

Aligning State Literacy Policies & Practices

Connecting the Georgia Early Literacy Act (HB 538), Georgia's K-12 English Language Arts Standards, Georgia's Early Intervention Program (EIP) and Georgia's Dyslexia Efforts (SB 48)



Purpose

Recently, Georgia has undergone several developments that have impacted literacy policy and practice statewide. This guidance document provides key connections and information to support school districts in effectively and efficiently implementing these new expectations with the ultimate goal of increasing literacy outcomes for Georgia's students.

Understanding the Georgia Early Literacy Act (HB 538)

In state legislatures across the nation, there has been a recent trend of adopting state policies to address early literacy. In the 2023 legislative session, state legislators passed the Georgia Early Literacy Act ([House Bill 538](#)) which addresses kindergarten through third grade reading in five parts: (1) high-quality instructional materials, (2) screeners, (3) interventions, (4) professional learning, and (5) teacher preparation.

Georgia Early Literacy Act (HB 538) Components	
Key Components	Key Highlights
Instructional Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Aligned to the science of reading; instruct students in foundational literacy skills and State Board of Education (SBOE)-approved English Language Arts (ELA) standards; approved by SBOE for grades K-3.
Screeners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Administered three times per year to K-3 students; measure foundational literacy skills; identify characteristics of dyslexia; used for progress monitoring.
Interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Tiered reading intervention plans for K-3 students who exhibit significant reading deficiency; use of evidence-based strategies.
Professional Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Training for all K-3 teachers on the science of reading, structured literacy, and foundational literacy skills.
Teacher Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Georgia Assessments for the Certification of Educators (GACE) aligned with developmentally appropriate evidence-based literacy instruction; creation of standards to ensure students completing teacher certification programs graduate with the knowledge and skills to teach reading.

Aligning Quality Instruction to the Georgia Early Literacy Act: Georgia's New K-12 English Language Arts Standards

On May 11, 2023, at the recommendation of State School Superintendent Richard Woods, the State Board of Education (SBOE) adopted the new K-12 English Language Arts (ELA) standards.

Drafted by Georgia ELA teachers with input from educational leaders, parents, students, business and industry leaders, and community members, the standards are designed to be clear, understandable, and prepare students to meet future challenges and become world-class learners. The standards feature built-in learning progressions across grade bands and within grade-level concepts, allowing teachers to remediate or accelerate learning as needed.

These standards will be fully implemented in the 2025-2026 school year, providing time for professional learning, resource development, and assessment updates.

Georgia’s K-12 English Language Arts Standards: Implementation Timeline		
2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource development, instructional supports, professional learning, and assessment updates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource development, instructional supports, professional learning, and assessment updates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full Implementation – Georgia students tested on updated ELA assessments.

Note: Per the Georgia Early Literacy Act, the SBOE will approve a list of high-quality instructional materials for K-3 reading by January 1, 2024. School districts should consider this and other timeframes when making adoption and purchasing decisions.

The standards are intentionally designed to provide a strong literacy foundation beginning in the early grades. During the development of the new K-12 ELA standards, GaDOE ensured full alignment with the requirements of HB 538. Specifically, the K-5 standards contain an additional domain, *Foundations* ([K-2](#); [3-5](#)), with big ideas that include: (1) Phonological Awareness, (2) Concepts of Print, (3) Phonics, (4) Fluency, and (5) Handwriting.

Aligning Reading Interventions to the Georgia Early Literacy Act: Georgia’s Early Intervention Program (EIP)

To comply with the Georgia Early Literacy Act’s requirement that the State Board of Education adopt a list of high-quality instructional materials for K-3 reading by January 1, 2024, all school districts will be required to use instructional programs and interventions aligned to foundational literacy skills and the science of reading by the 2024-2025 school year. School districts must meet this requirement to receive EIP funding.

The Innovative Model will continue to be an option for school districts, but school districts will be required to continue assurances, including alignment with the requirements of the Georgia Early Literacy Act.

Making the Connection to Dyslexia Efforts (SB 48)

[Senate Bill 48](#) (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-159.6) was passed in the 2019 legislative session. This legislation established the creation of a [dyslexia informational handbook](#), implementation of a [dyslexia pilot](#), and [dyslexia screening and intervention processes and procedures](#).

Below are key requirements from O.C.G.A. §20-2-159.6 (SB 48) related to screening:

SB 48: Dyslexia Screening Requirements		
O.C.G.A. § 20-2-159.6 (SB 48)	Topic	Language
§(a)(8)	Qualified Screener Tool	‘Qualified dyslexia screening tool’ means an assessment that measures a student’s ability to demonstrate phonological awareness skills, phonemic decoding efficiency skills, sight word reading efficiency skills, rapid automatic naming skills, and accuracy of word reading on grade-level text.’

