

Ready to Read Act of 2019

Local Control, Costs, Benefits, Funding & Potential Savings

Ready to Read



Ready to Succeed

LOCAL CONTROL. The bill does not specify any particular screening instrument, diagnostic assessment, curricula or reading instruction or intervention. School districts would be able to choose screening, assessment and instruction measures, programs and materials. This bill provides a guideline to determine who may struggle to read and a prevention framework to provide consistency across districts. Without consistent, clear, evidence based practices in place, Maryland school districts will find it difficult to meet the state mandate that two-thirds of all students meet grade level requirements by 2020. Districts will also find it difficult to meet the State Board's educational equity requirement that all students read on grade level by the end of grade two.

The Laws. The state has a number of requirements in place to ensure students learn to read:¹

- Requiring that students learn to read is **not a new mandate**. State law already requires that all students be taught to read. There is a state constitutional requirement that all students receive "adequate" educational opportunity, and nothing is more basic to an adequate education than reading.
- Maryland statute(7-202) already requires "appropriate reading assistance" be provided for any students who have not met "minimum reading level" beginning in grade 3.

COSTS. Maryland school districts spent more than \$46 million (not including Baltimore City) on screening, assessments, and reading interventions for Kindergarten to grade 3 in 2017-2018². The Ready to Read Act requires school districts to use a reading screener(s) and train staff on best practices to implement effective reading screening practices. More importantly, this legislation does not ask school systems to spend more. Rather, it asks school systems to align current screening and intervention practices with the science of reading and replace what is not aligned, with effective practices.³

BENEFITS. An evidence-based framework of reading screening, ongoing formative assessments, progress monitoring, and intervention will give students help as early as possible to prevent reading difficulties. The prevention framework will provide benefits to English learners, students at risk for reading difficulties, and students living in poverty. School systems will also benefit. The screening and intervention framework provides valuable feedback about core reading instruction. If more than 20% of students require supplemental instruction, the core general education reading instruction may not be meeting student needs.

¹ Maryland's Keys to Comprehensive Literacy: Tiered Instruction and Interventions, ESSA 2015

SB 1 (Specialized Interventions Services Act of 2017)

HB 1415 (Maryland's Early Literacy Initiative Grants)

The Kirwan Commission legislation for FY 2020 funding for literacy interventions in K-3.

The recent State Board of Education Educational Equity policy that says "all students will read on level by the end of grade two."

² [Specialized Intervention Reports 2017-2018 \(SB1\)](#) are reported on the Maryland State Department of Education website. These reports include math and behavior interventions, but the majority of expenditures relate to reading interventions.

³ Foorman, B., Beyer, N., Borradaile, K., Coyne, M., Denton, C. A., Dimino, J., Furgeson, J., Hayes, L., Henke, J., Justice, L., Keating, B., Lewis, W., Sattar, S., Streke, A., Wagner, R., & Wissel, S. (2016). *Foundational skills to support reading for understanding in kindergarten through 3rd grade* (NCEE 2016-4008). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE), Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from the NCEE website: <http://whatworks.ed.gov>.

FUNDING. Kirwan Commission will provide schools with additional funding to ensure all students are college and career ready. The Transitional Supplemental Instruction (TSI) funding of \$23 million in FY2020 (HB 1413 and SB 1030) will provide reading screening and interventions for struggling students in grades K-3. Other sources of funds for prevention and early intervention include the [Learn Act Striving Readers Literacy Grant to Maryland](#) in 2018 of \$45 million, [IDEA Early Intervening Services Funds](#) (15% of special education funds can be used for prevention) and the [Maryland Preschool Development Grant](#) for \$10 million that can be used for early literacy development.

POTENTIAL SAVINGS. If this bill is well implemented, there is an expected cost savings whereby students who have “garden variety reading difficulties”, will be given instruction as early as possible as a result of reading screening. Many of these students, when reading difficulties are addressed early, would not need special education services. A conservative reduction in special education of one-third, assuming the average cost for special education of \$5,918⁴, would equal a conservative savings estimate of \$212 million annually.

EXAMPLE:

Students in special education, age 3-21 (2017):	107,189 students
Assume one third reduction in special education population:	35,801 fewer students
Annual cost of special education student (1999)	\$5,918

Cost Savings: ~\$212 million annually

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⁴ Chambers, Jay G. et al, “Special Education Expenditure Project: What are we Spending on Special Education Services in the United States, 1999-2000?” Report. Special Education Expenditure Project, American Institutes for Research in the Behavioral Sciences. Updated September 2002.