Service Scholarships; College Courses in Secondary Schools; Every Child Can Read Act; Kansas Promise Act; Workforce Pell Grants; ACT WorkKeys; HB 2485

HB 2485 makes changes regarding the authority to negotiate and settle repayment obligations under the Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR) service scholarship programs, agreements between public school districts and community or technical colleges for the provision of college courses in secondary schools, the Every Child Can Read Act and the Kansas Blueprint for Literacy, workforce training programs for federal Workforce Pell Grants, ACT WorkKeys and other similar career readiness assessments, and the Kansas Promise Scholarship.

Repayment Obligations Under Service Scholarship Programs

The bill authorizes KBOR to negotiate and settle repayment obligations under the KBOR service scholarship programs and prohibits service scholarship recipients who are subject to a repayment obligation from receiving any additional service scholarship funds.

Public School Agreements with Community and Technical Colleges

Agreement Requirements

The bill permits community and technical colleges to enter into agreements with school districts for the provision of college courses at a high school or high schools within a school district. The bill requires all agreements to adhere to KBOR service areas and concurrent enrollment policies.

Beginning July 1, 2026, the bill requires agreements to contain the following requirements for community or technical colleges:

- Directly purchase any instructional materials and supplies required for the course, if such materials and supplies are not provided by the school district;
- Pay the standard amount, as provided in the bill, for teaching services to the school district; and
- Pay an amount, not to exceed the standard amount for non-teaching site coordinator services, directly to any school district employee providing such services to the community or technical colleges.

The bill further requires that any payments made to school districts for teaching services must be paid directly to the teacher providing the course as a supplement to the teacher's regular salary.

For a school district employee providing site coordinating services for a community or technical college, the bill provides for such employee to be considered a contractor of the community or technical college for purposes of payment.

Community or technical colleges will not provide financial or other compensation to school districts or school district employees beyond what is required under the bill for the provision of college courses in a school district building during the normal school day.

Standard Amounts

The bill defines "standard amounts" for community or technical colleges for the 2026–2027 academic year as:

- $600 per credit hour, not to exceed 10 credit hours per semester, for teaching services; and

- Not to exceed $1,500 per semester for non-teaching site coordination services.

If a course has fewer than eight students enrolled in and attending the course, the bill allows a community or technical college to prorate payments for teaching services based upon student enrollment.

For the 2027–2028 academic year and beyond, the bill requires the standard amounts to be adjusted annually by adding an amount equal to the average percentage increase in the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers in the Midwest region (CPI-U Midwest) for the three immediately preceding academic years, rounded to the nearest dollar.

Other Provisions

The bill also states that nothing in the bill may be construed to include an accredited independent institution, as defined by law, or to limit, preempt, or otherwise restrict:

- Any negotiated agreement;

- The terms and conditions of any negotiated agreement between a school district and the district's faculty; or

- Any negotiated agreement or terms and conditions of such an agreement between a community or technical college and its faculty.

Workforce Pell Grants

The bill requires the Governor, in consultation with the state workforce development board, to approve eligible workforce training programs for federal Workforce Pell Grants and establishes requirements for the state workforce development board regarding the Workforce Pell Grant Program.

The bill requires the state workforce development board to:

- Establish an internal process for eligibility approval of postsecondary educational institutions and programs for Workforce Pell Grants;

- Establish an appeals process for postsecondary educational institutions and programs denied eligibility for Workforce Pell Grants;

- Coordinate approval of eligible workforce training programs with other state and federal workforce programs to prevent duplicative funding for similar programs; and

- Align and leverage available state and federal moneys to support the implementation and expansion of eligible workforce training programs.

[*Note:* The state workforce development board in Kansas is the KANSASWORKS State Board that was established pursuant to the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.]

For purposes of the bill, an "eligible workforce training program" means any program that meets federal requirements in Section 481(b) of the Higher Education Act of 1965, including:

- A program offered by an eligible institution that:
    - Is at least 150 but less than 600 clock hours of instruction or an equivalent number of credit hours; and
    - Is at least 8 and and less than 15 weeks of duration;
- Not offered as a correspondence course, as defined in federal regulations;
- Determined by the Governor, in consultation with the state workforce development board, that the program:
    - Provides an education aligned with the requirements of high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand industry sectors or occupations;
    - Meets the hiring requirements of potential employers in the in-demand industry sectors or occupations;
    - Leads to either a postsecondary credential that is stackable and portable across more than one employer or is for an occupation for which the postsecondary credential is the only one recognized; and
    - Prepares students to pursue one or more certificate or degree programs at an institution of higher education where the student would receive academic credit for the workforce development program toward the certificate or degree program; and
- Upon approval by the Governor, is determined by the U.S. Secretary of Education (Secretary) that, for each award year, the program:

- Has been offered by the eligible institution for one or more years prior to the Secretary's determination;
- Has a verified completion rate of at least 70.0 percent or more within 150.0 percent of the normal time for completion;
- Has a verified job placement rate of at least 70.0 percent or more 180 days after completion; and
- Has total published tuition and fees that do not exceed the value-added earnings of students who received federal financial aid and completed the program three years prior by calculating the difference between 150.0 percent of the poverty line for a single individual and the adjusted median earnings for such students based upon the location of the program.

