

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

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to education, so as to
2 provide for identification of and support for students in pre-kindergarten through second
3 grade with dyslexia; to provide for definitions; to require the Department of Education to
4 make a dyslexia informational handbook available to local school systems; to provide for
5 certain information in the dyslexia informational handbook; to provide for ongoing
6 professional development opportunities relating to dyslexia for teachers; to require local
7 boards of education to develop policies for the identification and assistance of students with
8 dyslexia; to provide for data collection; to provide for postsecondary teacher preparation
9 programs to include instruction relating to students with dyslexia; to provide for the selection
10 of local school systems to serve as dynamic laboratories of learning to demonstrate and
11 evaluate the effectiveness of early reading assistance programs for students with risk factors
12 for dyslexia; to provide for a report; to provide for a teaching endorsement in dyslexia; to
13 provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

14 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

15 style="text-align:center">**SECTION 1.**

16 Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to education, is amended in
17 Article 1 of Chapter 1A, relating to general provisions relative to early care and learning, by
18 adding a new Code section to read as follows:

19 "20-1A-19.

20 (a) All pre-kindergarten students shall be screened for dyslexia, including by testing
21 expressive and receptive language using a screening measure approved by the Department
22 of Education.

23 (b) The parents or guardians of each pre-kindergarten student shall be provided the results
24 of such screening.

25 (c) This Code section shall be contingent upon specific appropriations by the General
26 Assembly for such purposes or other available state funding for such purposes."

SECTION 2.

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Said title is further amended in Part 3 of Article 6 of Chapter 2, 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) '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.

(7) '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 September 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 identified with or displaying characteristics of dyslexia.

(c) The dyslexia informational handbook shall include, but not be limited to, the following information for local school systems targeting students in kindergarten through grade three

63 who have been identified through the response-to-intervention process with or as
64 displaying characteristics of dyslexia:

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

66 (2) Characteristics of targeted instruction for dyslexia;

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

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

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

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

72 (7) Suggested training programs.

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

76 (1) Development and ongoing implementation of training and coaching for teachers,
77 including the definition and characteristics of dyslexia and other disorders;

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

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

82 (4) Evidence based interventions, structured multisensory approaches to teach language
83 and reading skills, and accommodations for dyslexia and other specific learning
84 disabilities, not limited to other disorders; and

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

89 (e) No later than January 1, 2020, each local board of education shall develop policies for
90 addressing the identification of and strategies for assisting students in kindergarten through
91 grade three with dyslexia and other learning disabilities, including but not limited to other
92 disorders.

93 (f) Each local board of education shall maintain policies that include but are not limited
94 to:

95 (1) The definition and characteristics of dyslexia and other learning disabilities,
96 including but not limited to other disorders;

97 (2) The process for screening students identified as displaying characteristics of dyslexia
98 or referred for further screening in collaboration with the local school system's
99 response-to-intervention programs;

- 100 (3) A process for the utilization of qualified dyslexia screening tools or diagnostics to
101 accurately identify students who are displaying characteristics of dyslexia. Any qualified
102 dyslexia screening tool utilized by a local school system shall address the following
103 components:
- 104 (A) Phonological awareness and phonemic awareness;
 - 105 (B) Sound symbol recognition;
 - 106 (C) Alphabet knowledge;
 - 107 (D) Decoding skills;
 - 108 (E) Encoding skills; and
 - 109 (F) Rapid naming;
- 110 (4) A process by which a qualified dyslexia screening tool shall be administered and
111 evaluated by trained school system personnel or licensed professionals in administering
112 the qualified dyslexia screening tool;
- 113 (5) A process for parents or guardians to provide informed consent for use of a qualified
114 dyslexia screening tool and notification of the results of the screening. If the student is
115 identified as having dyslexia, the school shall provide the parents or guardians with
116 information and resource material regarding dyslexia and how the student's learning
117 disability will be addressed by the school;
- 118 (6) Identification of evidence based interventions, structured multisensory approaches
119 to teach language and reading skills, and accommodations that schools may utilize to
120 provide services to students identified as having dyslexia; and
- 121 (7) A process for monitoring the student's progress after the positive identification,
122 including assessments to ascertain whether the intervention services improve the student's
123 language processing and reading skills.
- 124 (g) By June 30 of each year, local school systems shall provide the Department of
125 Education the following data:
- 126 (1) The number of students in kindergarten through grade three who were identified
127 through response-to-intervention programs as displaying characteristics of dyslexia;
 - 128 (2) The number of students in kindergarten through grade three who were screened for
129 dyslexia in a school year;
 - 130 (3) The number of students in kindergarten through grade three who were newly
131 identified as having dyslexia in a school year;
 - 132 (4) The qualified dyslexia screening tool used to identify students;
 - 133 (5) The process or tool used to evaluate student progress;
 - 134 (6) The number of students in kindergarten through grade three who were participating
135 in interventions within the school setting and the number participating in interventions
136 outside the school setting; and

