

By Senator Burgess

20-01401B-21

20211372\_\_

1                   A bill to be entitled  
2       An act relating to literacy improvement; creating s.  
3       1003.485, F.S.; establishing the New Worlds Reading  
4       Initiative under the Department of Education;  
5       providing definitions; providing duties of the  
6       administrator; requiring the administrator to develop  
7       an application process; requiring the administrator,  
8       in consultation with a specified entity, to develop a  
9       selection of books; requiring the administrator to  
10      coordinate monthly book distribution to certain  
11      students; requiring the administrator to assist with  
12      local implementation of the initiative; requiring the  
13      administrator to maintain a clearinghouse of specified  
14      information; requiring the administrator to develop  
15      and disseminate certain training materials by  
16      specified means; establishing reporting requirements;  
17      providing that certain entities may participate in the  
18      initiative by completing an application; providing  
19      that participating school districts must allow public  
20      school students to enroll in the program; establishing  
21      student eligibility requirements; requiring  
22      participating entities to notify parents of eligible  
23      students; requiring participating entities to  
24      coordinate with the administrator to initiate book  
25      delivery; providing requirements for book delivery;  
26      allowing local funds to be used to purchase books  
27      during certain months; requiring that students be  
28      offered certain options relating to books; specifying  
29      when student enrollment ends; requiring participating

20-01401B-21

20211372\_\_

30 entities and certain nonprofits to perform certain  
31 actions to raise awareness of the initiative;  
32 requiring that books be delivered at no cost to  
33 families; providing requirements for funding;  
34 authorizing the department to contract with a third-  
35 party entity; providing requirements for such third-  
36 party entity; amending s. 1008.25, F.S.; requiring  
37 that a certain notification include information about  
38 the initiative; providing an effective date.

39  
40 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

41  
42 Section 1. Section 1003.485, Florida Statutes, is created  
43 to read:

44 1003.485 The New Worlds Reading Initiative.-

45 (1) The New Worlds Reading Initiative is established under  
46 the Department of Education to improve literacy skills and  
47 instill a love of reading by providing high-quality free books  
48 to students in kindergarten through grade 5 who are reading  
49 below grade level.

50 (2) DEFINITIONS.- As used in this section the term:

51 (a) "Administrator" means the Department of Education or a  
52 third-party entity contracted to administer the initiative.

53 (b) "Initiative" means the New Worlds Reading Initiative.

54 (c) "Participating entity" means a school district  
55 participating in the initiative or a charter school located in a  
56 nonparticipating school district which is participating in the  
57 initiative, as specified in subsection (4).

58 (3) The administrator shall:

20-01401B-21

20211372\_\_

59 (a) Develop an application process for participating  
60 entities that identifies:

61 1. At least one partnership with a nonprofit organization  
62 to raise public awareness of the initiative, perform  
63 fundraising, and conduct or facilitate family literacy  
64 engagement activities.

65 2. Local funding sources to meet the requirements of  
66 subsection (7).

67 (b) Develop, in consultation with the Just Read, Florida!  
68 Office under s. 1001.215, a selection of high-quality books  
69 encompassing diverse subjects and genres for each grade level to  
70 be mailed to students enrolled in the initiative.

71 (c) Facilitate the distribution of books as provided in  
72 paragraph (5)(c) either directly or through an agreement with a  
73 book distribution company.

74 (d) Assist local implementation of the initiative by:

75 1. Providing assistance to local communities to raise  
76 awareness of the initiative, including through the use of  
77 partnerships between public libraries and participating entities  
78 to implement events such as family library nights, library card  
79 drives, summer access and activities, and other activities  
80 designed to increase family engagement and instill a love of  
81 reading in students.

82 2. Developing and providing marketing materials to  
83 participating entities and partnering nonprofit organizations to  
84 assist with public awareness campaigns.

85 (e) Maintain a clearinghouse for information on national,  
86 state, and local nonprofit organizations that support efforts to  
87 provide books to children.

20-01401B-21

20211372\_\_

88       (f) Develop training materials for parents of students  
89 enrolled in the initiative, including brief video training  
90 modules, which engage families in reading and assist with  
91 improving student literacy skills. The administrator shall  
92 periodically send, via text message and e-mail, tips for  
93 facilitating reading at home and hyperlinks to the video  
94 training modules.

95       (g) Beginning September 30, 2022, and annually thereafter,  
96 report to the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House  
97 of Representatives, and the Commissioner of Education the number  
98 of students enrolled in the initiative in each participating  
99 entity, the academic performance of enrolled students based on  
100 data provided by participating entities as permitted under s.  
101 1002.22, and the amount of funds raised by any local nonprofit  
102 organization identified by the participating entity in the  
103 application.

104       (4) A school district or a charter school located in a  
105 nonparticipating school district may participate in the  
106 initiative by completing the application process under paragraph  
107 (3) (a). A participating school district must allow a student at  
108 any public school, including a charter school, in the district  
109 to enroll in the program.

