

Senate Bill 48

By: Senators Martin of the 9th, Kirkpatrick of the 32nd, Brass of the 28th, Unterman of the 45th, Sims of the 12th and others

AS PASSED SENATE**A BILL TO BE ENTITLED****AN ACT**

To amend Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to elementary and secondary education, so as to provide for identification of and support for students in kindergarten through grade three with characteristics of dyslexia; to provide for definitions; to require the State Board of Education to develop policies for the identification and assistance of students with dyslexia; to require the Department of Education to make a dyslexia informational handbook available to local school systems; to provide for certain information in the dyslexia informational handbook; to provide for ongoing professional development opportunities relating to dyslexia for teachers; to provide for screening for all kindergarten students; to provide for referral for screening for students in grades one through three through response-to-intervention programs; to provide for data collection; to provide for a pilot program to demonstrate and evaluate the effectiveness of early reading assistance programs for students with risk factors for dyslexia; to provide for a report; to provide for a teaching endorsement in dyslexia; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

SECTION 1.

Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to elementary and secondary education, is amended in Part 3 of Article 6, relating to educational programs, by adding a new Code section to read as follows:

"20-2-159.6.

(a) As used in this Code section, the term:

(1) 'Aphasia' means a condition characterized by either partial or total loss of the ability to communicate verbally or through written words. A person with aphasia may have difficulty speaking, reading, writing, recognizing the names of objects, or understanding what other people have said. The condition may be temporary or permanent and shall not include speech problems caused by loss of muscle control.

(2) 'Dyscalculia' means the inability to understand the meaning of numbers, the basic operations of addition and subtraction, or the complex operations of multiplication and division or to apply math principles to solve practical or abstract problems.

(3) 'Dysgraphia' means difficulty in automatically remembering and mastering the sequence of muscle motor movements needed to accurately write letters or numbers.

(4) 'Dyslexia' means a specific learning disability that is neurological in origin. Dyslexia is characterized by difficulties with accurate or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede the growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.

(5) 'Other disorders' means aphasia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia.

(6) 'Parent' means a parent, legal agent, legal guardian, or kinship caregiver.

(7) 'Phonemic awareness' means the ability to recognize that a spoken word consists of a sequence of individual sounds and the ability to manipulate individual sounds when speaking.

(8) 'Qualified dyslexia screening tool' means an assessment that measures a student's ability to demonstrate phonological awareness skills, phonemic decoding efficiency skills, sight word reading efficiency skills, rapid automatic naming skills, and accuracy of word reading on grade-level text.

(b) No later than July 1, 2020, the State Board of Education shall develop policies for screening all kindergarten students and for referring students in grades one through three for screening who have been identified through the response-to-intervention process as having characteristics of dyslexia and other disorders. Such policies shall include but are not limited to:

(1) The definition and characteristics of dyslexia and other disorders;

(2) A list of approved qualified dyslexia screening tools that address the following components:

(A) Phonological awareness and phonemic awareness;

(B) Sound symbol recognition;

(C) Alphabet knowledge;

(D) Decoding skills;

(E) Encoding skills; and

(F) Rapid naming;

(3) The process for screening all kindergarten students for dyslexia and for referring students in grades one through three for screening in collaboration with the local school system's response-to-intervention programs;

(4) A process by which a qualified dyslexia screening tool shall be administered and evaluated by trained school system personnel or licensed professionals in administering the qualified dyslexia screening tool;

(5) A process for parents to provide informed consent for use of a qualified dyslexia screening tool and notification of the results of the screening;

(6) A process for parents to decline dyslexia screening for their child;

(7) A process for providing the parents of students identified as having characteristics of dyslexia with information and resource material regarding dyslexia and how the student's learning disability will be addressed by the school;

(8) Identification of evidence based interventions, structured multisensory approaches to teach language and reading skills, and accommodations that schools may utilize to provide services to students with characteristics of dyslexia; and

(9) A process for monitoring the student's progress after the positive identification of characteristics of dyslexia, including assessments to ascertain whether the intervention services improve the student's language processing and reading skills.

(c) No later than December 1, 2019, the Department of Education shall make available a dyslexia informational handbook that includes guidance, technical assistance, and training to assist all local school systems in the implementation of evidence based practices for instructing students with characteristics of dyslexia. Such handbook shall include, but not be limited to, the following information for local school systems screening all students in kindergarten and providing further screening for students in grades one through three who have been identified through the response-to-intervention process as having characteristics of dyslexia:

(1) Evidence based practices designed specifically for students with characteristics of dyslexia;

(2) Characteristics of targeted instruction for dyslexia;

(3) Guidance on developing instructional plans for students with characteristics of dyslexia;

(4) Best practices toward meaning-centered reading and writing;

(5) Developmentally appropriate curricula and engaging instructional materials and practices;

(6) Structured multisensory approaches to teach language and reading skills; and

(7) Suggested training programs.

(d) The Department of Education shall collaborate with the Professional Standards Commission to improve and update professional development opportunities for teachers specifically relating to dyslexia. The training shall focus on:

(1) Development and ongoing implementation of training and coaching for teachers regarding dyslexia and other disorders;

(2) Identifying high-quality trainers to provide support to local school systems utilizing a coaching model to develop school level dyslexia experts;

(3) Developing awareness training modules for all instructional staff to include information about dyslexia;

(4) Evidence based interventions, structured multisensory approaches to teach language and reading skills, and accommodations for students with characteristics of dyslexia and other disorders; and

(5) School and school system policies and procedures related to the response-to-intervention framework addressing reading, writing, mathematics, and behavior. Teachers shall be notified annually of any changes in policy, procedures, and specific instructional methodologies.

