

HB 639 -- Student Academic Progression

Sponsor: McNary

This bill requires each school district to establish a comprehensive program for student academic progression. A district must develop standards for evaluating performance; specify reading levels, including when remediation will be required; and provide appropriate alternative placement for students retained for two or more years. A district must allocate its remedial and supplemental instruction resources to readers who are struggling at the end of third grade and to students who do not meet the district's standards for progression. Student progress will be monitored using district performance levels and the state assessment for reading; and if a student is not meeting proficiency requirements, a plan for targeted instruction must be developed. If a student's deficiency remains unremediated, he or she may be retained. All students who do not meet minimum grade level standards for reading will continue to receive additional instruction until they are reading at grade level, graduate from high school, or are no longer subject to compulsory school attendance.

Any student in kindergarten through third grade who exhibits a substantial deficiency in reading will be given intensive instruction as soon as the deficiency is identified. Beginning in the 2013-2014 school year, retention will be required of students who are not proficient in reading by the end of third grade. Parents must be notified in writing about the deficiency, the type of services currently being provided, the services that are proposed, and other specified information. Promotion decisions must not be made solely on age or other factors that constitute social promotion except for good cause. Good cause exemptions from retention are specified as well as the procedure for requesting an exemption.

Students who are retained must be given intensive intervention for their specific deficiencies. By school year 2015-2016, each district must review student progress monitoring plans for struggling readers and intensive programs for others. Midyear promotion to fourth grade is allowed under certain specified circumstances. The bill lists instructional options that parents may choose including an initiative targeted to third graders at risk of being retained and an intensive acceleration class for students who score below the basic level on the reading portion of the state assessment.

Each district must annually report individual results to each parent and the aggregated data to the State Board of Education within the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The

state board is authorized to enforce the bill's provisions, and the department must provide any needed technical assistance to district school boards.

The bill repeals the provisions that require a student to read no more than a year below grade level by the fourth grade or be retained.