



## The Legislative Bulletin of the School Administrators Coalition

3550 Amazonas Drive  
Jefferson City, Missouri 65109  
573.638.4825  
[www.moschoolleaders.org](http://www.moschoolleaders.org)

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### **Critical Alert: Devastating Reading Bill Fast-Tracked in House, Action Needed Today**

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Dear Allan,

Last week, the Senate passed [SB 949](#), filed by Senator Ed Emery (R – Lamar). SB 949 forces school districts to scrap their existing reading intervention programs by the 2020-2021 school year and mandates local school districts adopt specific, regimented reading intervention programs for all students. The bill is very prescriptive and costly and will require school districts to implement a myriad of reading intervention programs for all students not reading on grade level by second grade. **The School Administrators Coalition is adamantly opposed to SB 949.**

Now, it appears the bill is on the fast-track in the House during this final week of the legislative session. On Friday, SB 949 was referred to the House Rules Committee (not the Elementary & Secondary Education Committee). The bill will be heard this afternoon at 2 p.m. Not only will SB 949 be heard, it will also be voted out of the committee today. Given the bill has gone to this Committee, the bill could be brought up for a final vote before the entire House of Representatives as soon as Tuesday morning.

**It is imperative for members to engage on this bill immediately. Below are actions that need to be taken today.**

1. Contact members of the [House Rules – Administrative Oversight Committee](#) and urge them to oppose SB 949.
2. Contact your local state representative(s) and urge them to oppose SB 949.

3. Make members of your staff that are responsible for administering your district's reading instruction aware of this bill and have them reach out to lawmakers as well.

Below, we have provided you with a summary of the bill as well as a few suggested talking points to be used with legislators.

### **What does SB 949 do?**

Under SB 949, school districts would be required to establish reading intervention plans for K-3 students who exhibit a reading deficiency, are identified as being at risk for dyslexia, or have a formal diagnosis of dyslexia. The reading intervention program must be provided in addition to core reading instruction.

A student who exhibits a reading deficiency must receive an individual reading success plan no later than 30 days after the identification of the reading deficiency for students in first through third grade and by January 31st for kindergarten students. The student's parent must be notified no later than 15 days after the identification of the reading deficiency.

Beginning in the 2020-21 school year, students who are not reading at grade level by the end of the second grade shall receive intensive reading intervention. As part of this intensive reading intervention requirement, each school district must review student reading intervention plans and must provide certain specified services. For instance, each school district must:

- 1) provide training to all K-3 teachers about screening assessments;
- 2) have a highly effective teacher provide instruction to said students (this will require schools to move their teaching staff around to meet the requirements of the bill);
- 3) provide more dedicated time for reading instruction;
- 4) provide for progress monitoring of students;
- 5) provide structured literacy instruction;
- 6) offer a transitional instructional setting for students;
- 7) establish an intensive acceleration class for any student not reading proficient or above on the third grade state assessment; and
- 8) provide summer reading camps to all third grade students scoring at the lowest achievement level on the third grade statewide English language arts assessment.

In addition to the requirements listed above, school districts must annually report certain information relating to student reading proficiency to DESE by September 1st of each year and DESE is given broad enforcement authority.

The state will not be providing any additional funding for these services meaning the costs generated from these requirements will be borne by each individual district.

### **Talking Points**

Senate Bill 949, filed by Senator Ed Emery (R – Lamar), repeals long-standing reading intervention programs and mandates a single, statewide reading intervention program for all students starting in the 2020-2021 school year. The bill requires extensive, specific interventions from kindergarten through third grade and requires additional interventions until students exit high school. Some interventions required in the bill run contrary to those currently being taught in teacher preparation programs and utilized in local school districts. This bill will force districts to scrap their current programs, provide extensive professional development to re-train teachers, pay for new screenings, hire additional teachers and support staff, and create additional classrooms.

**1) Removes Local Control:** This bill removes a school district's local control when it comes to teaching students how to read. As stated above, the bill is very prescriptive as it mandates the type of reading instruction a school district must provide. The bill also dictates the types of interventions that must be provided to a student that is determined to have a reading deficiency. For instance, the bill dictates the teachers who shall teach students who are determined to have a reading deficiency. Specifically, teachers with the highest student reading performance data and teacher performance evaluations will be required to be moved to teach students with reading deficiency.

**2) Costly for Local School Districts:** As discussed above, districts will be required to offer a myriad of reading intervention programs such as mandatory summer school, intensive acceleration classes, teacher transfers and separate classrooms for students with a reading deficiency. These interventions will require districts to create new classrooms for students and require that they hire additional teachers and staff. All these costs will be borne by individual school districts.

**3) Costly to the State of Missouri:** SB 949 requires school districts offer “summer camps” for students that do not score proficient or advanced on the state MAP test. These summer camps must be at least 60 hours. Currently, nearly 200 school districts do not offer summer school. Not only would this bill require districts to use funds to open summer school programs, but the resulting increase into statewide average daily attendance would be a significant pressure on the formula. The situation would require additional state appropriation to ensure state aid payments are not reduced to formula districts.

**4) Devastating to Disabled Students:** The reading interventions contained in the bill are required for all students, including special needs students. For instance, a deaf or blind student will likely need very different reading intervention methodologies from those

prescribed by this bill. In addition, there is no "aging out" from the mandated intensive reading interventions required by this bill for older students with significant disabilities. An IEP team may determine that a secondary student with significant disabilities would best be served by instruction in functional life skills (learning how to take care of one's self), but SB 949 would require continuing the intensive reading instruction until the student completes their program (which could be until they reach the age of 21). Requiring specific instruction that could be special education that is outside of the IEP decision-making process is likely a violation of the IDEA as only the student's IEP team can determine special education services.

**5) Overrides Dyslexia Task Force Recommendations:** This bill overrides the recommendations that were handed down by the Dyslexia Task Force. Senate Bill 949 requires DESE to approve screening assessments for school districts. The Dyslexia Task Force specifically rejected this requirement as they were of the opinion that school districts should retain discretion in the types of assessments they utilize. This will also likely result in additional costs for school districts should their current screening tool not be approved by DESE.

**6) A Lack of Stakeholder Input and Proper Process:** Senate Bill 949 has not been thoroughly vetted. This is the first year SB 949 has been filed. The bill received approximately 30 minutes of discussion in the Senate Education Committee and approximately 30 minutes of floor debate. Now, in the final week of session, a bill that would change how we teach 900,000 students how to read is scheduled to be heard (and voted out) in the House - Rules Administrative Oversight Committee on Monday at 2:00 p.m. instead of in the House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee.

[Complete Listing of 2018 Bill Summaries Impacting Education](http://www.mcsa.org/reference/BillsSummary.htm)

If you can not access this link, simply copy and paste  
<http://www.mcsa.org/reference/BillsSummary.htm> in your browser.

## **Legislators That Represent A Portion of Your School District**

### **Senators**

S. Kiki Curls (D) Phone: (573) 751-3158

John Rizzo (D) Phone: (573) 751-3074

### **Representatives**

Brandon Ellington (D) Phone: 573-751-3129

Richard Brown (D) Phone: 573-751-7639

Jerome Barnes (D) Phone: 573-751-9851

Rory Rowland (D) Phone: 573-751-3623

Vacant (R) Phone: 573-751-0907

Contact Us: [bulletin@mcsa.org](mailto:bulletin@mcsa.org)

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