

House passes bill on third grade reading proficiency

BOSTON – On Wednesday, July 11, the Massachusetts House of Representatives passed legislation aimed at having all students in the Commonwealth reading proficiently by the end of third grade. This legislation creates an “Expert Literacy Expert Panel,” chaired by the Secretary of Education and an outside expert on children’s early language and literacy development, which will help to streamline different initiatives and create a cohesive system that will directly help close the achievement gap by third grade for all Massachusetts students.

Although Massachusetts remains a national leader in public education, many of the Commonwealth’s students are falling behind. According to the

2011 MCAS scores, 39 percent of Massachusetts third graders do not read at grade level, an alarming statistic given the research that indicates 7 percent of students with less than proficient reading abilities by third grade have a dramatically reduced likelihood of graduating from high school. The legislation passed by the House of Representatives on Wednesday seeks to strengthen the implementation of literacy programs in public schools across the state by requiring the expert panel to advise the Department of Early Education and Care, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the Department of Higher Education on aligning and coordinating current initiatives.

The Early Literacy Expert

Panel is expected to make recommendations on things such as comprehensive curricula changes, effective teaching practices to promote children’s language and literacy development, family engagement strategies, and professional development and training for educators on language and literacy development.

In addition to these recommendations, the panel must also advise the Department of Early Education and Care, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Department of Higher Education on utilizing new and existing federal grant funds, as well as private funds, to support language and literacy development.