The bill states that these requirements of the bill must be consistent with applicable federal rules governing the Workforce Pell Grant Program and that, if any provision conflicts with federal law, federal law will govern.

Every Child Can Read Act

Universal Screener

The bill adds the usage of a single, statewide, universal screening tool that is recommended in the comprehensive literacy implementation plan due to the State Board of Education (State Board) on June 1, 2026, and implemented for the 2027–2028 school year to the list of required measurements of student achievement under the Act.

[*Note:* Continuing law would still require measurements of student achievement through participation in state assessments and through universal screening and assessment tools approved by the local board of education (local board) or State Board.]

School District Reporting Requirements

The bill also adds additional data to be reported to the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE), on or before June 30 of each school year, by school districts, including:

- The number of students in grades pre-kindergarten (Pre-K) through eight who performed in the high-risk category on the fall screening measure;
- The number of students in grades kindergarten through three with an individual student literacy plan beginning in school year 2027–2028; and
- The number of students in grades kindergarten through three who exited the high-risk category or such student's individual student literacy plan by the end of the school year beginning in school year 2027–2028.

Annual Report

The bill includes the State Board and the Literacy Advisory Committee as recipients of the KSDE required report on the data provided to it by school districts and change the due date of such report from on or before January 15 to on or before October 1 of each year.

[*Note:* Both the Governor and the Legislature continue to be required recipients of the report.]

Kansas Blueprint for Literacy

Literacy Advisory Committee

Committee members. The bill requires that members appointed to the Literacy Advisory Committee (Committee) have expertise in:

- Evidence-based literacy practices;
- Educator preparation;
- Science of Reading research and evaluation;
- Dyslexia research;
- Literacy intervention;
- Implementation science policy development; or
- Implementation literacy policy development.

Responsibilities. The bill transfers the attainment of a transformational goal for the credentialing of specific teachers in the Science of Reading and structured literacy by 2030 and student achievement on the English Language Arts (ELA) State Assessment by 2033 from being a responsibility of the Committee to being a joint responsibility of the State Board and KBOR.

[*Note:* Additional details regarding the transformational goal and amendments made to said goal by the bill can be found under the "Joint Responsibilities" heading of the Responsibilities of the State Board and the KBOR section of this summary.]

Reporting. The bill removes select reporting criteria and various reporting dates for the Committee and, instead, requires the Committee to make an annual progress report on or before January 31 of each year to the:

- State Board;
- Legislature;
- House Committee on Education; and
- Senate Committee on Education.

Director of Literacy Education

The bill replaces the term "tier I literacy methodologies" with the term "structured literacy and evidence-based practices" in regards to the responsibility of the Director of Literacy

Education to ensure use of such methodologies or practices by state educational institutions, elementary schools, and secondary schools.

School Districts

Individual student literacy plans. Beginning in school year 2027–2028, the bill requires each school district to develop individual student literacy plans (ISLP) for all students that:

- Are in grades kindergarten through three; and
- Performs at a high-risk level on fall literacy screening measures.

ISLPs are required by the bill to be developed in partnership with a student's parent or person acting as parent, and are to include:

- A minimum of 90 minutes per week of interventions that are:
    - Targeted and tiered;
    - Designed to address the student's individual deficiencies; and
    - Delivered as one-on-one instruction, small group instruction, tutoring, or a summer school program; and
- A diagnostic assessment, progress monitoring, and interventions until the student achieves grade level performance.

The bill also requires a teacher of any student that requires an ISLP to communicate with the student's parent or person acting as parent and provide such individual with information required by the Every Child Can Read Act.

Required Staff. The bill requires that each school district employ, either directly, through shared cooperative agreement, or by contract, a licensed reading specialist for each elementary school within the district, beginning in school year 2029–2030.

Retired and Substitute Teachers

The bill states that retired or substitute teachers cannot be required to complete approved training in the Science of Reading, structured literacy, or other training to achieve a seal of literacy.

