
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 contributing to low literacy rates. A proactive and
14 systematic approach is required to achieve high literacy for all
15 students. Presently, the department of education is working to
16 address these challenges by administering a universal screener
17 at the beginning, middle, and end of the year for all students



1 from kindergarten through grade nine. The purpose of this
2 screening is to identify students at risk for reading failure
3 and provide evidence-based interventions alongside core
4 structured literacy instruction. However, not all universal
5 screeners can detect underlying language challenges or
6 disabilities, such as dyslexia, which may require more intensive
7 or individualized support. Hawaii is the only state in the
8 country without dyslexia-specific laws.

9 The legislature further recognizes that students who are
10 not reading proficiently by third grade face significantly lower
11 chances of future success. However, research shows that with
12 effective assessment and instruction, all students can improve
13 their reading skills. The federal government has awarded the
14 department of education a five-year, \$60,000,000 grant to
15 advance evidence-based literacy practices in public schools,
16 including training, coaching, and screener evaluation. This
17 follows a nearly \$50,000,000, five-year comprehensive literacy
18 state development grant received in 2019. Language arts
19 proficiency is a key performance indicator under the board of
20 education's 2023-2029 strategic plan. The legislature applauds
21 these efforts and the significant investment of federal funds.



1 The purpose of this Act is to:

- 2 (1) Beginning no later than the 2028-2029 school year,
3 require the Department of Education to administer a
4 general dyslexia screening to all students in
5 kindergarten through grade three;
- 6 (2) Beginning with the 2028-2029 school year, require
7 certain employees of public schools to have an
8 opportunity to participate in training on literacy
9 instruction;
- 10 (3) Require a report to the legislature and board of
11 education; and
- 12 (4) Appropriate funds.

13 SECTION 2. Chapter 302A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
14 amended by adding a new section to part II, subpart B, to be
15 appropriately designated and to read as follows:

16 **"§302A- Dyslexia-sensitive universal screening;**
17 **evidence-based intervention; professional development.** (a)
18 Beginning no later than the 2028-2029 school year, all public
19 elementary schools shall administer to all students in
20 kindergarten through third grade a dyslexia-sensitive universal
21 screeener selected from the department-approved list; provided



1 that this section shall not apply to Hawaiian language immersion
2 schools and public charter schools. The dyslexia-sensitive
3 universal screening shall be administered as part of the
4 established Hawaii multi-tiered system of supports and shall
5 include, as developmentally appropriate, the following:

6 (1) Phonological and phonemic awareness;

7 (2) Sound-symbol recognition;

8 (3) Alphabet knowledge;

9 (4) Decoding skills, including real and pseudowords;

10 (5) Rapid naming skills, including letter naming and
11 letter sound fluency;

12 (6) Encoding skills;

13 (7) Oral reading accuracy and fluency; and

14 (8) Oral language.

15 (b) The dyslexia-sensitive universal screener shall
16 consider characteristics of English earners, including long-term
17 English learners and newcomers, as defined in department-issued
18 materials and memos such as the English learner guidance manual,
19 and shall be administered and interpreted in a manner that
20 distinguishes typical English language acquisition from risk
21 factors associated with reading disabilities. Interventions for



1 students who are identified as being at risk for language and
2 literacy challenges and are English learners shall consider the
3 stage and context of the student's English language development.

4 (c) All public schools shall implement evidence-based
5 interventions for students identified as struggling readers
6 through the dyslexia-sensitive universal screening process,
7 including those at risk for having language and literacy
8 challenges such as dyslexia. Interventions and progress
9 monitoring of the identified students shall be implemented
10 within the established Hawaii multi-tiered system of supports.
11 The parents and legal guardians of these students shall be
12 notified in a timely manner by schools, as determined by the
13 department.

14 (d) Structured literacy instruction, as required under
15 this section, shall involve detailed step-by-step instruction
16 necessary for developing strong reading and writing skills. In
17 addition to explicit and systematic instruction, a structured
18 literacy approach shall provide multiple opportunities for
19 students to practice a skill or strategy and require teachers to
20 provide immediate, specific feedback to students and
21 continuously monitor progress. Instruction shall be



1 differentiated based on students' existing linguistic and
2 academic strengths.