110       (5) (a) A student in kindergarten through grade 5 who is  
111 enrolled in a participating entity is eligible to receive books  
112 through the initiative if the student has a substantial reading  
113 deficiency identified under s. 1008.25(5) (a) or scored below a  
114 level 3 on the preceding year's statewide, standardized English  
115 Language Arts assessment under s. 1008.22.

116       (b) The participating entity shall notify the parent of a

20-01401B-21

20211372\_\_

117 student who meets the criteria under paragraph (a) that the  
118 student is eligible to receive books at no cost through the New  
119 Worlds Reading Initiative and provide the parent the opportunity  
120 to enroll his or her child using an application form developed  
121 by the administrator.

122 (c) Once an eligible student is enrolled in the initiative,  
123 the participating entity shall coordinate with the administrator  
124 to initiate book delivery on a monthly basis during the school  
125 year, which must begin no later than October 31 and continue  
126 through at least June 30. The participating entity may use local  
127 funds to continue the initiative through the summer months.

128 (d) At the beginning of each school year, students must be  
129 provided options for specific book topics or genres in order to  
130 maximize student interest in reading.

131 (e) A student's enrollment in the initiative continues  
132 until promotion to grade 6 or until the student's parent opts  
133 out of the initiative.

134 (6) Participating entities and partnering nonprofit  
135 organizations shall raise awareness of the initiative, including  
136 information on eligibility and video training modules under  
137 paragraph (3) (f), through, at least, the following:

138 (a) The student handbook and the read-at-home plan under s.  
139 1008.25 (5) (c) .

140 (b) A parent or curriculum night or separate initiative  
141 awareness event at each elementary school.

142 (c) Partnering with the county library to host awareness  
143 events, which should coincide with other initiatives such as  
144 library card drives and other family engagement programming.

145 (7) Books must be provided under this section at no cost to

20-01401B-21

20211372\_\_

146 families. The administrator shall pay 50 percent of the costs,  
147 with the remaining funds coming from the local funding source  
148 identified by the participating entity in the application.  
149 Funding will be on a pro rata basis for each enrolled student,  
150 taking into consideration total student enrollment in the  
151 initiative and available funding. The administrator may solicit  
152 donations and apply for grants to supplement funds for the  
153 purpose of implementing this section.

154 (8) If the department contracts with a third-party entity  
155 to act as administrator, the entity must be capable of  
156 coordinating statewide marketing, dissemination of books, and  
157 development of video training modules, as well as completing all  
158 other duties of the administrator.

159 Section 2. Paragraph (c) of subsection (5) of section  
160 1008.25, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

161 1008.25 Public school student progression; student support;  
162 reporting requirements.—

163 (5) READING DEFICIENCY AND PARENTAL NOTIFICATION.—

164 (c) The parent of any student who exhibits a substantial  
165 deficiency in reading, as described in paragraph (a), must be  
166 notified in writing of the following:

167 1. That his or her child has been identified as having a  
168 substantial deficiency in reading, including a description and  
169 explanation, in terms understandable to the parent, of the exact  
170 nature of the student's difficulty in learning and lack of  
171 achievement in reading.

172 2. A description of the current services that are provided  
173 to the child.

174 3. A description of the proposed intensive interventions

20-01401B-21

20211372\_\_

175 and supports that will be provided to the child that are  
176 designed to remediate the identified area of reading deficiency.

177 4. That if the child's reading deficiency is not remediated  
178 by the end of grade 3, the child must be retained unless he or  
179 she is exempt from mandatory retention for good cause.

180 5. Strategies, including multisensory strategies, through a  
181 read-at-home plan the parent can use in helping his or her child  
182 succeed in reading.

183 6. That the statewide, standardized English Language Arts  
184 assessment is not the sole determiner of promotion and that  
185 additional evaluations, portfolio reviews, and assessments are  
186 available to the child to assist parents and the school district  
187 in knowing when a child is reading at or above grade level and  
188 ready for grade promotion.

189 7. The district's specific criteria and policies for a  
190 portfolio as provided in subparagraph (6)(b)4. and the evidence  
191 required for a student to demonstrate mastery of Florida's  
192 academic standards for English Language Arts. A parent of a  
193 student in grade 3 who is identified anytime during the year as  
194 being at risk of retention may request that the school  
195 immediately begin collecting evidence for a portfolio.

196 8. The district's specific criteria and policies for  
197 midyear promotion. Midyear promotion means promotion of a  
198 retained student at any time during the year of retention once  
199 the student has demonstrated ability to read at grade level.

200 9. If applicable, information about the student's  
201 eligibility for the New Worlds Reading Initiative under s.  
202 1003.485 and information on parent training modules and other  
203 reading engagement resources available through the initiative.

20-01401B-21

20211372\_\_

204

Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2021.