

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to home book delivery for elementary
3 students; providing legislative findings; creating s.
4 1003.485 F.S.; establishing the New Worlds Reading
5 Initiative under the Department of Education;
6 providing definitions; providing duties of the
7 administrator; requiring the administrator to develop
8 an application process; requiring the administrator,
9 in consultation with a specified entity, to develop a
10 selection of books; requiring the administrator to
11 coordinate monthly book distribution to certain
12 students; requiring the administrator to assist with
13 local implementation of the initiative; requiring the
14 administrator to maintain a clearinghouse of specified
15 information; requiring the administrator to develop
16 and disseminate certain training materials by
17 specified means; establishing reporting requirements;
18 providing that certain entities may participate in the
19 initiative by completing an application; providing
20 that participating school districts must meet
21 specified requirements; establishing student
22 eligibility requirements; requiring participating
23 entities to notify parents of eligible students;
24 requiring participating entities coordinate with the
25 administrator to initiate book delivery; providing

26 requirements for book delivery; allowing local funds
27 to be used to purchase books during certain months;
28 requiring that students be offered certain options
29 relating to books; specifying when student enrollment
30 ends; requiring participating entities and certain
31 nonprofits perform certain actions to raise awareness
32 of the initiative; requiring that books be delivered
33 at no cost to families; authorizing the Department of
34 Education to contract with a third-party entity;
35 providing requirements for such third-party entity;
36 providing requirements for funding; amending s.
37 1008.25, F.S.; requiring that a certain notification
38 include information about the initiative; providing an
39 effective date.

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41 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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43 Section 1. The Legislature finds that the ability to read
44 is fundamental to a productive, fulfilling, culturally
45 rewarding, and civically engaged life. Furthermore, a literacy-
46 rich home environment helps develop reading and writing skills
47 in young learners to prepare them for future academic and career
48 success. Research shows that students who read more perform
49 better academically than those who do not. Unfortunately,
50 statistics show students who have fewer books and literacy-based

51 interactions at home than their peers have lower educational
52 attainment and lifetime income-earning potential. Programs that
53 deliver books directly to students' homes and support engagement
54 in reading enable parents to develop their child's reading
55 skills and enjoyment of reading and foster improved outcomes for
56 students.

57 Section 2. Section 1003.485, Florida Statutes, is created
58 to read:

59 1003.485 The New Worlds Reading Initiative.—

60 (1) The New Worlds Reading Initiative is established under
61 the Department of Education to improve literacy skills and
62 instill a love of reading by providing high-quality, free books
63 to students in kindergarten through grade 5 who are reading
64 below grade level.

65 (2) DEFINITIONS.— As used in this section the term:

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

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

69 (c) "Participating entity" means a school district
70 participating in the initiative or a charter school located in a
71 nonparticipating school district which is participating in the
72 initiative, as specified in subsection (4).

73 (3) The administrator shall:

74 (a) Develop an application process for participating
75 entities that identifies:

76 | 1. At least one partnership with a nonprofit organization
77 | to raise public awareness of the initiative, perform
78 | fundraising, and conduct or facilitate family literacy
79 | engagement activities.

80 | 2. Local funding sources to meet the requirements of
81 | subsection (7).

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

86 | (c) Facilitate the distribution of books as provided in
87 | paragraph (5)(c) either directly or through an agreement with a
88 | book distribution company.

89 | (d) Assist local implementation of the initiative by:

90 | 1. Providing assistance to local communities to raise
91 | awareness of the initiative, including through the use of
92 | partnerships between public libraries and participating entities
93 | to implement events such as family library nights, library card
94 | drives, summer access and activities, and other activities
95 | designed to increase family engagement and instill a love of
96 | reading in students.

97 | 2. Developing and providing marketing materials to
98 | participating entities and partnering nonprofit organizations to
99 | assist with public awareness campaigns.

100 | (e) Maintain a clearinghouse for information on national,

101 state, and local nonprofit organizations that support efforts to
102 provide books to children.

103 (f) Develop training materials for parents of students
104 enrolled in the initiative, including brief video training
105 modules, which engage families in reading and assist with
106 improving student literacy skills. The administrator shall
107 periodically send, via text message and e-mail, tips for
108 facilitating reading at home and hyperlinks to the video
109 training modules.

