

1 HOUSE BILL NO. 262  
 2 INTRODUCED BY L. REKSTEN, M. NIKOLAKAKOS, L. BENNETT, E. TILLEMANN, D. BEDEY, M.  
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5 A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT ESTABLISHING STATE POLICY ON READING INSTRUCTION;  
 6 REQUIRING THAT EARLY LITERACY INSTRUCTION BE EVIDENCE-BASED AND INCLUDE  
 7 SCIENTIFICALLY SUPPORTED COMPONENTS; ~~DISALLOWING INEFFECTIVE APPROACHES TO~~  
 8 ~~READING INSTRUCTION;~~ PROVIDING A DEFINITION; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE."  
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10 WHEREAS, there is a growing convergence of evidence regarding the science of reading; and  
 11 WHEREAS, the science of reading is grounded in rigorous research that encompasses cognitive  
 12 psychology, neuroscience, and education; and  
 13 WHEREAS, effective reading instruction involves phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency,  
 14 and comprehension strategies, all of which are essential for literacy development; and  
 15 WHEREAS, systematic phonics instruction is critical for teaching children how to decode words and  
 16 understand the relationship between letters and sounds; and  
 17 WHEREAS, successful comprehension stems from the ability to integrate background knowledge with  
 18 the text, necessitating strategies that build this connection; and  
 19 WHEREAS, studies show that implementing science-based reading instruction significantly improves  
 20 literacy rates among all students, especially those at risk for reading difficulties; and  
 21 WHEREAS, educators must be equipped with knowledge of the science of reading to effectively teach  
 22 these foundational skills and support diverse learners; and  
 23 WHEREAS, evidence suggests that access to quality reading instruction based on the science of  
 24 reading can reduce achievement gaps among students from various backgrounds; and  
 25 WHEREAS, the state has been authorized to define the basic system of free quality schools under  
 26 Article X of the Montana Constitution; and  
 27 WHEREAS, the Legislature wishes to express its intent as a full partner with the Board of Public  
 28 Education and elected school boards in ensuring a basic system of free quality schools and believes that

1 proficient reading skills are linked to better academic outcomes, economic opportunities, and overall societal  
2 engagement throughout an individual's life.

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4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

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6 NEW SECTION. **Section 1. Early literacy instruction -- policy -- instructional requirements.** (1)

7 Affirming that reading and language skills are generally the foundation on which a person's educational  
8 potential is developed, the legislature declares that it is the policy of this state that reading instruction is based  
9 on literacy strategies that are scientifically researched.

10 (2) ~~Textbooks, The development of accreditation standards by the board of public education, the~~  
11 ~~adoption of policy by school districts, and the local process of curriculum development, including the selection~~  
12 ~~of textbooks and~~ instructional materials, and ~~the development of~~ teaching methods for reading instruction in the  
13 public schools of this state, ~~may not include instruction related to strategies or approaches that teach students~~  
14 ~~to read based on meaning drawn from context, structure, syntax, visual cues and pictures, or memory, including~~  
15 ~~the instructional model commonly known as the three-cueing system~~ must meet or exceed the minimum  
16 requirements of subsection (3).

17 (3) Early literacy instruction in the public schools of this state must at a minimum:

- 18 (a) be evidence-based and supported by research;
- 19 (b) follow a scope and sequence;
- 20 (c) be direct, systematic, explicit, and responsive; and
- 21 (d) include all of the following:
  - 22 (i) phonics, including decoding and encoding and instruction in writing;
  - 23 (ii) phonemic awareness and phonological awareness;
  - 24 (iii) fluency, including oral language development;
  - 25 (iv) vocabulary; and
  - 26 (v) comprehension, including building background knowledge.

27 (4) As used in this section, "evidence-based" means demonstrating a rationale based on high-  
28 quality research findings or positive evaluation that the activity, strategy, or intervention is likely to improve

**Amendment - 1st Reading-white - Requested by: Linda Reksten - (H) Education**

- 2025

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Drafter: Pad McCracken,

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1 student outcomes or other relevant outcomes and includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of the activity,  
2 strategy, or intervention.

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4 **NEW SECTION. Section 2. Codification instruction.** [Section 1] is intended to be codified as an  
5 integral part of Title 20, chapter 7, part 1, and the provisions of Title 20, chapter 7, part 1, apply to [section 1].

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7 **NEW SECTION. Section 3. Effective date.** [This act] is effective July 1, 2025.

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