
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO EDUCATION.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that in 1853, an
2 estimated seventy-five per cent of the population in the Kingdom
3 of Hawaii over the age of sixteen was literate. By 1878, eighty
4 per cent were literate in Hawaiian, English, or a European
5 language, making Hawaii one of the most literate nations in the
6 world at the time. The department of education is committed to
7 preserving and honoring this legacy by ensuring that all
8 students are proficient in reading by the time they graduate.

9 Currently, just over half of Hawaii's students are reading
10 proficiently. To improve student reading proficiency, it is
11 necessary to address the root causes that contribute to the
12 present levels of poor reading proficiency rates. A proactive
13 and systematic approach is required to achieve high literacy
14 rates for all students. Presently, the department is striving
15 to address poor reading proficiency rates by administering a
16 universal screener at the beginning, middle, and end of the year
17 for all students from kindergarten to grade nine. The purpose
18 of this universal screening is to identify students who may be

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1 at risk for reading failure, and to provide evidence-based
2 interventions to support these students, in addition to core-
3 structured literacy instruction. However, it is important to
4 note that not all universal screeners are able to detect or
5 identify students who may have certain underlying language
6 challenges that impact learning. This is problematic because
7 students with dyslexia or other developmental language disorders
8 may need more intensive support or a more individualized
9 intervention program in order to address the causes of their
10 reading challenges. Unfortunately, Hawaii is the only state in
11 the country that lacks dyslexia-specific laws to support
12 students in this area.

13 Evidence shows that students who are not identified and
14 brought to reading proficiency by third grade face significantly
15 lower chances of success in the future. However, a substantial
16 body of evidence also indicates that, with effective assessment
17 and instruction, all students can learn to read. This includes
18 students with language and literacy challenges, as well as
19 students who have dyslexia.

20 The purposes of this Act are to support students with
21 dyslexia and students with language and literacy challenges by
22 requiring schools to administer department-approved dyslexia-

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1 sensitive universal screeners as a part of the universal
2 screening process; implement evidence-based interventions for
3 students who are identified as having dyslexia and students who
4 are flagged as having language and literacy challenges through
5 the Hawaii multi-tiered system of supports; provide professional
6 development for teachers to increase implementation of
7 structured literacy instruction; and support pre-service teacher
8 programs in training their general and special education teacher
9 candidates in structured literacy instruction.

10 SECTION 2. Chapter 302A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
11 amended by adding to part II, subpart C, a new section to be
12 appropriately designated and to read as follows:

13 "§302A- Dyslexia-sensitive universal screening, Hawaii
14 multi-tiered system of supports, professional development, and
15 pre-service requirements. (a) Beginning with the 2026-2027
16 school year, all public schools shall administer dyslexia-
17 sensitive universal screeners approved by the department for all
18 students in kindergarten through third grade. The dyslexia-
19 sensitive universal screening shall be administered as part of
20 the established universal screening process and shall include,
21 as developmentally appropriate, the following:

22 (1) Phonological and phonemic awareness;

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- 1 (2) Sound-symbol recognition;
- 2 (3) Alphabet knowledge;
- 3 (4) Decoding skills;
- 4 (5) Rapid naming skills, including letter naming and
- 5 letter sound fluency;
- 6 (6) Encoding skills;
- 7 (7) Oral reading accuracy and fluency; and
- 8 (8) Oral language.

9 All public schools shall implement evidence-based interventions
10 for students identified as having dyslexia, and for students who
11 are flagged as struggling readers through the universal
12 screening process. Interventions and progress monitoring of
13 these students should be implemented within the established
14 Hawaii multi-tiered system of supports framework.

15 (b) The department shall provide professional learning
16 opportunities for complex areas and schools on the
17 implementation of structured literacy instruction and evidence-
18 based interventions.

19 (c) The department shall collaborate with pre-service
20 teacher programs in higher education institutions to ensure
21 general and special education teacher candidates are trained on

1 the implementation of structured literacy instruction to support
2 all learners."

