



HB 240 Kindergarten Screener

What the Bill Does

- **End-of-Year Reading Assessment:** The bill requires school districts to give all kindergarten and first-grade students a reading assessment at the end of the school year.
- **Kindergarten Students:** A kindergarten student **can** stay in kindergarten for another year if:
 - They didn't meet the reading goals set for their grade level on the assessment.
 - They didn't master the required reading skills for kindergarten.
 - They aren't ready to succeed in first grade.
- **First-Grade Students:** A first-grade student **must** stay in first grade for another year if:
 - They didn't meet the reading goals set for their grade level on the assessment.
 - They didn't master the required reading skills for first grade.
 - They aren't ready to succeed in second grade.
- **Exceptions:**
 - If a student repeats kindergarten, they won't have to repeat first grade.
 - A student can only repeat first grade once.
 - Students can move to the next grade at any time during the school year if the school believes it's in their best **academic** interest.

Why It Matters

This bill, focused on helping more students achieve reading proficiency in elementary grades, supports the goals of Read to Succeed and aligns with findings from the Big Bold Future report, which underscores the need for improved reading outcomes given Kentucky's current rank of 29th out of 50 states in fourth-grade reading proficiency.

- **Improves Literacy Outcomes:** The bill helps more students reach reading proficiency by third grade, recognizing that kindergarten readiness is key to later literacy success, supporting the goals of Read to Succeed.
- **Promotes Early Literacy:** This bill supports Kentucky's goals to improve education, building on programs like the Read to Succeed Act to help all students succeed in school long-term.
- **Acknowledges Need for Extra Time:** The bill recognizes that some students may need more time and extra support to catch up, especially if they haven't developed early reading skills yet.



- **Supports Tailored Learning:** The bill includes individualized reading plans for each student, making sure struggling readers get the help they need.
- **Encourages Long-Term Success:** The bill ensures that all students are ready to move from "learning to read" to "reading to learn," giving them a solid foundation for future academic success.

How Do We Make This Bill Work in the Real World

- **Ensuring Flexibility for Educators:** As the bill is implemented, teachers must retain the freedom to use their professional judgment to support each student's unique needs. One test shouldn't decide everything. We should also look at whether schools are giving students the chance to move up a grade mid-year once they meet reading goals.
- **Addressing Potential Negative Impact:** Holding students back can sometimes do more harm than good—it may not boost long-term academic success or brain development and can hurt a child's emotional well-being. It's important to work with the Kentucky Department of Education and others to find ways to minimize these risks. The goal should be to support students and protect their well-being.
- **Evaluating Effectiveness:** We need to collect data to see how well universal assessments work in deciding if a student should move to the next grade. This should include tracking whether repeating kindergarten or first grade actually improves reading skills by third or fourth grade.
- **Exploring Additional Tools:** We should consider whether using just one statewide screener—or allowing a choice of approved screeners—would give teachers a better picture of student needs. These tools should support teachers in making the best decisions for their students.