing a professional development program concerning evidence-based foundational literacy instruction.

- Some or all of the bill's requirements that are applicable to the department may be able to be subsumed within existing staff and resources that are already dedicated to similar departmental efforts.

BILL DESCRIPTION

This bill requires the Department of Education and school districts to implement various efforts to improve student literacy in the State.

This bill requires a school district to, at least twice annually, conduct a literacy screening of each student enrolled in kindergarten through grade three to determine a student's reading proficiency. The literacy screening is required to comply with guidance issued by the department pursuant to the bill, following recommendations from the Working Group on Student Literacy. A school district is also required to provide a student any necessary supports as determined by the district, which may include conducting an additional screening. Pursuant to the bill, a school district is to report universal literacy screening data to the department in a manner and frequency determined by the department.

The bill requires the department to establish an online resource center to aid school districts in the selection of evidence-based, high-quality literacy instructional materials, including data analysis tools, as part of the school district's implementation of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards in English Language Arts. The department is also required to, beginning with the 2025-2026 school year, develop and publish guidance for use by school districts concerning literacy screening and instruction.

Finally, the bill requires the department to establish a professional development program regarding evidence-based foundational literacy instruction, which is to be available to all school districts at no cost. School districts are to use the professional development program established by the bill to provide professional development to certain teaching staff members and school administrators.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

None received.

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

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all of the requirements that will be promulgated by the Department of Education through guidance issued pursuant to the bill.

For the purposes of illustration, the OLS notes that data from the Department of Education indicates total kindergarten through grade three enrollment of 376,644 in the fall of 2023. Assuming a high-end annual cost of \$15 per student to administer the screening and adjusting upward to account for staff training and implementation costs, the maximum Statewide costs that may be borne by school districts is \$6.0 million. The \$15 annual per student cost is based on information published by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts concerning the implementation of literacy screening assessments and the costs of various assessment providers.

The OLS also notes that the Department of Education may experience indeterminate administrative cost increases to implement certain requirements of the bill, including: developing and promulgating guidance concerning reading and literacy instruction; establishing an online resource center to support school districts in selecting literacy instructional materials and data analysis tools; and establishing a professional development program concerning evidence-based foundational literacy instruction. Some or all of these requirements may be able to be subsumed within existing staff and resources that are already dedicated to similar departmental efforts.

Section: Education

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This legislative fiscal estimate has been produced by the Office of Legislative Services due to the failure of the Executive Branch to respond to our request for a fiscal note.

This fiscal estimate has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67 (C.52:13B-6 et seq.).