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# 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 legislature recognizes that the  
7       department of education is committed to preserving and honoring  
8       this legacy by ensuring that all students are proficient in  
9       reading by the time they graduate.

10       The legislature further finds that, currently, just over  
11       half of Hawaii's students are reading proficiently. To improve  
12       student reading proficiency, it is necessary to address the root  
13       causes that contribute to the present levels of poor reading  
14       proficiency rates. A proactive and systematic approach is  
15       required to achieve high literacy rates for all students.  
16       Presently, the department of education is striving to address  
17       poor reading proficiency rates by administering a universal



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

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



1       The purpose of this Act is to support students with  
2       dyslexia and students with language and literacy challenges by:

3       (1)   Requiring schools to administer department of  
4           education-approved dyslexia-sensitive universal  
5           screening as a part of the universal screening  
6           process;

7       (2)   Implement evidence-based interventions for students  
8           who are identified as having dyslexia and students who  
9           are flagged as having language and literacy challenges  
10          through the Hawaii multi-tiered system of supports;

11       (3)   Provide professional development for teachers to  
12           increase the implementation of structured literacy  
13           instruction; and

14       (4)   Support pre-service teacher programs in training their  
15           general and special education teacher candidates in  
16           structured literacy instruction.

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

20       "§302A-       Dyslexia-sensitive universal screening;  
21       evidence-based interventions; professional development;



1 pre-service requirements. (a) Beginning with the 2026-2027  
2 school year, all public schools shall administer  
3 dyslexia-sensitive universal screening approved by the  
4 department for all students in kindergarten through third grade.  
5 The dyslexia-sensitive universal screening shall be administered  
6 as part of the established universal screening process and shall  
7 include, as developmentally appropriate, the following:

- 8 (1) Phonological and phonemic awareness;
- 9 (2) Sound-symbol recognition;
- 10 (3) Alphabet knowledge;
- 11 (4) Decoding skills;
- 12 (5) Rapid naming skills, including letter naming and  
13 letter sound fluency;
- 14 (6) Encoding skills;
- 15 (7) Oral reading accuracy and fluency; and
- 16 (8) Oral language.

17 (b) All public schools shall implement evidence-based  
18 interventions for students identified as having dyslexia and  
19 students who are flagged as struggling readers through the  
20 universal screening process. Interventions and progress  
21 monitoring of the identified students shall be implemented



1 within the established Hawaii multi-tiered system of supports  
2 framework.

3 (c) The department shall provide professional learning  
4 opportunities for staff in complex areas and public schools on  
5 the implementation of structured literacy instruction and  
6 evidence-based interventions.

7 (d) Structured literacy instruction, as required under  
8 this section, shall involve detailed, step-by-step instruction  
9 necessary for developing strong reading and writing skills. In  
10 addition to explicit and systematic instruction, a structured  
11 literacy approach shall provide multiple opportunities for  
12 students to practice a skill or strategy and require teachers to  
13 provide immediate, specific feedback to students and  
14 continuously monitor progress.

15 (e) The department shall collaborate with pre-service  
16 teacher programs in higher education institutions to ensure  
17 general education teacher candidates and special education  
18 teacher candidates are trained on the implementation of  
19 structured literacy instruction to support all learners."



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

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

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



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  
5 decision-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 the ability to  
9 manipulate individual sounds when speaking.

10 "Structured literacy instruction" means 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 "Universal screening" means the process of administering a  
20 brief standardized assessment to all students to identify those  
21 who are at risk of poor reading outcomes."



1       SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general  
2 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$               or so  
3 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and  
4 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal  
5 year 2026-2027 for dyslexia-sensitive universal screeners.

6       The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department  
7 of education for the purposes of this Act.

8       SECTION 5. New statutory material is underscored.

9       SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 3000.





**Report Title:**

Department of Education; Dyslexia Screening; Universal Screening; Evidence-based Interventions; Teacher Professional Development; Appropriation

**Description:**

Requires the Department of Education to implement dyslexia-sensitive universal screenings and evidence-based interventions, offer professional development on structured literacy and evidenced-based interventions, and support pre-teacher programs in training candidates in structured literary instruction. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

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