

BILL SUMMARY
2nd Session of the 60th Legislature

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| Bill No.: | HB4420 |
| Version: | Subcommittee Substitute 1 |
| Request Number: | 16263 |
| Author: | Speaker Hilbert |
| Date: | 2/16/2026 |
| Impact: | See Below |

Research Analysis

The proposed subcommittee substitute for HB 4420 modifies various aspects of the Strong Readers Act.

The measure requires third grade students to score above the below basic level on the statewide reading test, earn an acceptable score on an alternative assessment, or qualify for a good-cause exemption in order to be promoted to the fourth grade.

Good cause exemptions are limited to the following:

- Students with disabilities whose IEPs indicate that participation in the statewide student assessment is not appropriate;
- English Language Learners with fewer than two years of instruction in an English-learner program;
- Students with IEPs showing they received intensive intervention for more than two years but still demonstrate a deficiency, or were previously retained for one year;
- Students who received intensive intervention for two or more years but still demonstrate a deficiency and were previously retained for a total of two years.

The measure lists the process for requesting a good cause exemption and allows a parent to retain their child despite being approved for an exemption. Students promoted with a good-cause exemption must continue to receive intense reading intervention until their deficiency is remedied.

Students who are retained must also receive intense reading intervention from a highly qualified teacher. Such students must be offered the option of a transitional setting where they can make gains against fourth-grade performance standards, while continuing to address their reading deficiency.

Further, if a first grade student has not met a certain benchmark on their mid-year or end-of-year reading screening, the school's Reading Proficiency Team must discuss retention. If a second grade student has not met a certain benchmark by end-of-year, the Reading Proficiency Team must discuss retention. Such retention would be optional, and based upon recommendations from at least five members of the Team.

If the first or second grade student is not retained, the family must be provided with a summer tutoring program and the student must be re-screened prior to the start of the next grade. If retention is suggested, the student may re-screen prior to the next grade if: it's requested by the parents, five members of the reading team agree to it, and the student received summer

interventions. The Reading Team may use the additional screening results to re-determine if retention is necessary.

Any time a reading deficiency is detected, a parent must be notified within 7 days. When a child receives a reading intervention plan, their parents must be updated on the child's progress once a month. Schools must also provide intensive reading services to students in kindergarten through second grade who are identified with a deficiency. Any required, additional in-school reading instruction may not take the place of other core curriculum classes. Schools may not provide reading intervention solely through digital technology. Rather, a majority of it must come from a teacher or reading specialist.

School districts must also provide summer reading academies to all third-grade students scoring at the below basic level on the third grade reading test, and to students in grades k-2 who are at risk of reading deficiencies as determined by screening results.

State law regarding literacy coaches is also updated. The number of required regional literacy leads is increased from five to 20, and there must be one reading specialist, or a contracted reading specialist, for each elementary schools. Schools performing the worst on the end-of-year reading assessment or reading screener will be given priority access to the reading coaches employed by the State Department of Education. The measure also updates requirements for literacy coaches and requires them to pass Oklahoma's Foundations of Reading test. The State Department of Education may hire retired teachers as literacy coaches.

Lastly, the measure creates a "Strong Readers Revolving Fund" which is subject to donations. Donors must designate a school, district, or region to receive their funds.

Prepared By: Emily Byrne

Fiscal Analysis

(In Progress)

HB 4421 creates the Strong Readers Act. Though a detailed fiscal impact is still in progress, the measure is expected to have a material impact on the State Budget requiring additional appropriations to the State Department of Education in excess of \$75,000,000. Major cost drivers in the measure include: additional software for assessments, online reading platforms, alternative reading assessments, faculty education requirements, the hiring of literacy specialists, regional lead supervisors at the district level, and the hiring of literacy instructional teams and project managers at the Department level. This fiscal impact will be updated as additional detailed estimates become available.

Prepared By: John McPhetridge, House Fiscal Director

Other Considerations

None.

