A bill

TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY ADDING CHAPTER 159 TO TITLE 59 SO AS TO ESTABLISH THE ADAPTIVE KINDERGARTEN READINESS PROGRAM IN THE STATE; TO CREATE RELEVANT DEFINITIONS FOR THE ADAPTIVE KINDERGARTEN READINESS PROGRAM; TO ESTABLISH GOALS FOR THE PROGRAM AND ESTABLISH SELECTION STANDARDS FOR SELECTION OF A PROVIDER; TO ENSURE THE AVAILABILITY OF THE PROGRAM; TO ESTABLISH ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS AND GUIDELINES FOR RECRUITMENT PLANS FOR THE PROGRAM; AND TO REQUIRE AN ANNUAL REPORT ON THE PROGRAM AND REQUIRE CERTAIN INFORMATION BE INCLUDED.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Title 59 of the S.C. Code is amended by adding:

CHAPTER 159

Adaptive Kindergarten Readiness Program

Section 59‑159‑10. (A) The purpose of this act is to promote early childhood literacy and increase kindergarten readiness among children in the State of South Carolina by establishing a framework for offering innovative, evidence‑based early literacy support.

(B) The General Assembly hereby finds that:

(1) High‑quality early childhood literacy programs can significantly improve a child’s readiness for kindergarten and academic success.

(2) Many children in South Carolina lack access to affordable and effective early literacy services.

(3) By contracting with innovative, early literacy providers, the State can expand access to these services and improve kindergarten readiness for children in South Carolina.

Section 59‑159‑20. (A) As used in this chapter:

(1) “Contractor” means the educational technology provider selected by the State Department of Education.

(2) “Department” means the State Department of Education.

(3) “Preschool Child” means a child who is:

(a) four or five years old; and

(b) not yet enrolled in kindergarten.

(4) “Childcare Center” means a childcare program that is defined in Section 63‑13‑20.

(5) “Home‑based” means an educational program provided to children in a home setting, including, but not limited to, home‑based childcare, preschool, or other early childhood education programs conducted in a residential setting.

(6) “Center‑based” means an educational program provided to children in a Childcare Center.

(7) “Preschool Provider” means:

(a) programs defined in Section 59‑152‑25; and

(b) early Childhood Development Initiatives established by Section 59‑139‑10.

(8) “Adaptive Kindergarten Readiness Program” means the statewide program created in this section that uses a home‑based or center‑based educational technology program and parent engagement to develop school readiness skills of preschool children.

Section 59‑159‑30. (A) The Adaptive Kindergarten Readiness Program, a program available statewide that uses a home‑based or center‑based educational technology program and family engagement to develop school readiness skills of preschool children, is established within the public education system.

(B) The Adaptive Kindergarten Readiness Program is created to:

(1) provide preschool children in the State access to a home‑based or center‑based educational technology program with strong parental and family involvement;

(2) develop the school readiness of preschool children in the State; and

(3) deliver age‑appropriate preparation in reading, math, and science to preschool children in the State.

(C) The department shall select an educational technology provider in accordance with the State procurement code.

(D) Every three years, the department shall competitively select an education technology provider that meets the requirements described in this section.

(E) The department shall ensure that any contractor engaged to carry out and educational technology program for preschool children has:

(1) at least three years of experience in implementing a home‑based or center‑based educational technology program for preschool children; and

(2) a demonstrated plan for a randomized controlled trial and other external evaluations that support the efficacy of the educational technology program for preschool children and for submission of the results of those evaluations to the State Department of Education.

(F) The contractor shall provide individualized software instruction for preschool children in a home‑based or center‑based environment.

(G) The contractor shall:

(1) provide technical support to families or childcare centers for the installation and operation of the instructional software; and

(2) provide for the installation of a computer, a tablet, or other electronic or peripheral equipment, and internet access:

(a) in homes of participants whose household income levels do not exceed four hundred percent of federal poverty level; and

(b) for participating private preschool providers, including residential certificate providers, based upon need.

(H) The contractor shall have the capability of:

(1) communicating with parents or center‑based staff;

(2) updating the instructional software;

(3) validating user access;

(4) collecting usage data;

(5) storing research data; and

(6) producing reports for parents, schools, and the Legislature.

(I) The program shall include the following components:

(1) individualized software instruction in reading, mathematics, and science that:

(a) aligns with the South Carolina Early Learning Standards for preschool;

(b) aligns with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework implemented in accordance with the Head Start Act, 42 U.S.C. Section 9801, et seq;

(c) the Council of Administrators of Special Education endorsements; and

(d) meets the United States Department of Education benchmarks for evidence‑based programs;

(2) a multisensory reading tutoring program; and

(3) a validated adaptive reading test that does not require the presence of trained adults to administer and is an accurate indicator of reading readiness of children who cannot read.