3 SECTION 3. Section 302A-101, Hawaii Revised Statutes,
4 is amended by adding five new definitions to be appropriately
5 inserted and to read as follows:

6 "Dyslexia" means a specific learning disability that is
7 neurological in origin and characterized by difficulties with
8 accurate or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and
9 decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a
10 deficit in the phonological component of language and literacy
11 development that is often unexpected in relation to other
12 cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom
13 instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in
14 reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can
15 impede the growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.

16 "Dyslexia-sensitive screening tool" means an assessment
17 that measures a student's ability to demonstrate phonological
18 and phonemic awareness, sound-symbol recognition, alphabet
19 knowledge, decoding skills, rapid naming skills, including
20 letter naming and letter sound fluency, encoding skills, oral
21 reading accuracy and fluency, and accuracy of word reading on
22 grade-level text.

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1 "Hawaii multi-tiered system of supports" means a
2 comprehensive continuum of evidence-based, systemic practices to
3 support a rapid response to a student's needs, with regular
4 observation to facilitate data-based instructional decision-
5 making.

6 "Phonological component of language and literacy
7 development" means the ability to recognize that a spoken word
8 consists of a sequence of individual sounds and students possess
9 the ability to manipulate individual sounds when speaking.

10 "Structured literacy instruction" is an evidence-based
11 approach, that emphasizes explicit and systematic instruction in
12 the following components of literacy:

- 13 (1) Phonological awareness;
14 (2) Phonics (decoding and spelling);
15 (3) Fluency;
16 (4) Vocabulary;
17 (5) Comprehension; and
18 (6) Written expression.

19 Unlike whole language or balanced literacy approaches,
20 structured literacy requires detailed, step-by-step instruction
21 that is necessary for developing strong reading and writing
22 skills. In addition to explicit and systematic instruction, a

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structured literacy approach provides multiple opportunities for
students to practice a skill or strategy. Teachers provide
immediate, specific feedback to students and continuously
monitor progress.

"Universal screening" is the process of administering a
brief standardized assessment to all students to identify those
who are at risk of poor reading outcomes."

SECTION 4. New statutory material is underscored.

SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

INTRODUCED BY:

Heather K. Parker

BY REQUEST

JAN 21 2025

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Report Title:

DOE; Dyslexia Screening; Universal Screening

Description:

Requires the Department of Education to implement dyslexia-sensitive universal screenings, provide evidence-based interventions, and offer professional development on dyslexia and structured literacy.

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.

JUSTIFICATION SHEET

DEPARTMENT: Education

TITLE: A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO EDUCATION.

PURPOSE: To require the Department to administer dyslexia-sensitive universal screeners as a part of the universal screening process, provide evidence-based interventions, and offer professional development on dyslexia and structured literacy.

MEANS: Add a new section to part II, subpart C, of chapter 302A, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), and amend section 302A-101, HRS.

JUSTIFICATION: This bill will help to address the significant literacy challenges facing Hawaii's students. Historically, Hawaii was one of the most literate nations in the world, with 75 percent literacy in 1853 and 80 percent by 1878. However, today, just over half of Hawaii's students are reading proficiently. This bill aims to reverse this trend by addressing the root causes of low reading proficiency, including a lack of support for students with dyslexia. Hawaii is currently the only state without dyslexia-specific laws, which leaves struggling readers at a disadvantage.

Early detection and intervention are critical for student success. Research shows that students who are not reading proficiently by third grade are less likely to succeed academically. By implementing dyslexia-sensitive universal screenings, evidence-based interventions, and structured literacy instruction, this bill will provide the support necessary to improve literacy rates for all students. Additionally, the bill ensures that complex areas, schools, and pre-service educators receive the training they need to effectively support

struggling readers, including those with dyslexia.

Impact on the public: This bill will enhance literacy rates across Hawaii, improve educational outcomes and foster a more literate, informed, and capable population.

Impact on the department and other agencies: This bill will require the Department to implement dyslexia-sensitive universal screenings, provide evidence-based interventions, and offer professional development on dyslexia and structured literacy.

GENERAL FUND:	None.
OTHER FUNDS:	None.
PPBS PROGRAM DESIGNATION:	None.
OTHER AFFECTED AGENCIES:	None.
EFFECTIVE DATE:	Upon approval.