



ISHA Legislative Day Talking Points February 12, 2024

SB 1 – Reading Skills.

ISHA’s position: Supportive of some components of the bill (like early student screening and expanding funding eligibility for summer school courses) but concerned with other components of the bill (like retention and limited criteria exempting students from retention).

Provisions of the bill:

- Requires schools to offer summer school courses for students who are not or at risk of not being reading proficient.
- Expands eligibility for funding for summer school courses.
- Requires a student who does not have a 90% attendance rate in summer school reading courses to participate in an individual reading plan during the following school year.
- Requires DOE to procure a universal screening assessment for reading proficiency and requires schools to administer this assessment to K-2 students who are not on track for reading proficiency by grade 3.
- Effective the 2024-2025 school year, requires retention of a student in grade 3 in addition to remediation if the student does not achieve a passing score on the evaluation.
- Requires schools to provide reading instruction aligned with SoR (science of reading) to all K-8 students.
- Requires a student to take the evaluation until certain conditions are met.
- Creates exceptions to the retention requirement for a student meeting certain criteria.
- Requires school boards to have an appeals procedure for student retention.
- Requires DOE to notify kindergarten students’ parents of the retention requirements.

Talking points:

- Schools should help students develop oral language skills alongside literacy skills, because *there is no literacy without language*.
- Oral language, spelling, and writing should be assessed too.
- Student screening is important and should be done early to identify students who are having reading or language difficulties.
- Retention can negatively impact on students and tying retention to assessment is risky.
- Students facing retention (and their parents) should be given a clearly defined plan of what literacy interventions will be used.
- Students with other disabilities (e.g., hearing or visual impairments) should be exempted from retention.
- English learner (EL) students who have received services for up to 5-7 years should be exempted from retention, as it can take them much longer to achieve fluent proficiency.



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SB 6 – Reading Proficiency.

ISHA’s position: Mostly supportive of the bill but suggest that language skills also be considered as schools support at-risk students.

Provisions of the bill:

- Requires DOE to develop a method to identify grade 4-8 students who did not pass the reading skills evaluation approved by SBOE and who are at risk of not being proficient in reading as determined by Lexile scores on the statewide assessment.
- Requires DOE to develop guidance for schools on how to support students who are at risk of not being proficient in reading.

Talking points:

- This bill is much needed, as it looks beyond grade 3 and seeks to address reading difficulties in these higher grades.
- Grade 4-8 students who struggle with reading also tend to have language difficulties, so it is vital to focus on language skills here as well. *To improve literacy skills, we must also improve language skills.*