3 (e) Beginning with the 2028-2029 school year, all public
4 school general education elementary teachers, reading
5 interventionists, teachers of dedicated English language
6 instruction, and special education teachers shall have the
7 opportunity to participate in training identified or approved by
8 the department on structured literacy instruction. The
9 department shall provide guidance to schools and complex area
10 staff on identifying and ensuring access to approved training,
11 including when those opportunities are offered at low or no
12 cost.

13 (f) In addition to the training in subsection (e), the
14 department shall make available supplemental professional
15 learning opportunities as needed for teachers and staff at all
16 schools and complex areas on structured literacy instruction and
17 evidence-based interventions."

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



1 "Dyslexia" means a specific learning disability that
2 primarily affects word reading and spelling accuracy and speed,
3 often involving phonological processing difficulties, and
4 persists despite effective instruction, with potential secondary
5 impacts on comprehension, language development, and academic
6 achievement.

7 "Dyslexia-sensitive universal screening" means an
8 assessment that measures a student's ability to demonstrate, as
9 developmentally appropriate, the following:

- 10 (1) Phonological and phonemic awareness;
- 11 (2) Decoding skills, including real and pseudowords;
- 12 (3) Rapid naming skills, including letter naming and
13 letter sound fluency;
- 14 (4) Encoding skills; and
- 15 (5) Oral reading accuracy and fluency.

16 "Hawaii multi-tiered system of supports" means a
17 comprehensive continuum of evidence-based, systemic practices to
18 support a rapid response to a student's needs, with regular
19 observation to facilitate data-based instructional
20 decision-making.



1 "Phonological and phonemic awareness" means the ability to
2 recognize that a spoken word consists of a sequence of
3 individual sounds and the ability to manipulate individual
4 sounds when speaking.

5 "Structured literacy instruction" means an evidence-based
6 approach that emphasizes explicit and systematic instruction in
7 the following components of literacy:

8 (1) Phonological and phonemic awareness;

9 (2) Sound-symbol recognition;

10 (3) Alphabet knowledge;

11 (4) Decoding skills, including real and pseudowords;

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

20 SECTION 4. No later than the 2031-2032 school year, the
21 department of education shall submit to the legislature and



board of education an evaluation of the implementation and impact of this Act, including:

- (1) The extent to which evidence-based literacy instruction has been fully implemented in classrooms across the State;
- (2) The effectiveness of the approved training in improving teacher knowledge and instructional practice;
- (3) Data on student literacy outcomes, to the extent available, associated with the implementation of this Act;
- (4) A plan to more closely align and collaborate with institutes of higher education and educator preparation programs; and
- (5) Recommendations for further improving literacy instruction and outcomes in public schools, including Hawaiian language immersion schools and public charter schools.

SECTION 5. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 for



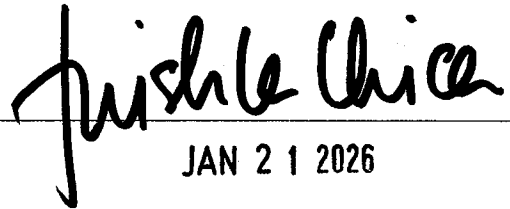
1 the selection and administration of the dyslexia-sensitive
2 universal screener pursuant to section 2; provided that the
3 appropriation authorized by this Act shall not lapse at the end
4 of the fiscal year for which the appropriation is made; provided
5 further that all moneys from the appropriation unencumbered as
6 of June 30, 2028, shall lapse as of that date.

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

9 SECTION 6. New statutory material is underscored.

10 SECTION 7. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

11
INTRODUCED BY:


JAN 21 2026



H.B. NO. 1784

Report Title:

DOE; Dyslexia-Sensitive Universal Screening; Professional Development; Report; Appropriation

Description:

Beginning no later than the 2028-2029 school year, requires the Department of Education to administer a dyslexia-sensitive universal screening to all students in kindergarten through grade three. Beginning with the 2028-2029 school year, requires certain employees of public schools to have an opportunity to participate in training on literacy instruction. Requires a report to the Legislature and Board of Education before the 2031-2032 school year. Appropriates funds.

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

