
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 linguistically
5 appropriate universal screening as a part of the
6 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 supports;
- 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 public 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 public school for the first
7 time in the State.

8 The dyslexia sensitive linguistically appropriate universal
9 screening shall be administered as part of the established
10 universal screening process and shall also include, as
11 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 (b) All public 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 supports
7 framework.

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

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

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 supports" 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 4. There is appropriated out of the general
5 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
6 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 for
7 dyslexia sensitive linguistically appropriate universal
8 screeners.

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

11 SECTION 5. New statutory material is underscored.

12 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 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. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

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