



Senator Andrew O. Brenner – 19th District
Senate Education Committee
January 29, 2025
Senate Bill 19 – Sponsor Testimony

Thank you, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee, for this opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 19 to you all this afternoon. The legislation before you was introduced in the previous General Assembly and has been reintroduced as it still needed to address the critical need for learning acceleration for Ohio's students most in need of additional academic support.

Ohio's standard assessments in English Language Arts and in Math are administered to all public school students across the state. A student's comprehension in the subject assessed is rated at one of five levels of proficiency: limited, basic, proficient, accomplished, and advanced, based on the percentage of questions a student correctly answers in that year's assessment. Generally speaking, a student will need to answer approximately a quarter of the test questions correctly in order to achieve a rating of basic. In other words, a student is considered limited in their proficiency if they answer less than a quarter of the assessment questions correctly.

During the 2022 to 2023 school year, a fifth of Ohio's students were scored at limited proficiency in English Language Arts. In Math, almost a third of Ohio's students were scored at limited. 366,621 students scored "limited" on at least one state assessment.

Let's take a moment to consider that. There are approximately 1.6 million children in our public schools; that means roughly 23%, or nearly one in every four, of our children demonstrated they did not have even a basic understanding of core concepts they need to become successful, thriving adults in this state. If we look only at students in grades K-8, 256,922 students scored at that lowest level of academic achievement last year; 64% of those students also scored limited on at least one state test in the year before, and 48% of them scored limited on at least one test the year before that. Clearly, a disturbing number of Ohio children are in need of significant and prolonged academic intervention before it is too late to address their desperately-needed learning deficiency.

According to the National Assessment for Educational Progress's 2024 report card, reading scores for both the 4th and 8th grades has fallen nationally. Both grades are down 2 points compared to 2022 and 5 points compared to 2019.

This problem has not developed overnight, but its severity grows ever more prevalent as students who were knocked off track by the impact of the pandemic, or who were already struggling academically,

continue to be promoted to the next grade despite showing very clear signs of needing significant intervention supports from their local school to address their lack of understanding of necessary skills. That is why I have introduced Senate Bill 19 and ask that you review it with me today. This legislation would require that any public school student who demonstrates a limited level of skill on a state assessments in Math or English Language Arts receive academic intervention services at no cost to the student. The language in Senate Bill 19 has been written so as to intentionally encompass a broad but meaningful scope of supports. These services might include tutoring supports, additional instructional time, an extended school calendar, or any other academically centered support service that the school or district determines will improve the student's academic performance. These services could be provided by the district, or provided through a contracted vendor, or both. Furthermore, I would note that the bill requires these services be evidence-based, be in-line with the material students are learning in their regular classes, and not supplant the student's normal instructional time and curriculum.

Schools would also be required to inform children's parents that academic intervention services are being provided to their child and the nature of those services. Following that notification, schools would provide the parents with periodic updates on their child's progress as well as resources and recommendations for ways parents can assist in accelerating their child's learning. Schools would also annually provide the Department of Education and Workforce a report that includes the number of students receiving academic intervention services in math and/or English, as well as how the school or district is providing these services. Once a student demonstrates proficiency on a state assessment, they would no longer be required to receive academic intervention services, though the school may continue providing such services to students if they so choose.

Additionally, schools will be required to develop mathematics improvement and monitoring plans for each student who qualifies for math intervention services within 60 days after receiving the student's results on the third grade state assessment in math. Math improvement and monitoring must include things such as identification of specific deficiencies, a description of the additional instructional services the child will receive in order to remediate, the process for monitoring the progress of the student, high dosage tutoring opportunities that align with regular classroom instruction through a state approved vendor, as well as others. A child will remain on the improvement plan until the child receives the required skill level for their current grade. A district or school will also be required to establish and submit to the Department of Education and Workforce a math improvement plan if 51% or less of the school's or district's students receive a "proficient" score on the third grade state assessment in math. The Department will be required to establish guidelines prescribing the content and deadlines for the math improvement plan.

Finally, the Department of Education and Workforce would be required to randomly select five percent of districts, community schools, and STEM schools each year for a review of the academic intervention services they are providing. The Department would review whether students are receiving intervention services as they should under the bill, the manner in which those services are being provided, and the quality of said services. This information would not be left to gather dust on the shelf at DEW. I want the information to be a resource to all schools, whether they were evaluated that year or not, and to the community at large, so information will be made publicly available.

Our educational system must be responsive to the needs of our students. In this last year alone, we have significantly increased the amount of funding each student receives for their education, provided resources for tutoring services, and made high quality instructional materials available while identifying methods of instruction that most benefit students. If we are unable to say that our students who need the most help are in fact receiving that assistance from their school, then we are putting the interests of adults ahead of the needs of children. Members of the committee, I am very grateful for the time you have afforded me today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.