SB 48: Dyslexia Screening Requirements (cont.)		
O.C.G.A. § 20-2-159.6 (SB 48)	Topic	Language
§(f)(1)	Grades Tested & Frequency	Students in kindergarten and grades one through three for annual screening
§(b)(2)	Qualities of a Screener Tool	A list of approved qualified dyslexia screening tools that address the following components: (A) Phonological awareness and phonemic awareness; (B) Sound symbol recognition; (C) Alphabet knowledge; (D) Decoding skills; (E) Rapid naming/fluency and (F) Encoding skills.

On May 11, 2023, the State Board of Education (SBOE), at the recommendation of State School Superintendent Richard Woods, adopted the list of [Qualified Dyslexia Screening Tools](#). All school districts are required to adhere to SB 48’s screening requirements by the 2024-2025 school year using screeners from the state-approved list:

“Beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, local school systems shall screen all kindergarten students for characteristics of dyslexia...Further, local school systems shall screen students grade one through three for characteristics of dyslexia...” (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-159.6(f)(1))

The approved FY24 budget includes \$3.5 million to support dyslexia screening. The Georgia Department of Education will allocate this funding by school district based on K-3 FTE counts. Superintendent Woods will recommend the approval of this funding at the June 2023 SBOE meeting so districts can access these funds July 1 to support local dyslexia screening.

In alignment with state law, [SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.39 Dyslexia Identification and Support](#) includes the requirement that by June 2025 and each year after, school districts shall provide the following data to the Georgia Department of Education:

- The number of students in kindergarten through grade three who were identified as having characteristics of dyslexia;
- The number of students in kindergarten through grade three who participate in screening for characteristics of dyslexia in a school year;
- The number of students in kindergarten through grade three who were newly identified as having characteristics of dyslexia in a school year;
- The process or tool used to evaluate student progress;
- The number of students in kindergarten through grade three who participated in interventions; and
- The number of trained LEA personnel or licensed professionals used to administer the Qualified Dyslexia Screening Tool.

GaDOE will request this data from school districts for the 2024-2025 school year with a June 30, 2025 deadline. More information will be provided to school districts as this requirement approaches.

Measuring Literacy Rates & Setting Metrics

Per the Georgia Early Literacy Act, the State Board of Education (SBOE), in consultation with the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) and the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement (GOSA), shall establish such policies, rules, and regulations as necessary to implement uniform grade-appropriate metrics for measuring literacy.

Traditionally, Lexile scores have been used to determine grade-level reading. Though GaDOE will provide input, the SBOE will ultimately establish literacy metrics, per state law.

Looking Ahead: 2023-2024

In addition to the deadlines in O.C.G.A. § 20-2-159.6 (SB 48), the Georgia Early Literacy Act (HB 538) includes a series of key requirements and deadlines spanning from January 1, 2024 through April 1, 2026 and beyond. Below are key literacy deadlines through the 2023-2024 school year that school districts should know:

Literacy Implementation Timeline: Present – July 1, 2024			
Date	Legislation	Topic	Language
May 11, 2023	N/A	K-12 ELA Standards	SBOE adopted the new K-12 English Language Arts standards. <i>Note: These standards will be fully implemented in the 2025-2026 school year.</i>
May 11, 2023	O.C.G.A. § 20-2-159.6(b)(2) (SB 48)	Dyslexia Screeners	SBOE adopted a list of approved qualified dyslexia screening tools .
June 15, 2023	HB 19; Line 154.7	Dyslexia Screeners	Superintendent Woods will recommend state-appropriated funding for school districts; subject to SBOE approval.
January 1, 2024	HB 538; Lines 95-101	Instructional Materials	SBOE shall approve high-quality instructional materials K-3 in reading; Each public school and system must annually certify they are using high-quality instructional materials.
January 1, 2024	HB 538; Lines 102-106	Universal Screeners	GaDOE shall establish qualifications, timelines, and submission procedures for providers to submit one or more universal reading screeners to be considered for the SBOE-approved list.
May 2024	N/A	Early Intervention Program (EIP)	GaDOE will issue updated EIP guidance to school districts. All school districts will be required to use instructional programs and interventions aligned to foundational literacy skills and the science of reading by the 2024-2025 school year. School districts must meet this requirement to receive EIP funding.
July 1, 2024	HB 538; Lines 107-118	Universal Screeners	SBOE shall approve a list of screeners that can (1) provide teachers with relevant information to target instruction, (2) measure foundational literacy skills, (3) identify students who have a significant reading deficiency, including characteristics of dyslexia, and (4) prescribe parameters on the time required to administer.

The Georgia Early Literacy Act contains numerous references to “as soon as practicable but not later than...” when establishing key deadlines in state statute, meaning GaDOE has the flexibility to meet statutory requirements earlier than required, but local school district requirements will not be moved up sooner than the timeframes established in state law. GaDOE is committed to providing clear and consistent guidance to school districts as soon as feasibly possible.

