



OHIO EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

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OEA Legislative Watch

An OEA Newsletter

Do you know that the political process affects virtually everything in your school day?

Take action — Become an OEA Member Lobbyist!

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February 28, 2013

Senate Passes Bill to Add Needed Flexibility to Third Grade Reading Guarantee Teacher Qualifications

On Wednesday, February 27, 2013, the Ohio Senate voted 30-1 to pass Senate Bill 21, which deals with the qualifications required for teachers of students on a reading improvement plan under the Third Grade Reading Guarantee. The bill makes needed changes to current law, which OEA views as inflexible and not set up to help schools and teachers meet the needs of struggling readers. OEA has been working to make improvements to the law and testified before the Senate Education Committee on the need to make improvements to Senate Bill 21. Additionally, since Friday of last week, OEA members have sent over 1,000 messages to legislators calling for additional flexibility in the law. This work was effective in producing a much improved bill that passed the Senate with strong bipartisan support.

As introduced, the bill removed the requirement that teachers be “actively engaged in the reading instruction of students for the previous three years.” A number of amendments were added in Senate Education Committee to provide additional flexibility. The following changes were made to the bill:

- Removes the qualification that the teacher was rated “above value-added” in reading. This is replaced with “the teacher is an effective reading instructor as determined by criteria established by the Department.”
- Clarifies the qualification option that the teacher has completed a program included on a list of scientifically research-based reading instruction



programs. This option qualifies for the 2013-14 school year and each year thereafter. Previously this provision required a credential, which may have excluded some programs and only applied to next school year.

- An amendment was added that states that if a district cannot furnish the number of teachers who satisfy one or more of the qualifications to work with third grade students during the 2013-14 school year, a waiver will be granted upon passage of a resolution by the local school board and submitted to the Department of Education. The department may not reject the plan.
- Exempts students with cognitive disabilities from reading assessments and other provisions of the Third Grade Reading Guarantee.
- Students may not circumvent retention requirements by not taking the achievement tests. Current waivers for legitimate absences remain in place.
- An emergency clause was added to the bill so that it will become law when and if passed by the House and signed by the Governor.