110 (g) Beginning September 30, 2022, and annually thereafter,
111 report to the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House
112 of Representatives, and the Commissioner of Education the number
113 of students enrolled in the initiative in each participating
114 entity, the academic performance of enrolled students based on
115 data provided by participating entities as permitted under s.
116 1002.22, and the amount of funds raised by any local nonprofit
117 organization identified by the participating entity in the
118 application.

119 (4) A school district or a charter school located in a
120 nonparticipating school district may participate in the
121 initiative by completing the application process under paragraph
122 (3) (a). A participating school district must allow a student at
123 any public school, including a charter school, in the district
124 to enroll in the program.

125 (5) (a) A student in kindergarten through grade 5 who is

126 enrolled in a participating entity is eligible to receive books
127 through the initiative if the student has a substantial reading
128 deficiency identified under s. 1008.25(5) (a) or scored below a
129 Level 3 on the preceding year's statewide, standardized English
130 Language Arts assessment under s. 1008.22.

131 (b) The participating entity shall notify the parent of a
132 student who meets the criteria under paragraph (a) that the
133 student is eligible to receive books at no cost through the New
134 Worlds Reading Initiative and provide the parent the opportunity
135 to enroll his or her child using an application form developed
136 by the administrator.

137 (c) Once an eligible student is enrolled in the
138 initiative, the participating entity shall coordinate with the
139 administrator to initiate book delivery on a monthly basis
140 during the school year, which must begin no later than October
141 and continue through at least June. The participating entity may
142 use local funds to continue the initiative through the summer
143 months.

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

147 (e) A student's enrollment in the initiative continues
148 until promotion to grade 6 or until the student's parent opts
149 out of the initiative.

150 (6) Participating entities and partnering nonprofit

151 organizations shall raise awareness of the initiative, including
152 information on eligibility and video training modules under
153 paragraph (3)(f), through, at least, the following:

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

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

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

161 (7) Books must be provided under this section at no cost
162 to families. The administrator shall pay 50 percent of the
163 costs, with the remaining funds coming from the local funding
164 source identified by the participating entity in the
165 application. Funding will be on a pro rata basis for each
166 enrolled student, taking into consideration total student
167 enrollment in the initiative and available funding. The
168 administrator may solicit donations and apply for grants to
169 supplement funds for the purpose of implementing this section.

170 (8) If the department contracts with a third-party entity
171 to act as administrator, the entity must be capable of
172 coordinating statewide marketing, dissemination of books, and
173 development of video training modules, as well as completing all
174 other duties of the administrator.

175 Section 3. Paragraph (c) of subsection (5) of section

176 | 1008.25, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

177 | 1008.25 Public school student progression; student
178 | support; reporting requirements.—

179 | (5) READING DEFICIENCY AND PARENTAL NOTIFICATION.—

180 | (c) The parent of any student who exhibits a substantial
181 | deficiency in reading, as described in paragraph (a), must be
182 | notified in writing of the following:

183 | 1. That his or her child has been identified as having a
184 | substantial deficiency in reading, including a description and
185 | explanation, in terms understandable to the parent, of the exact
186 | nature of the student's difficulty in learning and lack of
187 | achievement in reading.

188 | 2. A description of the current services that are provided
189 | to the child.

190 | 3. A description of the proposed intensive interventions
191 | and supports that will be provided to the child that are
192 | designed to remediate the identified area of reading deficiency.

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

197 | 5. Strategies, including multisensory strategies, through
198 | a read-at-home plan the parent can use in helping his or her
199 | child succeed in reading.

200 | 6. That the statewide, standardized English Language Arts

201 assessment is not the sole determiner of promotion and that
202 additional evaluations, portfolio reviews, and assessments are
203 available to the child to assist parents and the school district
204 in knowing when a child is reading at or above grade level and
205 ready for grade promotion.

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

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

217 9. If applicable, information about the student's
218 eligibility for the New Worlds Reading Initiative under s.
219 1003.485 and information on parent training modules and other
220 reading engagement resources available through the initiative.

221 Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2021.