

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2022 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 827
Ways and Means

(Delegate Boteler, *et al.*)

Education - Public Schools - Instruction in Print and Cursive Handwriting

This bill requires, beginning in the 2023-2024 school year, each local board of education to require each public elementary school to provide handwriting instruction that enables students to develop (1) legible print handwriting by the end of the third grade and (2) legible cursive handwriting by the end of the fifth grade. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2022.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill applies to local school systems.

Local Effect: Local school systems can provide the required instruction using existing resources; however, resources and instructional time may be diverted from other instruction.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: With the advice of the State Superintendent of Schools, the State Board of Education (SBE) establishes basic policy and guidelines for the program of instruction for public schools. Subject to State law and the regulations, bylaws, policies, and guidelines established by SBE, each local board of education must establish the curriculum guides and courses of study for schools in its jurisdiction. Policies, rules, and regulations for the graduation of students from Maryland public schools are established by local boards of education and SBE.

Current Law: According to MSDE, while cursive writing is not explicit in the Maryland English Language Arts standards, MSDE has included cursive writing in the curriculum frameworks under the “Essential Skills and Knowledge” for grades 3 to 5, which also includes the use of technology for writing. For grade 2, the “Essential Skills and Knowledge” explicitly includes the use of legible handwriting including the proper formation of cursive letters.

Local Expenditures: It is unclear to what extent local school systems will need to alter their curriculum to meet the requirements of the bill. As stated above, print and cursive handwriting are currently considered essential skills under the curricular framework. In addition, local school systems have the flexibility to implement the bill in the manner that best uses the resources available to their schools. Thus, it is assumed that local school systems can include the instruction required by the bill using existing resources; however, resources and instruction time may need to be diverted from other instruction.

Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS) advises that reintroducing explicit cursive handwriting instruction to the elementary curriculum requires 15 to 30 minutes daily, which is 45 to 90 hours of instruction time per school year. BCPS advises that curricular materials may need to be purchased. St. Mary’s County Public Schools advises that curricular materials, training, and supplies may need to be purchased at a cost of \$257,800 in fiscal 2023 and \$116,400 in fiscal 2024 and beyond. However, the Department of Legislative Services advises that the change can likely be implemented for less.

Baltimore County Public Schools and Prince George’s County Public Schools advise that they already provide instruction in print and cursive handwriting as part of their curriculum in elementary grades; thus, there is no financial impact in those jurisdictions.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: HB 725 of 2020 received a hearing in the House Ways and Means Committee, but no further action was taken. SB 961 of 2019 received an unfavorable report from the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education; Baltimore City Public Schools; Baltimore County Public Schools; Prince George’s County Public Schools; St. Mary’s County Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 1, 2022
fnu2/mcr

Analysis by: Caroline L. Boice

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510