

## Senate Leader Plans To Introduce Early Childhood Literacy Legislation

By Administrator

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EdNC today a legislative preview highlighting Senate Leader Phil Berger's (R-Rockingham) intent to reintroduce early childhood literacy legislation that passed the Senate unanimously in 2019. Dozens of stakeholders, including appointees to the State Board of Education, helped write the 2019 bill over many months. Below are excerpts from the EdNC piece. Senate President Pro Tempore Phil Berger, R-Rockingham, read with interest about Transylvania County Schools' shift to align reading instruction with how scientific research says kids learn to read. Some of the district's plans reminded him of a state law he tried pushing through two years ago.

"I feel good for Transylvania County and for the students in Transylvania County," he said. "Where my frustration level is raised a little bit is ... we certainly don't have the outcomes that I think would be better if we had more districts doing the same. ... We've not seen any mass movement in this direction."

Berger intends to change that in this year's legislative session. He plans to re-introduce legislation similar to 2019's Excellent Public Schools Act.

Berger candidly acknowledges Read to Achieve's shortcomings, and he won't defend it just because his name is attached to it. He wants to fix it, he said.

After legislative reform failed in 2019, Berger said, he worked with members of the State Board of Education and staff inside the Department of Public Instruction to push reform through policy.

The State Board and DPI spent much of 2020 working on just that. The board convened a literacy task force whose report helped inform and support the work of a K-12 Literacy Committee at DPI.

The State Board and DPI seem poised to continue policy support for science-backed approaches to reading instruction.

Truitt advocated for the science of reading during her campaign for superintendent. And this month, State Board Chair Eric Davis listed it as the second of his three legislative priorities.

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“We need to double down on literacy,” he said. “Every academic subject depends on our students’ ability to read. We’ve got to get on the same page with our partners across the districts around the science of reading and make a concerted effort to not only close the gaps, but also accelerate students’ literacy skills.”