
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 complex areas and public schools on the
5 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."



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

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

14 "Dyslexia-sensitive universal screening" means an
15 assessment that measures a student's ability to demonstrate
16 phonological and phonemic awareness; sound-symbol recognition;
17 alphabet knowledge; decoding skills; rapid naming skills,
18 including letter naming and letter sound fluency; encoding
19 skills; oral reading accuracy and fluency; and accuracy of word
20 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."



H.B. NO. 637

1 SECTION 4. New statutory material is underscored.

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

3

INTRODUCED BY:

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JAN 17 2025



H.B. NO. 637

Report Title:

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

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.

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

