



PA 21-168—sHB 6517

*Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
Appropriations Committee*

AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASK FORCE TO ANALYZE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LAWS GOVERNING DYSLEXIA INSTRUCTION AND TRAINING

SUMMARY: This act makes the following changes in state laws governing educator preparation programs, teacher certification, and elementary student reading proficiency assessments:

1. establishes an Office of Dyslexia and Reading Disabilities (hereafter “the office”) in the State Department of Education (SDE) to verify whether educator preparation programs and teacher certification applicants have complied with requirements in state law relating to dyslexia instruction and training (§§ 1-2 & 4);
2. bars the State Board of Education (SBE) from approving any teacher preparation programs, beginning September 1, 2022, until the office verifies that the program complies with state law relating to dyslexia instruction and training (§ 3);
3. requires SDE to issue a teaching certificate to any level of applicant (initial, provisional, or professional), beginning September 1, 2023, if the office verifies that he or she has fulfilled certain literacy training and education requirements (§ 4);
4. allows applicants for certain teaching certification endorsements to substitute student teaching experience for supervised practicum hours (§ 5);
5. requires the office to provide guidance to higher education institutions and other teacher preparation program providers about how to verify practicum hour supervisor qualifications (§ 6);
6. requires SDE to revise previously developed reading assessments for grades kindergarten through three (“K-3”) to include new methodologies for measuring reading proficiency (§ 7);
7. allows SDE to partner with a public college or university to establish a data center to guide the department and boards of education in the use and effectiveness of reading assessments (§ 7);
8. requires each local or regional board of education to develop a voluntary family history questionnaire to help identify students who are at risk for reading proficiency challenges (§ 8); and
9. requires SDE to report to legislative committees about the (a) progress of the office’s establishment and staffing, (b) results of the verification of teacher preparation programs’ and teacher certificate applicants’ compliance with state law, and (c) guidance given to boards of education

OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

about reading assessment administration (§§ 9 & 10).

The act also makes various minor, technical, and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2021

§§ 1-4 — OFFICE OF DYSLEXIA AND READING DISABILITIES

The act establishes the office in SDE. It must be managed by a chief who is qualified to perform the office's duties by training and experience, including expertise in higher education, dyslexia, and structured literacy. It tasks the office with performing the following duties:

1. verifying whether teacher preparation programs and teacher certification applicants (a) fulfill existing law's requirements about dyslexia instruction and training and (b) meet compliance standards relating to dyslexia instruction and training established by the act and
2. relating to these compliance standards, (a) reviewing and recommending changes, as necessary, to SBE's approval process for teacher preparation programs and (b) providing guidance to and consulting with SDE's Talent Office.

Under the act, the office's chief must appoint full-time staff necessary for operations. The staff must include support staff and people with expertise in education preparation program (1) accreditation analysis and approval and (2) curriculum analysis related to structured literacy and dyslexia.

Development of Compliance Measures and Audit Procedures (§ 1)

The act requires the office to develop compliance measures and audit procedures by July 1, 2022, for determining whether educator preparation programs fulfill requirements in state law about (1) instruction in literacy skills and processes (see BACKGROUND) and (2) whether these programs include supervised practicum hours or student teaching experience and instruction in the detection and recognition of, and evidence-based structured literacy interventions for, students with dyslexia in any programs of study in the diagnosis and remediation of reading and language arts. The office must consider the recommendations in Appendices D and E of the Task Force to Analyze the Implementation of Laws Governing Dyslexia Instruction and Training's final report ("task force final report," see BACKGROUND). The office must submit these compliance measures and audit procedures to the Education and Higher Education and Employment Advancement committees by that same date.

Additionally, the act requires the office to develop the following items by July 1, 2022, and update them as necessary:

1. structured literacy competency targets to identify structured literacy competencies an educator should achieve based on certification level and endorsement type, with consideration of the recommendations in Appendix F of the task force final report (see BACKGROUND);
2. a list of sample course assignments and evaluations for higher education institutions and other SDE-approved educator preparation programs to

OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

- review and consider that align with the structured literacy competency targets and compliance measures the office developed; and
3. model dyslexia in-service training programs for local and regional boards of education to use that also align with the structured literacy competency targets.

