

1 HOUSE BILL NO. 262

2 INTRODUCED BY L. REKSTEN, M. NIKOLAKAKOS, L. BENNETT, E. TILLEMANN, D. BEDEY, M.  
3 BERTOGLIO, L. JONES, C. KEOGH, M. ROMANO

4  
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."  
9

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.

3

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

5

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~~  
11 ~~EDUCATION, THE ADOPTION OF POLICY BY SCHOOL DISTRICTS, AND THE LOCAL PROCESS OF CURRICULUM~~  
12 ~~DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING THE SELECTION OF TEXTBOOKS AND instructional materials, and THE DEVELOPMENT OF~~  
13 ~~teaching methods for reading instruction in the public schools of this state, may not include instruction related to~~  
14 ~~strategies or approaches that teach students to read based on meaning drawn from context, structure, syntax,~~  
15 ~~visual cues and pictures, or memory, including the instructional model commonly known as the three-cueing~~  
16 ~~system~~ MUST MEET OR EXCEED THE MINIMUM 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

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

3

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].

6

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

8

- END -