

Amend the READ Act to include deaf and deafblind children

Date: March 5, 2024

To: House Education Policy
Rep. Laurie Pryor, Chair
Rep. Josiah Hill, Vice Chair

From: Minnesota Commission of the Deaf, DeafBlind & Hard of Hearing

Please support updating the READ Act to include those who cannot fully access sound-based approaches – HF3744

Since the passage of the READ Act, we at the Commission have been approached by educators working with deaf, deafblind, and hard of children with concerns on how to comply with the new law. These educators very much support the goal of increased literacy and want to ensure that their students can benefit from this valuable initiative.

The gist of their concerns is that the READ Act requirements and incentives do not account for students and educators who may not be able to fully access sound-based approaches such as phonics, nor does it recognize that sign language is a valid – and increasingly supported by research – foundation for literacy.

Through our network of educators, including those at a teacher licensure preparation program, we gathered input and worked with Rep. Edelson’s office to make edits to the current proposed amendment. In addition, we are asking that legislators establish a working group to identify and recommend alternatives to the sound-based approaches required by the current approved READ Act training, curricula, and screeners. Educators statewide already must make those adaptations within each school or program, but largely in isolation. Bringing representatives together on a state level to pool their knowledge will help make best practices available to even more deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing children in Minnesota.

Please support amending HF3744 to be inclusive of those who cannot fully access sound-based approaches to literacy instruction. We are grateful to Rep. Heather Edelson for her support in ensuring that the benefits of the READ Act reach as many children as possible.

Signed,



Alicia Lane, *Government Relations Director*



March 5, 2024

Re: HF3744, Read Act amended, report required, and money appropriated.

Dear Chair Pryor and Members of the House Education Policy Committee,

Reading proficiency is critical for success in college, career, and life. Research has found that students who were not proficient in reading by the end of third grade were four times more likely to drop out of high school than proficient readers.¹ Despite this, being able to teach reading was one of the most common things over 50 educators told us that they didn't learn, but wished that they had, in teacher preparation.²

This is why we supported the deep work that went into passing the Read Act last year, and the ongoing conversations to refine and improve the bill. We are grateful for Rep. Edelson's leadership, and for the intentionality around implementation of this landmark law. We support HF3744 because it builds on real-time feedback from educators, school and district leaders, and other stakeholders to ensure the legislation has the impact intended.

Our youngest Minnesotans—particularly those who have traditionally underserved—do not have time to wait and deserve educators with expertise in literacy instruction. Minnesota educators also deserve the opportunity to be trained in evidence-based literacy so they can have the essential tools and knowledge to better serve their students. This bill makes necessary adjustments to achieve that, while also ensuring the funding needed to move the work forward. Supporting educators to complete literacy training and supporting districts to adopt evidence-based curriculum are essential to ensuring our students have a strong literacy foundation, and we hope the legislature will make these initiatives a top funding priority.

Sincerely,
Matt Shaver
Policy Director
mshaver@edalliesmn.org

¹ Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2010). "Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters." http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-Early_Warning_Full_Report-2010.pdf

² Kaput, K. (February 2020). "10 Things All Teacher Candidates Should Learn in Teacher Prep." EdAllies. https://edalliesmn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Teacher-Prep-Brief_Final_Digital.pdf

Debbie Golos, PhD

Associate Professor and DHH Licensure Program Lead at the University of Minnesota

Brynn Kraning, PhD

DHH Field Placement Coordinator, DHH Student Teaching Supervisor and Lecturer University of Minnesota

Testimony in support of HF3744 amendment

House Education Policy Hearing

Tuesday, March 5, 2024, 3:00 pm

Chair: Rep. Laurie Pryor

Location: SOB Basement Hearing Room

Dear Chair Pryor and members of the Committee,

We are writing in regards to HF3744. We are deeply appreciative of your work to improve the teaching and learning of reading for the students of Minnesota, however, we have concerns for Deaf and Hard of Hearing students (DHH students). While we write this as private citizens, as researchers, faculty and supervisors training DHH teachers at the University of Minnesota, we believe The READ Act is an excellent support for children and we support this bill with expanded definitions to be inclusive for all students, including DHH students. There is increasing evidence that children can successfully learn to read without sound-based approaches and in fact, early access to ASL supports higher levels of reading (e.g., Scott, 2022). HF3744 should take this into consideration. As written, the READ Act is not inclusive of the needs of DHH students using American Sign Language (ASL) as one of the languages of instruction.