(J) The contractor shall:

(1) have the capability to modify, improve, and support the product; and

(2) work to provide administrative and technical support as required in Section 59‑159‑30 for the program in cooperation with public preschool or private preschool provider personnel.

(K) The contractor shall make the program available throughout the State, including in urban and rural areas.

(L) In implementing the home‑based educational technology program, the contractor shall seek the advice and expertise from early childhood education professionals and stakeholders, including the department, public and private preschool providers, local school board members, teachers, and parents on issues such as:

(1) soliciting families to participate in the program;

(2) providing training to families; and

(3) motivating families to regularly use the instructional software.

(M) The contract shall provide funding for a home‑based or center‑based educational technology program for preschool children, subject to the appropriation of money by the General Assembly for the Adaptive Kindergarten Readiness Program.

(N) The department shall evaluate a proposal based upon whether the home‑based or center‑based educational technology program meets the standards specified in 59‑159‑30(I).

Section 59‑159‑40. (A) A school district shall ensure that the Adaptive Kindergarten Readiness Program is available to all schools within the school district.

(B) A public or private preschool provider may participate in the Adaptive Kindergarten Readiness Program if the public or private preschool provider agrees to work in cooperation with the contractor to provide administrative and technical support for the Adaptive Kindergarten Readiness Program.

(C) Each local school board or public or private provider participating in the Adaptive Kindergarten Readiness Program may enter into an agreement with a contractor to:

(1) dictate targets for program usage and terms for failure to meet those targets;

(2) determine data sharing terms; and

(3) agree to other reasonable terms required for successful implementation.

Section 59‑159‑50. (A) The contractor shall, in partnership with the department, solicit families to participate in a home‑based program through a public information campaign, outreach programs, and referrals from local school districts, and participating preschool providers.

(B) To the extent allowed by federal and state privacy laws, the department shall:

(1) identify preschool children and families across the State who may benefit from the Adaptive Kindergarten Readiness Program; and

(2) provide information regarding the Adaptive Kindergarten Readiness Program participation to the identified families.

(C) In a contract entered into with an educational technology provider as described in Section 59‑159‑30, the department shall require the provider to prioritize enrollment of participants based on a first come, first served basis.

(D) The contractor shall annually provide participant information to the department as part of the verification process.

(E) A participant may obtain a computer, a tablet, or other electronic or peripheral equipment at no cost to the participant and receive free internet service for the duration of the participant’s participation in the Adaptive Kindergarten Readiness Program if the participant:

(1) is from a household whose income is no greater than four hundred percent of the federal poverty level; and

(2) the participant participates in the Adaptive Kindergarten Readiness Program at home.

(F) In a contract with an educational technology provider, as described in Section 59‑159‑30, the department shall determine the cost of the Adaptive Kindergarten Readiness Program based on the following factors:

(1) a defined recruitment plan to solicit families to participate in the Adaptive Kindergarten Readiness Program, including through a public information campaign and referrals that prioritize participants who:

(a) are eligible for childcare subsidies under the Child Care and Development Block Grant program, 42 U.S.C. Sections 9857‑9858г;

(b) are eligible for a federally assisted meal program that provides funds to licensed childcare centers;

(c) are from households whose income is no greater than four hundred percent of the federal poverty level; or

(d) meet other criteria based on state need as the department establishes;

(2) adaptive software;

(3) parent engagement and resources;

(4) validated assessment;

(5) educational technology, including a computer, a tablet, or other electronic or peripheral equipment, and Internet for eligible participants; and

(6) reporting for stakeholders, including parents, schools, and the Legislature.

(G) A preschool child only may participate in the Adaptive Kindergarten Readiness Program funded by the General Assembly during one school year.

Section 59‑159‑60. (A) The office shall make an annual report on the Adaptive Kindergarten Readiness Program in accordance with the requirements of this section.

(B) The report shall:

(1) address the extent to which the Adaptive Kindergarten Readiness Program is accomplishing the program’s purposes as described in Section 59‑159‑30; and

(2) include the following information:

(a) the number of families participating in the program who receive computers, tablets, or other electronic or peripheral equipment, and Internet service;

(b) the number of private preschool providers and public preschool providers participating in the program;

(c) the frequency of use of the instructional software;

(d) obstacles encountered with software usage, hardware, or providing technical assistance to families;

(e) student performance on entry and exit kindergarten assessments conducted by school districts and charter schools for students who participated in the home‑based educational technology program and those who did not participate in the program; and

(f) as available, the evaluation of the program conducted pursuant to Section 59‑159‑30.

SECTION 2. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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