

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

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

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

15 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

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

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

20 "20-2-159.6.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

52 (1) The definition and characteristics of dyslexia and related disorders;

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

55 (A) Phonological awareness and phonemic awareness;

56 (B) Sound symbol recognition;

57 (C) Alphabet knowledge;

58 (D) Decoding skills;

59 (E) Encoding skills; and

60 (F) Rapid naming;

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

- 64 (4) A process for parents to provide informed consent for use of a qualified dyslexia
 65 screening tool and notification of the results of the screening;
- 66 (5) A process for parents to decline dyslexia screening for their child;
- 67 (6) A process for providing the parents of students identified as having characteristics
 68 of dyslexia with information and resource material regarding dyslexia; and
- 69 (7) A process for monitoring the student's progress after the positive identification of
 70 characteristics of dyslexia.
- 71 (c) No later than December 1, 2019, the Department of Education shall make available a
 72 dyslexia informational handbook that includes guidance, technical assistance, and training
 73 to assist all local school systems in the implementation of evidence based practices for
 74 instructing students with characteristics of dyslexia. Such handbook shall include, but not
 75 be limited to, the following information for local school systems screening students in
 76 kindergarten and grades one through three who have been identified through the
 77 response-to-intervention process as having characteristics of dyslexia:
- 78 (1) Evidence based practices designed specifically for students with characteristics of
 79 dyslexia;
- 80 (2) Characteristics of targeted instruction for dyslexia;
- 81 (3) Guidance on developing instructional plans for students with characteristics of
 82 dyslexia;
- 83 (4) Best practices toward meaning-centered reading and writing;
- 84 (5) Developmentally appropriate curricula and engaging instructional materials and
 85 practices;
- 86 (6) Structured multisensory approaches to teach language and reading skills; and
- 87 (7) Suggested training programs.
- 88 (d) The Department of Education shall collaborate with the Professional Standards
 89 Commission to improve and update professional development opportunities for teachers
 90 specifically relating to dyslexia. The training shall focus on:
- 91 (1) Development and ongoing implementation of training and coaching for teachers
 92 regarding dyslexia and other disorders;
- 93 (2) Identifying high-quality trainers to provide support to local school systems utilizing
 94 a coaching model to develop school level dyslexia experts;
- 95 (3) Developing awareness training modules for all instructional staff to include
 96 information about dyslexia;
- 97 (4) Evidence based interventions, structured multisensory approaches to teach language
 98 and reading skills, and accommodations for students with characteristics of dyslexia and
 99 other disorders; and

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

104 (e)(1) Beginning with the 2020-2021 school year, the State School Superintendent shall
105 establish a three-year pilot program to demonstrate and evaluate the effectiveness of early
106 reading assistance programs for students with risk factors for dyslexia. The State School
107 Superintendent shall select at least three local school systems, preferably at least one of
108 which is located in an urban setting, one of which is located in a suburban setting, and
109 one of which is located in a rural setting. The State School Superintendent shall consult
110 with recognized organizations that specialize in structured literacy programs for the
111 instruction of students with characteristics of dyslexia in establishing and operating the
112 pilot program.

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

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

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

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

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

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

136 of students suspected of having characteristics of dyslexia information about dyslexia and
 137 recommended interventions.

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

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

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

149 (f)(1) Beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, local school systems shall screen all
 150 kindergarten students for characteristics of dyslexia and may screen kindergarten students
 151 for other disorders. Further, local school systems shall screen students in grades one
 152 through three for characteristics of dyslexia, and may screen such students for other
 153 disorders, who have been identified through the response-to-intervention process.
 154 Screening shall be conducted in accordance with the policies developed by the State
 155 Board of Education pursuant to subsection (b) of this Code section and the dyslexia
 156 informational handbook produced by the Department of Education pursuant to
 157 subsection (c) of this Code section, including policies and information developed relating
 158 to universal screening of kindergarten students for characteristics of dyslexia.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

174 **SECTION 2.**

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

178 "20-2-208.

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

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

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

188 **SECTION 3.**

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

192 "20-2-208.1.

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

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

196 (2) Evidence based interventions and accommodations for students with characteristics
197 of dyslexia and other disorders; and

198 (3) Core elements of a response-to-intervention framework addressing reading, writing,
199 mathematics, and behavior, including:

200 (A) Universal screening;

201 (B) Scientific, research based interventions;

202 (C) Progress monitoring of the effectiveness of interventions on student performance;

203 (D) Data based decision-making procedures related to:

204 (i) Determining intervention effectiveness on student performance; and

205 (ii) Determining the need to continue, alter, or discontinue interventions or conduct
206 further evaluation of student needs; and

207 (E) Application and implementation of response-to-intervention and dyslexia
208 instructional practices in the classroom setting."

209 **SECTION 4.**

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