Responsibilities of the State Board and KBOR

State Board. The bill requires the State Board to:

- Designate best practices based on the Science of Reading, with structured literacy as the core literacy methodology;

- Prohibit the use or teaching of any discredited methodologies, including the three-cueing system;

- Require applicants for licensure for special education and grades Pre-K through 8 to complete a minimum of 45 clock hours in a literacy practicum designed to increase skills and expertise in:

    - Screening, diagnostic, and formative assessments;
    - Developing instructional plans; and
    - Applying evidence-based practices in an elementary and secondary school setting;

- Require reading specialists to complete a minimum of 45 clock hours in a literacy clinical that:

    - Utilizes assessment tools and data interpretation;
    - Applies evidence-based practices in small or whole group instruction; and
    - Is under the supervision of a literacy expert with a minimum certification that demonstrates expertise in structured literacy;

- Ensure school districts develop ISLPs as required by the bill and that such development utilizes a literacy plan template developed by KSDE;

- Ensure educator preparation programs provide evidence that teacher candidates can demonstrate competency of:

    - Literacy assessment tools and data interpretations;
    - Utilization of literacy screening;
    - Diagnostic, progress monitoring, and formative assessment tools recommended by KSDE;
    - Skills to administer and interpret a variety of assessments to effectively instruct students in small groups and individually in authentic school settings; and
    - Develop plans to guide instruction based on the needs of diverse learners; and

- Submit an annual report to the Committee on or before November 1 of each year, and publish said report to the KSDE website, that must include:

    - Literacy screening measures for each grade level and all subgroups including, but not limited to, those defined in the bill;
    - ELA State Assessment scores for each grade level and all subgroups including, but not limited to, those defined in the bill; and
    - Literacy training for in-service and pre-service teachers.

KBOR. The bill requires the KBOR to:

- Support State Board action to officially designate best practices based on the Science of Reading, with structured literacy as the core literacy methodology;

- Support elementary and secondary schools, as necessary, to eliminate any discredited methodologies;

- Recommend literacy-specific universal screening measures and diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments to the State Board; and

- Approve reading instruction methodologies recommended by the Committee for state educational institutions.

Joint responsibilities. The bill establishes the State Board and KBOR as having joint oversight and responsibility to:

- Approve credential requirements for in-service teachers or certification requirements for pre-service teachers at state educational institutions in the Science of Reading and structured literacy;

- Develop, or make accessible, professional development programs and credential courses through a national online learning program or accredited Kansas postsecondary educational institutions for all Kansas licensed and practicing teachers at low or no cost to such teachers;

- Ensure all pre-service teacher preparation programs at state educational institutions are:

    - Based on the Science of Reading and structured literacy;
    - Exclusively utilizing Science of Reading and evidence-based practices; and
    - In accordance with the State Board accreditation of undergraduate and graduate postsecondary educational programs;

- Publish standards and course progressions to achieve transparency of Kansas reading education programs;

- Provide data for the program that tracks the Science of Reading and structured literacy training progression, course materials, and rigor of application for all Kansas licensed and practicing teachers and administrators;

- Make recommendations to the State Board on vetted high-quality instructional materials that include tier one curriculum resources and intervention curriculum and provide a list of such content to school district boards of education;

- Review undergraduate literacy courses, materials, and resources at least once every three years and make recommendations for improvements to such courses, materials, and resources;

- Implement ongoing professional learning in evidence-based practices in literacy, at low or no cost for reading specialists, special education teachers, paraeducators, school psychologists, and school and school district leaders;

- Accept certifications from programs accredited by the:

    - Academic Language Therapy Association;
    - International Dyslexia Association; and
    - International Multisensory Structured Language Education Council;

- Seek reciprocity for advanced degrees in literacy from international dyslexia accreditation programs within accredited institutions recognized by one of the six regional U.S. Department of Education accrediting organizations until such program is established in Kansas; and

- Attain the transformational goal of 100.0 percent of specific teachers to achieve a credential in the Science of Reading and structured literacy by 2030, to lead to 90.0 percent of students in grades three through eight achieving Level 3 or higher on the ELA State Assessment by 2033.

[*Note:* Prior law made the attainment of these goals the responsibility of the Literacy Advisory Committee and that student achievement for grades three through eight by 2033 would be 90.0 percent of students at Level 2 or higher and 50.0 percent of students at Level 3 or higher.]

The bill also states that all scores and other data on the ELA state assessment associated with the transformational goal must be disaggregated by grade level and all defined subgroups, a minimum of which are prescribed in the bill.

Comprehensive literacy implementation plan. The bill requires the State Board and KBOR to develop, in partnership with the Legislature, a comprehensive literacy implementation plan (comprehensive plan) for grades Pre-K through 12 and postsecondary education that considers input from educators, families, research, and evidence-based practices to:

- Address all policy requirements of the Kansas Blueprint for Literacy, including timelines and resources; and

- Include educator preparation, high-impact ongoing professional learning, and high quality instructional materials, assessments, interventions, multi-tiered systems of support, and family resources and support.

The bill requires an annual report on the comprehensive plan is required by the bill to be made to the:

- State Board;
- KBOR;
- Senate Committee on Education;
- House Committee on Education; and
- House Committee on Higher Education Budget.

