

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, in
8 consultation with a specified entity, to develop a
9 selection of books; requiring the administrator to
10 facilitate distribution of books; requiring the
11 administrator to assist with local implementation of
12 the initiative; requiring the administrator to
13 maintain a clearinghouse of specified information;
14 requiring the administrator to develop and disseminate
15 certain training materials by specified means;
16 establishing reporting requirements; establishing
17 student eligibility requirements; requiring school
18 districts to partner with certain entities; requiring
19 school districts to identify eligible students and
20 notify parents; requiring school districts to
21 coordinate with the administrator to initiate book
22 delivery; providing requirements for book delivery;
23 requiring that students be offered certain options
24 relating to books; specifying when student eligibility
25 ends; requiring school districts raise awareness of

26 the initiative; requiring that books be delivered at
27 no cost to families; authorizing the Department of
28 Education to contract with a third-party entity;
29 providing requirements for such third-party entity;
30 amending s. 1008.25, F.S.; requiring that a certain
31 notification include information about the initiative;
32 providing an effective date.

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

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36 Section 1. The Legislature finds that the ability to read
37 is fundamental to a productive, fulfilling, culturally
38 rewarding, and civically engaged life. Furthermore, a literacy-
39 rich home environment helps develop reading and writing skills
40 in young learners to prepare them for future academic and career
41 success. Research shows that students who read more perform
42 better academically than those who do not. Unfortunately,
43 statistics show students who have fewer books and literacy-based
44 interactions at home than their peers have lower educational
45 attainment and lifetime income-earning potential. Programs that
46 deliver books directly to students' homes and support engagement
47 in reading enable parents to develop their child's reading
48 skills and enjoyment of reading and foster improved outcomes for
49 students.

50 Section 2. Section 1003.485, Florida Statutes, is created

51 to read:

52 1003.485 The New Worlds Reading Initiative.-

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

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

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

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

62 (3) The administrator shall:

63 (a) Develop, in consultation with the Just Read, Florida!
 64 Office under s. 1001.215, a selection of high-quality books
 65 encompassing diverse subjects and genres for each grade level to
 66 be mailed to students in the initiative.

67 (b) Facilitate the distribution of books as provided in
 68 paragraph (5)(c) either directly or through an agreement with a
 69 book distribution company.

70 (c) Assist local implementation of the initiative by:

71 1. Providing assistance to local communities to raise
 72 awareness of the initiative, including through the use of
 73 partnerships between public libraries and school districts to
 74 implement events such as family library nights, library card
 75 drives, summer access and activities, and other activities

76 designed to increase family engagement and instill a love of
77 reading in students.

78 2. Developing and providing marketing materials to school
79 districts and any partnering nonprofit organizations to assist
80 with public awareness campaigns.

81 (d) Maintain a clearinghouse for information on national,
82 state, and local nonprofit organizations that support efforts to
83 provide books to children.

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

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91 Beginning September 30, 2022, and annually thereafter, the
92 Department of Education shall report to the President of the
93 Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the
94 Commissioner of Education the number of students participating
95 in the initiative in each school district and the academic
96 achievement and learning gains, as applicable, of participating
97 students based on data provided by school districts as permitted
98 under s. 1002.22. The department shall establish a date by which
99 each school district must annually provide the data necessary to
100 complete the report.

101 (4) Each school district shall participate in the
102 initiative by partnering with local nonprofit organizations,
103 raising awareness of the initiative using marketing materials
104 developed by the administrator, coordinating book delivery, and
105 identifying students and notifying parents pursuant to
106 subsection (5).

107 (5) (a) A student in kindergarten through grade 5 must be
108 provided books through the initiative if the student has a
109 substantial reading deficiency identified under s. 1008.25(5) (a)
110 or scored below a Level 3 on the preceding year's statewide,
111 standardized English Language Arts assessment under s. 1008.22.

112 (b) Each school district shall notify the parent of a
113 student who meets the criteria under paragraph (a) that the
114 student is eligible to receive books at no cost through the New
115 Worlds Reading Initiative and provide the parent with the
116 application form developed by the administrator, which must
117 allow for the selection of specific book topics or genres for
118 the student.

119 (c) Once an eligible student is identified, the school
120 district shall coordinate with the administrator to initiate
121 book delivery on a monthly basis during the school year, which
122 must begin no later than October and continue through at least
123 June.

124 (d) At the beginning of each school year, students must be
125 provided options for specific book topics or genres in order to

126 maximize student interest in reading.

127 (e) A student's eligibility for the initiative continues
128 until promotion to grade 6 or until the student's parent opts
129 out of the initiative.

130 (6) School districts and partnering nonprofit
131 organizations shall raise awareness of the initiative, including
132 information on eligibility and video training modules under
133 paragraph (3)(e), through, at least, the following:

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

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

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

141 (7) Books must be provided under this section at no cost
142 to families.

143 (8) If the department contracts with a third-party entity
144 to act as administrator, the entity must be capable of
145 coordinating statewide marketing, dissemination of books, and
146 development of video training modules, as well as completing all
147 other duties of the administrator.

148 Section 3. Paragraph (c) of subsection (5) of section
149 1008.25, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

150 1008.25 Public school student progression; student

151 support; reporting requirements.—

152 (5) READING DEFICIENCY AND PARENTAL NOTIFICATION.—

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

156 1. That his or her child has been identified as having a
157 substantial deficiency in reading, including a description and
158 explanation, in terms understandable to the parent, of the exact
159 nature of the student's difficulty in learning and lack of
160 achievement in reading.

161 2. A description of the current services that are provided
162 to the child.

163 3. A description of the proposed intensive interventions
164 and supports that will be provided to the child that are
165 designed to remediate the identified area of reading deficiency.

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

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

173 6. That the statewide, standardized English Language Arts
174 assessment is not the sole determiner of promotion and that
175 additional evaluations, portfolio reviews, and assessments are

176 available to the child to assist parents and the school district
177 in knowing when a child is reading at or above grade level and
178 ready for grade promotion.

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

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

190 9. Information about the student's eligibility for the New
191 Worlds Reading Initiative under s. 1003.485 and information on
192 parent training modules and other reading engagement resources
193 available through the initiative.

194 Section 4. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.