

JAN 16 2025

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO LITERACY.

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 over the age
3 of sixteen in the Kingdom of Hawaii was literate. By 1878,
4 eighty per cent of the population was literate in Hawaiian,
5 English, or a European language, making Hawaii one of the most
6 literate nations in the world at the time. To preserve and
7 honor this rich educational legacy, the department of education
8 is committed to ensuring that all students are proficient in
9 reading by the time they graduate high school. Providing
10 teachers and students with the necessary support will place the
11 State one step closer to revitalizing the historically high
12 literacy rates across the State.

13 Presently, approximately just over half of Hawaii's
14 students are at a proficient reading level. While the
15 department of education offers special education services to
16 students with learning or developmental disabilities, some
17 families may be unaware that the student has difficulty with



1 reading proficiency because of a learning disability. To
2 improve student reading proficiency, it is necessary to address
3 the causes that contribute to the present levels of poor reading
4 proficiency rates. A proactive and systematic approach is
5 required to achieve high literacy rates for all students.

6 Further, the department of education is striving to address
7 poor reading proficiency rates by administering a general
8 English language arts universal screening at the beginning,
9 middle, and end of the school year for all students in grades
10 kindergarten through nine. The purpose of this screening is to
11 identify students who might be at-risk for reading failure and
12 to provide evidence-based intervention to support these students
13 in core structured literacy instruction. However, general
14 English language arts universal screenings are not able to
15 detect or identify students who may have underlying language
16 challenges that impact learning such as dyslexia. As students
17 with dyslexia or other developmental language disorders may
18 require further intensive support or an individualized
19 intervention program to address the causes of their reading
20 challenges, additional screening may be necessary to ensure all
21 students can become proficient in reading.



1 The legislature further finds that Hawaii is the only state
2 in the United States that does not have laws specific to
3 dyslexia to support students who have difficulty with English
4 language arts. Evidence shows that students who are not
5 identified as having dyslexia and who do not achieve reading
6 proficiency by third grade face significantly lower chances of
7 success in the future. However, a substantial body of evidence
8 also indicates that, with effective assessment and instruction,
9 all students can learn to read, including students with dyslexia
10 or other language and literacy challenges.

11 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to support students
12 with dyslexia or other language and literacy challenges by:

13 (1) Requiring public schools to administer a department of
14 education-approved dyslexia screening as part of the
15 general English language arts universal screening
16 process;

17 (2) Implementing evidence-based intervention for students
18 who are identified as having dyslexia or students who
19 are flagged as having language and literacy challenges
20 through the Hawaii multi-tiered system of support
21 framework; and



1 (3) Providing professional development for teachers to
2 increase implementation of structured literacy
3 instruction by offering pre-service teacher programs
4 to train general and special education teacher
5 candidates in structured literacy instruction.

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

9 "§302A- Dyslexia screening; professional development;
10 pre-service requirements. (a) Beginning with the 2026-2027
11 school year, all public schools shall administer a qualified
12 dyslexia screening tool approved by the department for all
13 students in kindergarten through third grade. The qualified
14 dyslexia screening tool shall be administered in addition to,
15 and as part of, the established universal screening process.
16 The qualified dyslexia screening tool shall include, as
17 developmentally appropriate, the following:

- 18 (1) Phonological and phonemic awareness;
- 19 (2) Sound-symbol recognition;
- 20 (3) Alphabet knowledge;
- 21 (4) Decoding skills;



1 (5) Rapid naming skills, including letter naming and
2 letter sound fluency;

3 (6) Encoding skills;

4 (7) Oral reading accuracy and fluency; and

5 (8) Oral language.

6 (b) The department shall continue to administer general
7 English language arts universal screenings for students in
8 kindergarten through ninth grade as outlined in the Hawaii
9 multi-tiered system of support.

10 (c) The department shall provide evidence-based
11 intervention for any student identified as struggling readers
12 including students with dyslexia. Intervention and progress
13 monitoring of the student shall be implemented within the Hawaii
14 multi-tiered system of support framework.

15 (d) The department shall provide professional learning
16 opportunities for all complex areas and public schools on the
17 implementation of structured literacy instruction, which shall
18 include evidence-based intervention.

19 (e) The department shall collaborate with pre-service
20 teacher programs in the State to ensure general and special
21 education teacher candidates are trained on the implementation



1 of structured literacy instruction, which shall include
2 evidence-based intervention to support all students.

3 SECTION 3. Section 302A-101, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
4 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 "Hawaii multi-tiered system of support" 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 decision-
20 making.



1 "Phonological component of language and literacy
2 development" means the ability to recognize that a spoken word
3 consists of a sequence of individual sounds and whether the
4 student possesses the ability to manipulate individual sounds
5 when speaking.

6 "Structured literacy instruction" means an evidence-based
7 approach that emphasizes detailed, step-by-step systemic
8 instruction that is necessary for developing strong reading and
9 writing skills. "Structured literacy instruction" includes
10 approaches that provide multiple opportunities for a student to
11 practice a skill or strategy where the teacher provides
12 immediate, specific feedback to the student and continuously
13 monitors progress. "Structured literacy instruction" includes
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."

21 SECTION 4. New statutory material is underscored.



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

2

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S.B. NO. 421

Report Title:

DOE; Dyslexia Screening; Reading Proficiency; Professional Development; Teacher Training

Description:

Requires the Department of Education to administer a general dyslexia screening to all students in kindergarten through grade three. Requires the Department of Education to continue to administer the general English language arts universal screening for students in kindergarten through grade nine. Requires the Department of Education to collaborate with teacher training programs to ensure prospective candidates are trained on literacy instruction, including evidence-based intervention, to support all students.

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