- 137 (7) The number of trained school system personnel or licensed professionals used to
 138 administer the qualified dyslexia screening tool.
- 139 (h) By the 2020-2021 school year, postsecondary institutions in this state offering teacher
 140 preparation programs for elementary and secondary education shall include instruction on:
- 141 (1) The definition and characteristics of dyslexia and other disorders;
 142 (2) Evidence based interventions and accommodations for dyslexia and other disorders
 143 and related learning challenges; and
- 144 (3) Core elements of a response-to-intervention framework addressing reading, writing,
 145 mathematics, and behavior, including:
- 146 (A) Universal screening;
 147 (B) Scientific, research based interventions;
 148 (C) Progress monitoring of the effectiveness of interventions on student performance;
 149 (D) Data based decision-making procedures related to:
- 150 (i) Determining intervention effectiveness on student performance; and
 151 (ii) Determining the need to continue, alter, or discontinue interventions or conduct
 152 further evaluation of student needs; and
- 153 (E) Application and implementation of response-to-intervention and dyslexia
 154 instructional practices in the classroom setting.
- 155 (i)(1) By July 1, 2019, the State School Superintendent shall select three local school
 156 systems to serve as dynamic laboratories of learning, one of which shall be located in an
 157 urban setting, one of which shall be located in a suburban setting, and one of which shall
 158 be located in a rural setting. The State School Superintendent may consult with
 159 recognized organizations that specialize in structured literacy programs for the instruction
 160 of students with characteristics of dyslexia in establishing and operating the dynamic
 161 laboratories of learning program.
- 162 (2) The local school systems chosen to serve as dynamic laboratories of learning shall
 163 demonstrate and evaluate the effectiveness of early reading assistance programs for
 164 students with risk factors for dyslexia. Dynamic laboratories of learning programs shall
 165 serve as a resource for ongoing and updated methodology for serving students with
 166 characteristics of dyslexia.
- 167 (3) The Department of Education shall establish guidelines and procedures for the
 168 dynamic laboratories of learning.
- 169 (4) To be considered by the State School Superintendent to serve as a dynamic
 170 laboratory of learning, a local school system shall submit a proposal to the Department
 171 of Education that:
- 172 (A) Identifies a method of screening students for low phonemic awareness and
 173 characteristics of dyslexia;

174 (B) Provides for the enrollment of students identified as having risk factors for dyslexia
 175 in a reading program staffed by teachers trained in structured literacy programs; and
 176 (C) Includes a methodology for evaluating the effects of the reading program on the
 177 student's identified characteristics.

178 (5) As a dynamic laboratory of learning, each participating local school system, through
 179 early childhood reading instruction and reading assistance programs, shall screen students
 180 in kindergarten through grade three who are displaying characteristics of dyslexia,
 181 provide appropriate reading intervention services for such students, and administer
 182 assessments to ascertain whether the intervention services improve those students'
 183 language processing and reading skills.

184 (6) Each local school system chosen to serve as a dynamic laboratory of learning shall
 185 comply with all applicable state and federal laws and require the parent or guardian of
 186 students suspected of having dyslexia to indicate in writing that the parent or guardian
 187 voluntarily and knowingly consents to the student's participation in the dynamic
 188 laboratory of learning program for the provision of reading intervention services. Each
 189 participating local school system shall provide to the parents or guardians of students
 190 suspected of having dyslexia information about the learning disability and recommended
 191 interventions.

192 (7) Each participating local school system shall report to the Department of Education
 193 data about the operation and results of the dynamic laboratory of learning program, as
 194 required by the department's guidelines and procedures.

195 (8) Not later than December 1 of the third school year in which the dynamic laboratory
 196 of learning is operating and every year thereafter, the State School Superintendent shall
 197 submit a report to the House Education Committee and the Senate Committee on
 198 Education and Youth that contains the superintendent's evaluation of the results of the
 199 dynamic laboratories of learning and any legislative recommendations regarding the
 200 identification of and interventions for students with characteristics of dyslexia."

201 **SECTION 3.**

202 Said title is further amended in Subpart 1 of Part 6 of Article 6 of Chapter 2, relating to
 203 certificated professional personnel in elementary and secondary education, by adding a new
 204 Code section to read as follows:

205 "20-2-208.

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

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

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

216 **SECTION 4.**

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