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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 794

House Amendments in [] — February 6, 2001

[~~Directing~~ Requesting] the Department of Education, in cooperation with the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, to study the proficiency of Virginia teachers in teaching systematic explicit phonics and the availability in local school divisions of decodable textbooks and other suitable materials for systematic phonics instruction.

Patron Prior to Engrossment—Delegate Bolvin

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, only 61 percent of Virginia's third grade students passed the Standards of Learning (SOL) English test administered in 2000 and in only 15 of the state's 132 school divisions did 70 percent or more of the third grade students pass this test; and

WHEREAS, only 68 percent of Virginia's fifth grade students passed the Standards of Learning English test administered in 2000 and in only 49 of the state's 132 school divisions did 70 percent or more of the fifth grade students pass this test; and

WHEREAS, current research from the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, and a recent report from the Congressionally-appointed National Reading Panel agree that all children benefit from a reading program that includes systematic explicit phonics instruction and uses decodable text materials; and

WHEREAS, teachers must receive proper training in systematic explicit phonics instruction through schools of education or professional development programs, and they must be supplied with a range of appropriate instructional materials in order to effectively teach reading to their students—particularly those at risk of academic failure; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Department of Education, in cooperation with the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, be [~~directed~~ requested] to study the proficiency of Virginia teachers in teaching systematic explicit phonics and the availability in local school divisions of decodable textbooks and other suitable materials for systematic phonics instructions.

In conducting the study, the Department shall examine, among other things, the (i) extent to which teacher preparation programs in Virginia's schools of education provide instruction to aspiring teachers in the use of systematic explicit phonics, and (ii) usefulness of requiring that all persons seeking initial licensure or licensure renewal as K-3 teachers, K-6 reading specialists, special education teachers or English as a Second Language teachers demonstrate proficiency in the teaching of systematic explicit phonics. In addition, the Department shall develop recommendations for (a) establishing statewide standards of decodability for the textbooks used in Virginia's schools for phonics-based instruction, (b) creating a state professional development program to assess the skills of those teachers required to demonstrate phonics proficiency for licensure, and (c) providing additional training in systematic explicit phonics to those who do not demonstrate such proficiency. Finally, the study shall include recommendations regarding any supplemental state textbook funding necessary to enable local school divisions to add decodable textbooks and instructional materials for systematic phonics instruction to their reading programs.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Department for this study, upon request.

The Department [of Education] shall complete its work in time to submit its findings and recommendations [by November 30, 2001,] to the Governor and the 2002 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.

ENGROSSED

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