

Literacy Initiative

Exceptional Item #1

General Description:

To produce better student readers and writers funds are needed to develop and implement evidence-based reading and literacy academies for prekindergarten through grade 8. The academies will provide teachers with support in the teaching of reading and language development. Where applicable, the academies will provide training on the use of diagnostic instruments, integration of writing support, and a focus on building academic vocabulary. Additionally, these funds will provide targeted English language acquisition and reading support for English language learners.

Justification:

Over the past few years our reading scores have remained stagnant. Student demographics have changed, and there has not been a consistent focus on the best approach to teaching reading. Previous reading academies were shown to have an impact on reading scores. In an effort to be cost effective and to build on an initiative that demonstrated success in the past, this initiative will update the original Teacher Reading Academies (TRA) for kindergarten through grade 4 by updating the professional development content, aligning it with the structure and content of the recently released writing initiative, and creating quality online alternatives for teachers who may not be able to attend face-to-face academies. Since the grade 5 academy was never developed, this academy will be created to ensure alignment with other grade levels and bridge to the adolescent literacy academies that were developed for middle school. Additionally, in order to further support quality prekindergarten programs, an early literacy academy will be developed to set the foundation for teaching reading in elementary school and will align with the TRA. Finally, this initiative will provide reading support specifically for English language learners so that they are able to achieve at the same levels in reading and writing as their native English-speaking counterparts.

Additional Information:

What is the breakdown of the funds being requested?

- An amount not to exceed \$5,000,000 in each fiscal year of the biennium would fund development of a language development and early literacy academy for prekindergarten and provide the academy for prekindergarten teachers in face-to-face (with stipends) and online settings.
- An amount not to exceed \$15,000,000 in each fiscal year of the biennium would fund updates to previously developed reading academies for kindergarten through grade 4 and provide academies for teachers in grades kindergarten through grade 4 who have not previously attended in face-to-face (with stipends) and online settings. Where applicable, the academies would include training in the use of diagnostic instruments and a focus on building academic vocabulary.
- An amount not to exceed \$4,000,000 in each fiscal year of the biennium would fund development of a new reading academy for grade 5 and provide the academy for grade 5 teachers in face-to-face (with stipends) and online settings. Where applicable, the academies would include training in the use of diagnostic instruments and a focus on building academic vocabulary.
- An amount not to exceed \$6,000,000 in each fiscal year of the biennium would fund continuation of the Texas Adolescent Reading Academies for teachers in grades 6, 7, and 8 who have not previously attended, and training in teaching reading across content areas for grades 6, 7, and 8 mathematics, science and social studies

Funding Request:

- **FY 2016:** \$32,000,000
- **FY 2017:** \$32,000,000

- **Total:** \$64,000,000

Additional Details:

- **FTE Total Request:** 0
- **MOF:** General Revenue

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teachers. Where applicable, the academies would include training in the use of diagnostic instruments and a focus on building academic vocabulary.

- An amount not to exceed \$2,000,000 in each fiscal year of the biennium would fund development of English language acquisition and reading support for English language learners with a focus on providing professional development to secondary teachers who work with English language learners.

What do our current reading scores look like?

Reading Scores:

	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Grade 3	76%	79%	76%
Grade 4	77%	72%	74%
Grade 5	77%	77%	76%
Grade 6	75%	71%	77%
Grade 7	76%	77%	75%
Grade 8	80%	84%	83%

Reading Scores (Spanish):

Grade 3	65%	68%	65%
Grade 4	60%	57%	61%
Grade 5	69%	70%	62%

Previous Funding:

Reading Academies

The 76th Texas Legislature, with the passage of SB 472, provided TEA with emergency appropriations for the development of the first Teacher Reading Academy (TRA), which emphasized scientifically-validated instructional practices in the teaching of reading.

In the years the program was funded (1999-2002), approximately 66,000 teachers received training. Stipends accounted for approximately 50% of the total TRA costs. Teachers received \$150 per day for 4-day sessions. Attendance dropped drastically when stipends were eliminated.

The state provided a total of \$75 million dollars over 4 years to develop and deliver training and to provide stipends to teachers.

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Year	Grade	Cost
1999	K	\$17.8 mil
2000	1	\$20.6 mil
2001	2	\$18.2 mil
2002	3	\$18.4 mil
Total		\$75 mil

An evaluation of the program was conducted in 2004 by Gibson Consulting Group and their analysis showed that schools with a higher percentage of teachers who participated in TRA experienced higher overall student performance on the TAKS test at the passing standard, moderately higher student performance at the commended level; a decreased need for accelerated (remedial) instruction; lower percentages of students who were retained and not promoted to the next grade level; and similar improved student achievement results for economically disadvantaged students.

Texas Adolescent Literacy Academies (TALA)

TALA was created by House Bill 2237 during the 80th Texas Legislature.

The Texas Adolescent Literacy Academies (TALA) prepared middle school teachers to design appropriate instruction for all students, including those who struggle with reading due to limited English proficiency, learning disabilities, dyslexia, and other risk factors for reading difficulties. Included were a set of training modules on cross-curricular vocabulary, comprehension strategies, and academic writing; a diagnostic and progress-monitoring instrument; and guidance for intensive interventions targeting the needs of struggling adolescent readers.

Teachers for grades 6, 7, and 8 participated. English language arts/reading teachers for grades 5 and 9 were also invited to the professional development.

The last time it was funded was in Rider 42, part (a), of the 81st Texas Legislature (SSI Rider), which appropriated \$11,150,000 for the biennium to continue TALA.

An evaluation of the program was conducted in December 2010 by ICF International.

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