



Input on SB 2252

Relating to kindergarten readiness and early literacy and numeracy skills

April 1, 2025

The **Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE)** offers the following input on **Senate Bill SB 2252** by Chairman Creighton:

ATPE cares deeply about improving student literacy and numeracy across the state. We support the goals outlined in the bill, but we are also concerned that the current language and structure fall short of delivering the outcomes we all want to see for Texas students.

We are supportive of both the Reading and Mathematics Achievement Academies in concept. However, the implementation of the reading academies in the past has highlighted serious issues that must be addressed moving forward. Many educators reported that the content was overly general, lacked differentiation, and offered minimal benefit to experienced teachers who already possessed the foundational knowledge being taught.

To improve the program and make it truly effective, Sections 3 and 5 should include explicit differentiation between:

- New and experienced teachers,
- Certified and uncertified teachers, and
- Teachers from different certification pathways.

In addition, Sections 3 and 5 refer to stipends for participants. The amount of these stipends for the educator as well as the funding for the provision of the professional development must be clearly stated, otherwise this becomes yet another unfunded mandate. Further, the language should be amended to ensure that teachers participating in the academies are covered regardless of when their participation occurs. We suggest the following amendment:

Amend Section 21.4552(d-1) (2) and Section 21.4553(d-1) (2) to read:

"...attends the [academy] on a day or during hours of service included in the term of the teacher's contract; or..."

Several sections in SB 2252 introduce new or expanded standardized testing that raise serious concerns about duplication, overreach, and effectiveness:

- SECTION 9 – Section 28.006(b)
Introduces mandatory standardized testing for kindergarten students. The only appropriate use for assessing readiness at the kindergarten level is to provide aggregate data to policy makers on the efficacy of pre-K supports in narrowing readiness gaps. It should not be used as an accountability tool for schools.
- SECTION 10
Institutes state-standardized testing (likely MAP) for K–3 students. We question whether this provides new or necessary insight beyond what teachers already know. Furthermore, who is responsible for providing the interventions triggered by this data, and where is the funding to support them?
- 28.0065
establishes yet another state-mandated assessment. Even if the test itself is not flawed, is it the best use of limited public dollars?
- 28.0071
needs a test-out option or tiered requirement based on teacher experience. The stipend amount also needs to be clearly defined.
- Pgs. 17 and 20: Section 2001.0045, Government Code
This provision exempts TEA from cost-analysis requirements when issuing rules—opening the door to unfunded mandates. This is highly problematic and should be revised.

While the bill outlines ambitious academic goals, it does not provide sufficient or equitable funding to implement them effectively:

- SECTION 11 – Supplemental Tutoring
How much has been appropriated for this purpose? Is it more impactful to invest these funds earlier, particularly in pre-K and K–2 supports?
Additionally, these funds should not be used for special education services. If a student requires support beyond what is generally available due to a special education need, that cost should be covered through the district’s special education funding, not general literacy funds.
- SECTION 23 – High-Impact Tutoring
This section allocates \$250 per student but caps participation at 10% of the student population. The average annual salary of one paraprofessional is approximately

\$25,000. A district would need 100 eligible students just to fund one paraprofessional. Because only 10% of students are eligible, a district would need at least 1,000 students to fully utilize that funding, which excludes the vast majority of small and mid-sized districts in Texas. We urge the committee to do the math—this formula simply does not work for most communities.

- SECTION 24 – Recapture

The inclusion of recapture in a bill focused on early literacy and numeracy is unclear. This section should be removed unless there is a direct and transparent connection to the bill's academic objectives.

- SECTION 25 – Funding Mechanisms

The funding approach in this section appears punitive, disproportionately affecting school districts that serve higher populations of economically disadvantaged students. This undermines the equity principles at the core of education policy.

One strength of SB 2252 is its focus on improving communication with parents. Studies show that only one in 10 parents with a child who is behind grade level acknowledge it. Requiring screeners to produce plain-language, parent-friendly reports is a strong provision that we support.

However, implementation must prioritize local control and district flexibility. Mandates without meaningful funding or autonomy will not yield the results intended.

- SECTION 14 – Parent Support Programs

ATPE appreciates the intention to connect parents to resources, but is it realistic for the state agency to identify and maintain a directory of effective, local programs? This responsibility may be more appropriately handled by districts or Education Service Centers.

- SECTION 16 – Resource Campuses

We recommend expanding eligibility to schools where a significant percentage of students either failed or did not take the kindergarten readiness assessment—including those who did not attend kindergarten at all.

- Remove 29.934(b)(3): Requiring participation in the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) to qualify as a resource campus is an artificial barrier. The focus should be on student need, not state-driven initiatives.
- Under (4)(B): Do not tie eligibility to TIA. Instead, tie it to Texas Educator Standards (TESS) and allow districts to qualify with a plan to meet requirements by the following school year.

- SECTION 18 – Curriculum Marketing

The agency should not use state funds to market its own product (Bluebonnet) over other options. Instead, focus on disseminating information about high-quality curriculum across the board and allow districts to choose what fits their needs.

We share your commitment to ensuring every child in Texas learns to read and do math at high levels. But this bill, in its current form, places too much emphasis on testing and compliance—and not enough on equity, funding, flexibility, and actionable support. To improve this bill, ATPE recommends that SB 2252:

- Clearly appropriate funding for stipends, tutoring, and interventions such as staffing for high impact tutoring.
- Avoid adding more layers of standardized testing without clear utility.
- Allow local flexibility in how districts meet the expectations.
- Ensure funding mechanisms do not exclude or punish smaller, rural, or high-need districts.
- Focus on parent engagement and early intervention supports that are meaningful and scalable.

Thank you for your time and for considering these suggestions as you continue working to strengthen Texas education. We look forward to working with you. For additional information, contact ATPE Governmental Relations at (800) 777-2873 or government@atpe.org.