At-a-Glance: Literacy Timeline

2023			
Date	Legislation	Topic	Language
May 11, 2023	N/A	K-12 ELA Standards	Completed: SBOE adopted the new K-12 English Language Arts standards.
May 11, 2023	O.C.G.A. § 20-2-159.6(b)(2) (SB 48)	Dyslexia Screeners	Completed: SBOE adopted a list of approved qualified dyslexia screening tools .
June 15, 2023	HB 19; Line 154.7	Dyslexia Screeners	Superintendent Woods will recommend state-appropriated funding for school districts; subject to SBOE approval.
2024			
Date	Legislation	Topic	Language
January 1, 2024	HB 538; Lines 95-101	Instructional Materials	SBOE shall approve high-quality instructional materials K-3 in reading; Each public school and system must annually certify they are using high-quality instructional materials.
January 1, 2024	HB 538; Lines 102-106	Universal Screeners	GaDOE shall establish qualifications, timelines, and submission procedures for providers to submit one or more universal reading screeners to be considered for the SBOE-approved list.
May 2024	N/A	Early Intervention Program (EIP)	GaDOE will issue updated EIP guidance to school districts. LEAs will be required to use instructional programs and interventions aligned to foundational literacy skills and the science of reading by the 2024-2025 school year. LEAs must meet this requirement to receive EIP funding.
July 1, 2024	HB 538; Lines 107-118	Universal Screeners	SBOE shall approve a list of screeners that can (1) provide teachers with relevant information to target instruction, (2) measure foundational literacy skills, (3) identify students who have a significant reading deficiency, including characteristics of dyslexia, and (4) prescribe parameters on the time required to administer.

2024 (cont.)			
Date	Legislation	Topic	Language
August 2024	N/A	Early Intervention Program (EIP)	LEAs must use instructional programs and interventions aligned to foundational literacy skills and the science of reading to receive EIP funding.
August 1, 2024	HB 538; Lines 119-122	Universal Screeners	GaDOE shall publish a list of approved screeners, including free screener provided by GaDOE.
August 1, 2024	HB 538; Lines 182-188	Universal Screeners	LEAs shall administer screeners three times a year to each student in K-3; with the first administration occurring within 30 days of the beginning of school. For first and second graders, LEAs can substitute one administration of the formative reading assessment.
August 1, 2024	HB 538; Lines 199-209	Intervention Plans	LEAs shall implement tiered reading intervention plans for K-3 students who exhibit a significant reading deficiency on a screener within 30 days of a student being identified; plans shall describe the evidence-based intervention; LEAs can use existing MTSS frameworks and processes.
December 1, 2024	HB 538; Lines 160-161	Instructional Materials	LBOEs shall approve high-quality instructional materials in K-3.
December 15, 2024	HB 538; Lines 162-165	Instructional Materials	Each LBOE shall certify to GaDOE its instructional materials.
December 15, 2024 – first year; August 1 -- thereafter	HB 538; Lines 166-181	Instructional Materials	LEAs shall provide instructional support for K-3 teachers; if LEA cannot fund these supports then LEA must notify GaDOE in writing and GaDOE will provide the LEA guidance on using federal and other funding sources.
2025			
Date	Legislation	Topic	Language
June 30, 2025	O.C.G.A. § 20-2-159.6 (SB 48)	Annual Dyslexia Reporting	LEAs will submit data to GaDOE for required reporting.
July 1, 2025	HB 538; Lines 275-277	Teacher Preparation	GaPSC will require that the GACE align with developmentally appropriate evidence-based literacy instruction.
July 1, 2025	HB 538; Lines 230-231	Training Programs	LEAs will ensure all K-3 teachers complete a state-approved literacy training program.
August 1, 2025	HB 538; Lines 162-181	Instructional Materials	Each LBOE shall annually certify to GaDOE its instructional materials.

2026			
Date	Legislation	Topic	Language
2025-2026 School Year	N/A	K-12 ELA Standards	LEAs will fully implement the new K-12 ELA standards; Georgia students will be tested on updated ELA assessments.
April 1, 2026	HB 538; Lines 140-158	Annual Georgia Early Literacy Act Reporting	LEAs will submit data to GaDOE for required reporting. GaDOE shall provide annual report to legislature and post on its website: (1) Researched based formative assessments with a summative component that is tied to ELA performance indicators in grades one and two; (2) Comprehensive summative assessment program for third grade, (3) Nationally normed referenced in reading for third grade students; (4) Formative reading assessments for first and second grade students; and (5) Impact of screeners, instructional materials, and science of reading.
August 1, 2026	HB 538; Lines 162-181	Instructional Materials	Each LBOE annually shall certify to GaDOE its instructional materials.

