

SB 691 (Portantino) Universal Early Screening for Risk of Dyslexia

PROBLEM

Research from multiple scientific studies is unequivocal: early identification and intervention with evidence-based early literacy instructional strategies and materials improves literacy outcomes for students at risk of or with dyslexia and other struggling readers.

Dyslexia is the most common learning disability with at least 10% of the general population having dyslexia—some estimate it to be over 15%. Unfortunately, hundreds of thousands of California children on the dyslexia spectrum struggle every day with reading at grade-level, often without the proper identification and support. The repeated failure struggling readers often experience before receiving intervention can contribute to anxiety, depression and other mental health conditions.

Students with dyslexia are less likely to graduate high school and attend college, and also experience higher rates of incarceration. In some prisons today, where nearly 80% of the inmates are illiterate, almost one-half of the inmates are on the dyslexia spectrum.

Unfortunately, children without sufficient family resources and advocacy on their behalf are less likely to receive the appropriate instruction and support they need to reach their full potential.

BACKGROUND

Most school districts in California do not provide universal screening for students at risk of dyslexia, leaving teachers and staff without key resources necessary to help students. Even when screening is performed it is not always done consistently and with reliable and

valid screening instruments, so students at risk of dyslexia are frequently not identified.

The lack or delay in screening of struggling readers and students at risk of dyslexia results in unnecessary delays in receiving appropriate support and intervention. Due to these delays, the academic gap and learning loss in core content is often very difficult to overcome even after significant cost and interventions.

According to the National Center on Improving Literacy, forty states have passed legislation requiring screening for risk of dyslexia.

Screening should value the cultural and linguistic assets of California's diverse student population. By screening all students for risk of dyslexia early, California can help teachers and families achieve the best learning and life outcomes for all students, close academic achievement gaps, and help end the school-to-prison pipeline.

SUMMARY

SB 691 will help eliminate inequities of opportunity by requiring all local educational agencies serving students in grades kindergarten to grade 2 to annually screen every student for risk of dyslexia, unless parents or guardians choose not to have their child screened.

Further, the bill requires the State Board of Education (SBE) to establish an approved list of evidence-based culturally, linguistically and developmentally-appropriate screening instruments to be used by school districts to screen pupils for risk of dyslexia. The SBE approved instruments must include

developmentally and linguistically appropriate screening for phonological and phonemic awareness, sound-symbol (and symbol-sound) recognition, alphabet knowledge, decoding skills, and rapid automatized naming, all of which are consistently supported as necessary to develop foundational reading skills. The bill requires that when screening, factors such as English language acquisition status, home language, and language of instruction be considered.

SB 691 would require the results from the screening, California Dyslexia Guidelines, and information on Multi-Tiered Systems of Support be made available to the student's teacher and parent or guardian in a timely manner so they have awareness of the findings and knowledge of the strategies that can be used with pupils needing intervention. For students identified as being at risk of dyslexia, local educational agencies are required to provide evidence-based literacy instruction, progress monitoring, and early intervention in the regular general education classroom.

EXISTING LAW

Current California law does not require universal early screening of all children in kindergarten to grade 2 to identify children at risk of dyslexia to enable parents and teachers to be aware of the student's needs as early as possible and provide appropriate instruction and help in the regular education program.

SUPPORT

Co-sponsors:
Decoding Dyslexia CA
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