
DIGEST

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HB 446 Reengrossed

2019 Regular Session

Steve Carter

Abstract: Provides for a voucher program for public school students in 3rd through 5th grade who score below mastery in English language arts on state assessments.

Proposed law establishes the Reading Assistance Program for eligible students. Defines "eligible student" as a student who is enrolled in a public school in the third, fourth, or fifth grade and who scored below mastery in English language arts on the state assessment in the prior school year. Gives priority to the lowest performing economically disadvantaged students.

Proposed law provides that the amount of the program payment is \$500 to be remitted to approved providers on behalf of each eligible student to provide supplemental educational services designed to improve reading or literacy skills.

Proposed law requires the state Dept. of Education to administer the program pursuant to rules and regulations adopted by the State Bd. of Elementary and Secondary Education. Requires the department to:

- (1) Determine student eligibility.
- (2) Develop and accept applications from parents of eligible students.
- (3) Establish eligibility criteria for and procedures for the approval of providers of supplemental educational services.
- (4) Notify public school governing authorities of the application process, requirements, and deadlines for parents and legal guardians.
- (5) Define "supplemental educational services" for purposes of the program.
- (6) Annually report to the House and Senate education committees on the implementation of the program.

Requires public school governing authorities to notify the parents or legal guardians of eligible students of the program application process.

Specifies that any expenses above the amount of the program payment shall be the responsibility of the parent or legal guardian.

Provides that program implementation is subject to the appropriation of funds.

(Adds R.S. 17:4031.1)

Summary of Amendments Adopted by House

The House Floor Amendments to the engrossed bill:

1. Change the name of the program from the "Reading Scholarship Program" to the "Reading Assistance Program".
2. Specify that the lowest performing economically disadvantaged students shall be given highest priority.
3. Delete requirement that reading scholarships be given on a first-come, first-served basis giving preference to eligible students classified as English Language Learners.
4. Provide that payments are remitted to providers of supplemental educational services instead of to parents of eligible students.
5. Delete list of eligible services that parents would have been allowed to choose.
6. Require the state Dept. of Education to establish eligibility criteria and approval procedures for the providers.
7. Require the department to define "supplemental educational services".
8. Require the department to annually submit to the House and Senate education committees a list of approved providers to which program payments were remitted and the supplemental educational services provided to each eligible student.
9. Expand the program to eligible students in public schools under the jurisdiction of all public school governing authorities instead of only those under local public school boards.