Teacher Preparation Program Compliance Measures and Verification (§ 2)

Under the act, beginning on September 1, 2022, the office must use the compliance measures and audit procedures it develops to verify whether any educator preparation program that submits an initial or continued approval application to SBE is complying with existing law on:

1. instruction in dyslexia detection and recognition and evidence-based structured literacy interventions and
2. inclusion of supervised practicum hours or student teaching experience and instruction in dyslexia detection and recognition and evidence-based structured literacy interventions for students with dyslexia in programs of study for remedial reading, remedial language arts, and reading consultants or special education.

Additionally, the act allows the office to complete the compliance verification by reviewing the information gathered by a national accrediting agency that accredits educator preparation programs for SDE, so long as the agency uses the compliance measures and audit procedures developed by the office under the act.

Under the act, the office must report annually to the Education and Higher Education and Employment Advancement committees about the compliance verification results for each educator preparation program, with a first reporting deadline of January 1, 2023.

Additionally, by that same date, the act requires the office to do the following, annually:

1. review and request updates as necessary about webinar modules and trainings developed or endorsed by SDE to align the modules with the office's compliance measures and
2. submit status reports on the compliance of these modules and trainings to the Education and Higher Education and Employment Advancement committees.

Approval of New Educator Preparation Programs (§ 3)

Beginning September 1, 2022, the act prohibits SBE from approving any educator preparation programs until the office completes the compliance verification described above (§ 2), using the compliance measures and audit procedures it develops as required by the act.

Teacher Certification Applicant Compliance Measures and Verification (§ 4)

Beginning September 1, 2023, the act requires SBE to issue any appropriate

OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

level of teaching certificate (initial, provisional, or professional) to an applicant who meets specified requirements in state teacher certification law as verified by the office in consultation with SDE's Talent Office and Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification. The act establishes two verification requirements specific to the type of teaching certificate that the applicant seeks.

First, if the applicant is seeking an initial certificate and has graduated from a Connecticut educator preparation program, the act requires the office to certify that he or she has completed at least 12 clock hours of instruction in detection and recognition of, and evidence-based structured literacy interventions for, students with dyslexia.

Second, if the applicant is seeking an initial certificate with an endorsement in comprehensive special education or integrated early childhood and special education, the act requires the office to certify that he or she has complied with the requirements in state law about completing a program of study in the diagnosis of remediation of reading and language arts that includes supervised practicum hours or student teaching experience and instruction in the detection and recognition of, and evidence-based structured literacy interventions for, students with dyslexia.

§ 5 — APPLICANT REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTAIN TEACHING CERTIFICATE ENDORSEMENTS

Beginning on July 1, 2021, the act allows the following applicants to complete a student teaching experience as an alternative to completing supervised practicum hours:

1. any certified employees applying for a comprehensive special education or integrated early childhood and special education endorsement or
2. applicants for an initial, provisional, or professional teaching certificate and a comprehensive special education or integrated early childhood and special education endorsement.

§ 6 — SUPERVISORS OF PRACTICUM HOURS

Beginning January 1, 2022, the act requires the office to provide guidance to higher education institutions and other educator preparation program providers about how to verify whether practicum hour supervisors have obtained at least four of the following qualifications:

1. a satisfactory score on the SBE-approved reading instruction exam or a comparable reading instruction exam;
2. a valid initial, provisional, or professional SBE-issued teaching certificate;
3. a master's degree in remedial reading or a closely related field;
4. specific and documented knowledge of structured literacy principles and practices;
5. training for practicum supervision, coaching, and evaluation of a reading interventionist; or
6. at least three years' work experience providing structured literacy

OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

interventions for students with remedial reading needs, including students with dyslexia.

Under the act, higher education institutions and other educator preparation program providers must give preference to practicum supervisor candidates who meet the above six qualifications and also have (1) experience in the design, implementation, or monitoring of structured literacy interventions or (2) previous practicum supervisor experience.

§ 7 — K-3 READING ASSESSMENTS

Under the act, SDE must revisit the reading assessments for grades K-3 that state law previously required it to develop and approve by January 1, 2016. The department must now reconsider these assessments by July 1, 2022, considering the recommendations made in Appendix G of the task force final report (see BACKGROUND). Local and regional boards of education must begin using these assessments in the 2023-24 school year to identify K-3 students who are below proficiency in reading.