While we are supportive of and believe in the value of the updated READ Act (HF3744), we are proposing the bill be amended for three main reasons:

1. It is not appropriate for the context and developmental stage of all readers such as deaf and hard of hearing readers.
 - It assumes all readers have (and need) access to sound-based approaches to reading (i.e., phonics)
 - It does not take into consideration recent research demonstrating children (including DHH and hearing children) can learn to read without access to or through sound-based approaches (e.g. Scott 2022; Moses et al., 2015; Mayberry et al., 2011)
 - It does not take into consideration the role of fingerspelling as a pathway to decoding (Stone et al., 2015)
2. Definitions for key words need to be expanded to support reading development for all children.
 - Expanding the term phonics/phonological awareness
 - Add and expand on the term decoding instruction to include fingerspelling.
 - Expand on the term oral language to include sign language

- Expansion of listening and speaking skills to include expressive and receptive skills
 - Add and expand on the term multilingual to include American Sign Language (Kurz et al., 2021).
3. It doesn't expand on who the instructional support staff could be.
- ASL specialist
 - Reading specialist fluent in ASL
 - Reading specialist trained in multilingual strategies (including with ASL)

We know that reading is at the core of teaching and learning. We are supportive of teaching reading and are willing to work collaboratively to improve reading instruction in the state for all children.

Sincerely,

Debbie Golos, PhD

Hugo, Minnesota

Brynn Kraning, PhD

Saint Louis, Missouri

Minnesota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

2024 Legislative Priorities

Laura Mogelson, Legislative Liaison
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Dr. Darrell Stolle, President
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Minnesota Teacher Diversity

- Support the investment and creation of the Minnesota Aspiring Teachers of Color Scholarship Program
- Support increases in funding to the Minnesota Underrepresented Student Teacher Grant program
- Support increases to the Collaborative Urban and Greater MN Educators of Color grant program
- Add IHE eligibility to the PELSB Teacher Mentorship and Retention of Effective Teachers Grant

Paid Student Teaching

- Fund [paid student teaching](#) for all Minnesota teacher candidates for 12 continuous weeks.

Tiered Licensure and Special Education Teachers

- Require Special Education teachers issued a Tier 3 license through the experience pathway¹ demonstrate evidence of the Standards of Effective Practice and Subject Matter Standards (through coursework or the portfolio process).
- Support advancement of all Tier 1 Special Education teachers to Tier 2 with onboarding and enrollment into an approved teacher preparation program.
- Limit special education licenses to Tiers 2, 3, and 4.
- Increase investments in special education teacher licensure teacher preparation.

Reading and Teacher Preparation

- Require elementary education, early childhood education, and special education teachers issued a Tier 3 license through the experience pathway demonstrate evidence of meeting the subject matter standards for reading in administrative rule and dyslexia standards (through coursework or the portfolio process).
- Require early literacy clinical experience in teacher preparation for all license areas with primary responsibility for reading instruction (elementary education, special education, early childhood).
- Planning and funding mechanisms that help create and support quality and reliable early literacy clinical placements for teacher candidates in schools with teachers trained in structured literacy approaches.
- Continued opportunities and funding for teacher education faculty development on structured literacy.

¹ Three years of teaching experience under a Tier 2 license and evidence of summative teacher evaluations that did not result in placing or otherwise keeping the teacher on an improvement process pursuant to section 122A.40, subdivision 8, or 122A.41, subdivision 5.

February 9, 2024

Rep. Heather Edelson
549 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Rep. Edelson:

Thank you for meeting with us and for seeking our input about our priority for supplemental funding for the Read Act. We greatly appreciate your leadership and continued collaboration with our associations.

As you requested, we have conferred with superintendents, school board members, school principals, and other district staff to ascertain their priority for supplemental funding to successfully implement the Read Act. Not surprisingly, the priority varies from district to district. Some districts report that they have successfully trained a large share of their staff but they need to purchase an approved curriculum. Other districts already have an approved curriculum but have just started training their staff. There is broad agreement that funding is needed to compensate staff for taking the training outside of contract hours.

As you know, there are additional costs associated with successful implementation of the Read Act including hiring literacy specialists and purchasing approved screeners. Given the varying needs of school districts, we ask you to consider establishing a funding stream that would provide some flexibility for school districts so they can address their local needs. One idea would be to establish *Read Act Implementation Aid* that school districts, intermediate districts, cooperative districts, and charters could use for staff training stipends, to purchase approved curriculum and screeners, or to hire literacy specialists depending on where the district is in the implementation process.

This approach would recognize that districts have different needs and are in different stages in the implementation process. Providing each district with the flexibility to target the funds where they are needed during the initial stages of this effort will go a long way toward building momentum and ensuring a successful statewide implementation of the Read Act.

Thank you for your consideration and please feel free to contact any of us with questions.

Respectfully,

Association of Metropolitan School Districts



MN Association of School Administrators



Administrators of Special Education

MN Association of School Business Officials



MN Association of Secondary School Principals



MN Elementary School Principals Association



MN Rural Education Association



MN School Boards Association



MN Service Cooperatives



Schools for Equity in Education