(e)(1) Beginning with the 2020-2021 school year, local school systems shall screen all kindergarten students for characteristics of dyslexia and may screen kindergarten students for other disorders. Further, local school systems shall screen any student in grades one through three who did not attend kindergarten, or who attended a kindergarten program in which screening was not required, for characteristics of dyslexia. Further, local school systems shall screen students in grades one through three for characteristics of dyslexia, and may screen such students for other disorders, who have been identified through the response-to-intervention process. Screening shall be conducted in accordance with the policies developed by the State Board of Education pursuant to subsection (b) of this Code section and the dyslexia informational handbook produced by the Department of Education pursuant to subsection (c) of this Code section.

(2) By June 30 of each year, local school systems shall provide the following data to the Department of Education:

(A) The number of students in kindergarten through grade three who were identified as having characteristics of dyslexia through screening;

(B) The number of students in kindergarten through grade three who were screened for characteristics of dyslexia in a school year;

(C) The number of students in kindergarten through grade three who were newly identified as having characteristics of dyslexia in a school year;

(D) The process or tool used to evaluate student progress;

(E) The number of students in kindergarten through grade three who were participating in interventions within the school setting and the number participating in interventions outside the school setting; and

(F) The number of trained school system personnel or licensed professionals used to administer the qualified dyslexia screening tool.

(3) This subsection shall be subject to appropriations by the General Assembly.

(f)(1) Beginning with the 2019-2020 school year, the State School Superintendent shall establish a two-year pilot program to demonstrate and evaluate the effectiveness of early reading assistance programs for students with risk factors for dyslexia. The State School Superintendent shall select at least three local school systems, preferably at least one of which is located in an urban setting, one of which is located in a suburban setting, and one of which is located in a rural setting. The State School Superintendent shall consult with recognized organizations that specialize in structured literacy programs for the instruction of students with characteristics of dyslexia in establishing and operating the pilot program.

(2) To be considered by the State School Superintendent to be in the pilot program, a local school system shall submit a proposal to the Department of Education that:

(A) Identifies a method of screening students for low phonemic awareness, rapid automatic naming skills, and characteristics of dyslexia;

(B) Provides for the enrollment of students with characteristics of dyslexia in an International Dyslexia Association (IDA) approved reading program staffed by teachers trained in structured literacy programs as outlined in IDA's Knowledge and Practice Standards; and

(C) Includes a methodology for evaluating the effects of the reading program on the student's identified characteristics.

(3) Local school systems selected to participate in the pilot program shall screen all kindergarten students for characteristics of dyslexia and may screen kindergarten students for other disorders. Further, such participating local school systems shall screen students in grades one through three for characteristics of dyslexia, and may screen such students for other disorders, who have been identified through the response-to-intervention process. Participating local school systems shall also provide appropriate reading intervention services for such students and administer assessments to ascertain whether the intervention services improve such students' language processing and reading skills.

(4) Each local school system chosen to participate in the pilot program shall comply with all applicable state and federal laws and require the parent of students suspected of having characteristics of dyslexia to indicate in writing that the parent voluntarily and knowingly consents to the student's participation in the pilot program for the provision of reading

intervention services. Each participating local school system shall provide to the parents of students suspected of having characteristics of dyslexia information about dyslexia and recommended interventions.

(5) Each participating local school system shall report to the Department of Education data about the operation and results of the pilot program, as required by the department's guidelines and procedures.

(6) Not later than December 1 of the second school year in which the pilot program is operating, the State School Superintendent shall submit a report to the House Education Committee and the Senate Committee on Education and Youth that contains the superintendent's evaluation of the results of the pilot program and any legislative recommendations regarding the identification of and interventions for students with characteristics of dyslexia.

(7) This subsection shall be subject to appropriations by the General Assembly."

SECTION 2.

Said chapter is further amended in Subpart 1 of Part 6 of Article 6, relating to certificated professional personnel in elementary and secondary education, by adding a new Code section to read as follows:

"20-2-208.

(a) No later than December 30, 2019, the Professional Standards Commission shall create a dyslexia endorsement for teachers trained in appropriately recognizing and responding to students with characteristics of dyslexia and language disorders, such as difficulty with expressive or receptive language.

(b) The requirements to receive such dyslexia endorsement may include training on the use of universal screening measures to identify those at risk for dyslexia, providing guidance to parents, and providing training or guidance to other teachers and school personnel.

(c) The Professional Standards Commission shall establish measures to assess the fidelity of teacher training and implementation for teachers who receive the dyslexia endorsement."

SECTION 3.

Said chapter is further amended in Subpart 1 of Part 6 of Article 6, relating to certificated professional personnel in elementary and secondary education, by adding a new Code section to read as follows:

"20-2-208.1.

The Professional Standards Commission shall include in its standards for teacher preparation programs for elementary and secondary education instruction on:

(1) The definition and characteristics of dyslexia and other disorders;

- 206 (2) Evidence based interventions and accommodations for students with characteristics
207 of dyslexia and other disorders; and
208 (3) Core elements of a response-to-intervention framework addressing reading, writing,
209 mathematics, and behavior, including:
210 (A) Universal screening;
211 (B) Scientific, research based interventions;
212 (C) Progress monitoring of the effectiveness of interventions on student performance;
213 (D) Data based decision-making procedures related to:
214 (i) Determining intervention effectiveness on student performance; and
215 (ii) Determining the need to continue, alter, or discontinue interventions or conduct
216 further evaluation of student needs; and
217 (E) Application and implementation of response-to-intervention and dyslexia
218 instructional practices in the classroom setting."

219 **SECTION 4.**

220 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.