Additionally, the act makes changes to the assessments' methodology for identifying these students' abilities. In addition to the requirements in existing law, it specifically requires that the assessments:

1. be evidence-based, as defined in federal law (see BACKGROUND), be brief, and have proven psychometrics for validity;
2. measure oral language, rapid automatic name or letter name fluency, and reading comprehension, in addition to the methods in existing law (i.e., phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, and vocabulary); and
3. be given at least three times each school year in fall, winter, and spring, rather than periodically at unspecified times during the school year as prior law required.

The act also requires SDE to provide guidance to local and regional boards of education by January 1, 2023, about administering the approved reading assessments. This guidance must address the following topics at a minimum:

1. appropriate grade levels for each reading assessment;
2. combining approved reading assessments when needed to ensure each ability is measured during each school year using one or more grade level-appropriate reading assessments;
3. advice on how each board's goals, student body characteristics, and resources should inform the choice of reading assessments used by each board;
4. advice on how aggregate data derived from reading assessments should guide each board's prevention and early intervention initiatives; and
5. the requirement that approved reading assessments be administered in both English and a student's native language, if available, for any student receiving literacy instruction in his or her native language.

Under the act, the SDE commissioner must submit the revised reading assessments and the newly developed or approved guidance for school boards to the Education Committee by February 1, 2023.

OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

Data Center

The act allows SDE to partner with a public college or university to establish a data center to guide SDE and boards of education in the use and effectiveness of reading assessments. The center may track, but is not limited to tracking, the following types of data:

1. which reading assessment each board of education uses and
2. student information, disaggregated by categories to keep it personally nonidentifiable (presumably, to protect students' identities), including by a student's demographic background, school district, and reading assessment dates and scores.

§ 8 — VOLUNTARY FAMILY HISTORY QUESTIONNAIRE

The act requires SDE to develop or approve a voluntary family history questionnaire by January 1, 2022. This questionnaire must be distributed annually, beginning with the 2022-23 school year, to help identify, in whole or in part, students who are at risk of reading proficiency challenges.

§§ 9 & 10 — SDE REPORTS TO LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES

The act requires SDE to make two types of reports to the Education and Higher Education committees in addition to the ones described above.

First, the department must submit status reports on the establishment and staffing of the Office of Dyslexia and Reading Disabilities. This report is initially due by January 1, 2022, followed by annual updates until the office is fully staffed.

Second, the department must submit a report by January 1, 2023, and annually thereafter outlining the (1) outcomes of the compliance verification it conducted as required by the act and (2) reading assessments it developed or approved and the related guidance it provided to boards of education about their administration.

BACKGROUND

Literacy Skills and Processes Instruction in Teacher Preparation Programs

Any teacher preparation program that leads to professional teacher certification must include instruction in literacy skills and processes that reflects current research and best practices in the literacy training field. The instruction must (1) be incorporated into the requirements of the student's major and concentration and (2) include at least 12 clock hours of instruction in dyslexia detection and recognition of, and evidence-based structured literacy interventions for, students with dyslexia (CGS § 10-145a(e)).

Final Task Force Report, Appendices D, E, F & G

OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

The Task Force to Analyze the Implementation of Laws Governing Dyslexia Instruction and Training, established by the legislature in Special Act 19-8, issued a final report of findings and recommendations on December 31, 2020.

Appendix D of this report contains task force-approved teacher preparation program candidate outcomes and compliance targets. Appendix E contains an audit protocol framework. Appendix F contains structured literacy educator competency standards for districts to use. Appendix G contains a “Menu of K-3 Screeners,” which lists approved reading tests for students in grades K-3; the skills that each test measures; and grades levels during which the tests should be administered.

Definition of “Evidence-Based”

Under federal law, “evidence-based” (in relation to a state, local education agency, or school activity) means an activity, strategy, or intervention that demonstrates a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes, based on either:

1. strong evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study; moderate evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study; or promising evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias; or
2. demonstration of a rationale based on high-quality research findings or positive evaluation that such activity, strategy, or intervention is likely to improve student outcomes or other relevant outcomes; and inclusion of ongoing efforts to examine the effects of such activity, strategy, or intervention (20 U.S.C. § 7801(21)).

Related Act

PA 21-2 (June Special Session) also changes the law regarding reading assessments for K-3 students. Under § 398, the Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success, which the act establishes, must compile a list of approved reading assessments for school districts to use beginning with the 2023-24 school year, giving consideration to Appendix G of the task force final report. It also allows SDE to establish a data center in partnership with a college or university to track the same types of data as those described in this act.