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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 screening 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 screenings 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 department of education schools to  
4 administer department approved dyslexia sensitive  
5 linguistically appropriate universal screening as a  
6 part of the universal screening process;

7 (2) Implementing 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 support;

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

14 (4) Supporting pre-service teacher programs in training  
15 their general and special education teacher candidates  
16 in 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 linguistically appropriate  
21 universal screening; evidence-based interventions; professional



1 development; pre-service requirements. (a) Beginning with the  
2 2028-2029 school year, all department schools shall administer  
3 dyslexia sensitive linguistically appropriate universal  
4 screening approved by the department for:

- 5 (1) All students in kindergarten through third grade; and
- 6 (2) Any new student entering a department school for the  
7 first time in the State.

8 (b) The dyslexia sensitive linguistically appropriate  
9 universal screening shall be administered as part of the  
10 established universal screening process and shall also include,  
11 as developmentally appropriate, the following:

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



1        (c) All department schools shall implement evidence-based  
2 interventions for students identified as having dyslexia and  
3 students who are flagged as struggling readers through the  
4 universal screening process. Interventions and progress  
5 monitoring of the identified students shall be implemented  
6 within the established Hawaii multi-tiered system of support  
7 framework.

8        (d) The department shall provide professional learning  
9 opportunities for staff in complex areas and department schools  
10 on the implementation of structured literacy instruction and  
11 evidence-based interventions.

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

20        (f) The department shall collaborate with pre-service  
21 teacher programs in higher education institutions to ensure



1 general education teacher candidates and special education  
2 teacher candidates are trained on the implementation of  
3 structured literacy instruction to support all learners.

4 (g) This section shall not apply to Hawaiian language  
5 immersion schools and charter schools.

6 (h) For the purposes of this section:

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

17 "Dyslexia sensitive linguistically appropriate universal  
18 screening" means an assessment that measures a student's ability  
19 to demonstrate phonological and phonemic awareness; sound-symbol  
20 recognition; alphabet knowledge; decoding skills; rapid naming  
21 skills, including letter naming and letter sound fluency;



1 encoding skills; oral reading accuracy and fluency; and accuracy  
2 of word reading on grade-level text.

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

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

12 "Structured literacy instruction" means an evidence-based  
13 approach that emphasizes explicit and systematic instruction in  
14 the following components of literacy:

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



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

4        SECTION 3. New statutory material is underscored.

5        SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.



**Report Title:**

DOE; Dyslexia Screening; Universal Screening; Evidence-Based Interventions; Teacher Professional Development

**Description:**

Requires the Department of Education to implement dyslexia sensitive linguistically appropriate 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 literacy instruction. (CD1)

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