The bill requires an initial report of the comprehensive plan to be submitted to those legislative committees previously listed on or before May 1, 2026, with the full comprehensive plan to be submitted to all the entities previously listed on or before January 15, 2027.

Postsecondary Educational Institution Responsibilities

The bill requires KBOR, the provost, and the dean of the college or school of education of each postsecondary educational institution to have joint oversight and responsibility for undergraduate and graduate level reading and literacy courses at their respective institutions and to:

- Integrate explicit courses and ensure candidate competency in the Science of Learning, Science of Reading, and structured literacy, including the five pillars of reading, for all undergraduate early childhood and elementary teacher preparation programs at state educational institutions;

- Appoint one representative from each postsecondary educational institution to, at least once every three years as part of the accreditation process, conduct a systemwide analysis of the curriculum maps across all literacy courses and include clear evidence of instructional approaches and core components of reading development such as, but not limited to:

    - Curriculum maps demonstrating that literacy coursework addresses phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension and includes screening, diagnostic assessment, progress monitoring, and interventions;

    - Documentation that language structures related to reading development, including phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics are addressed;

    - Data demonstrating teacher candidate competency regarding evidence-based literacy instruction through course assessments and clinical evaluations;

    - Teacher candidate performance on literacy-related licensure assessments or competency measures;

    - Observation or evaluation data demonstrating a teacher candidate's ability to deliver explicit and systematic reading instruction;

    - Documentation of ongoing faculty professional learning related to current research on reading development and literacy instruction; and

- Documentation of program revisions or instructional changes made in response to teacher candidate performance data, licensure outcomes, or workforce feedback;

- Provide evidence that 80.0 percent of teacher candidates pass the State Board's approved licensure exam in literacy instruction;

- Provide evidence that practicum supervisors demonstrate expertise in structured literacy, evidence-based practices, and supervision;

- Present a report on such systemwide analysis and any results from such analysis to the Committee, State Board, and KBOR; and

- Provide information, advice, and recommendations to the Committee.

Definitions

New definitions. The bill includes additional definitions for purposes of the Act:

- The term "field experience" means learning opportunities for pre-service educators that:
  - Are structured and supervised;
  - Allow for the observation and interaction with students; and
  - Include the application of evidence-aligned reading practices in authentic and diverse classroom settings;

- The term "literacy practicum" means field experience that provides:
  - Explicit guided, hands-on practice delivering evidence-based instructional practices in one-on-one or small group instruction;
  - Administration of literacy assessments;
  - Designing and implementing diagnostic and prescriptive instructional plans with joint supervision; and
  - Mentorship by both literacy faculty and an experienced mentor teacher;

- The term "mentor teacher" means a licensed teacher who has earned a Kansas seal of literacy and models evidence-aligned literacy instruction to ensure pre-service educators gain meaningful, high-impact teaching experience that bridges theory and practice; and

- The term "ongoing professional learning" means the continuous, embedded process to improve teaching effectiveness and student achievement, including

active collaborative learning that integrates new knowledge and skills into daily practice.

Amended definitions. The bill amends definitions within the Act:

- The term "Science of Reading" is amended to mean an interdisciplinary body of evidence that informs how students learn to read and write proficiently. The definition also states that the Science of Reading informs evidence-based practices that includes phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension; and

- The term "structured literacy" is amended to mean a comprehensive instructional approach that guides how reading and writing are taught by providing direct, explicit, sequential, data-driven, and systematic instruction that leads to the mastery of reading and writing.

Repealer and Technical Changes

The bill repeals law requiring the Committee to develop a plan for the establishment of six regional centers of excellence in reading.

The bill also makes a variety of technical amendments, some of which remove required actions or reports that were required to occur prior to July 1, 2026.

ACT WorkKeys and Career Readiness Assessments

The bill amends law to require postsecondary institutions to adopt and implement credit transfer policies for the ACT WorkKeys assessments or other similar career readiness assessments.

The bill requires each postsecondary institution to adopt and implement a policy to use a platinum, gold, or silver credential earned through the ACT WorkKeys assessments, or other similar credential earned through a similar career readiness assessment, as transferable credit toward the attainment of a postsecondary technical degree. The transferability will be based on the recommendations of the American Council on Education National Guide.

The bill defines "postsecondary educational institution" as it is defined in the Kansas Higher Education Coordination Act.

Kansas Promise Scholarship Act

The bill amends the Kansas Promise Scholarship Act to prohibit Kansas Promise Scholarship awards from being used to fund remedial hours offered as part of a corequisite course.

[*Note:* Prior law prohibited Kansas Promise Scholarship awards from being used on any remedial course, except for those offered in a corequisite format.]