

1 S.204

2 Introduced by Senators Gulick, Baruth, Clarkson, Hardy, Harrison, Hashim,

3 Perchlik, Starr, Vyhovsky and Wrenner

4 Referred to Committee on

5 Date:

6 Subject: Education; literacy; reading instruction

7 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to require 1) the  
8 Agency of Education to approve universal reading screeners for use by public  
9 school districts and approved independent schools; 2) school districts and  
10 approved independent schools to screen students in kindergarten through grade  
11 three using the universal reading screeners; 3) school districts and approved  
12 independent schools to provide reading interventions for students who exhibit  
13 substantial deficiencies in reading; 4) school districts and approved  
14 independent schools to provide families with notification of identified reading  
15 deficiencies; and 5) school districts and approved independent schools to  
16 report certain reading performance data to the Agency.

17 An act relating to reading assessment and intervention

1 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

2 Sec. 1. 16 V.S.A. § 2907 is added to read:

3 § 2907. READING ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION

4 (a) As used in this section:

5 (1) “Dysgraphia” means the difficulties with putting thoughts on paper,  
6 including difficulties with spelling, grammar, punctuation, and handwriting.

7 (2) “Dyslexia” means deficits in reading and spelling words combined  
8 with inadequate response to evidence-based instruction and secondary  
9 consequences such as reading comprehension problems and reduced reading  
10 experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.

11 (b)(1) The Agency of Education shall identify and publish a list of  
12 approved universal reading screeners for local district use on or before June 1,  
13 2025. The screeners shall be made available by the Agency at no cost to  
14 school districts and approved independent schools.

15 (2) The universal screeners and screeners for dyslexia characteristics  
16 shall measure skills based on grade-level predictive measures, including:

17 (A) letter sound and naming fluency;

18 (B) phonemic awareness;

19 (C) decoding accuracy of real and nonwords;

20 (D) decoding fluency of real and nonwords;

21 (E) oral reading fluency;

1           (F) handwriting; and

2           (G) spelling inventory.

3           (3) The reading assessments shall:

4           (A) be brief;

5           (B) assist in identifying students at risk for or currently experiencing  
6 reading deficiency; and

7           (C) produce data that:

8                 (i) inform teachers' classroom instruction based on students'  
9 performance and gaps in reading; and

10                (ii) inform the groupings of students based on instructional needs  
11 for both in-class differentiated instruction and small-group and individual  
12 intervention.

13           (4) The dyslexia screener shall measure:

14           (A) rapid automatized naming (RAN); and

15           (B) a battery of phonological awareness tasks, including phoneme  
16 segmentation, blending, substitution, elision, and onset-time tasks and  
17 syllabication.

18           (c) All public schools and approved independent schools shall screen all  
19 students in kindergarten through grade three using a universal reading screener  
20 made available by the Agency. The universal screener shall be given in the  
21 first 30 days after the start of the school year and repeated at midyear and at

1 the end of the school year to determine student progression in reading.  
2 Screening for dyslexia characteristics shall be administered for students  
3 attending kindergarten or first grade in public schools and approved  
4 independent schools, and at appropriate times thereafter, specifically when  
5 students show deficits in reading and spelling words despite receiving  
6 evidence-based instruction.

7 (d) Each student who exhibits a substantial deficiency in reading at any  
8 time, as demonstrated through performance on an approved reading screener,  
9 through locally determined assessments and teacher observations conducted in  
10 kindergarten and grades one through three, or through statewide end-of-year  
11 assessments, shall be given intensive general education reading intervention  
12 immediately following the identification of the reading deficiency. The  
13 progress of such students will be monitored and evaluated more regularly to  
14 ensure interventions are working and the student is progressing at an  
15 accelerated rate. The intensive reading instruction and intervention shall be  
16 documented for each student in an individual reading plan, which includes, at a  
17 minimum, the following:

18 (1) the student's specific, diagnosed reading skill deficiencies as  
19 determined or identified by diagnostic assessment data;

20 (2) the goals and benchmarks for growth;

1           (3) the type of additional instructional services and interventions the  
2           student will receive;

3           (4) the evidence-based reading instructional programming the teacher  
4           will use to provide reading instruction, addressing the areas of phonemic  
5           awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension;

6           (5) the strategies the student’s parent is encouraged to use in assisting  
7           the student to achieve reading competency; and

8           (6) any additional services the teacher deems available and appropriate  
9           to accelerate the student’s reading skill development.

10          (e) The reading instructional and intervention programs identified  
11          pursuant to subsection (d) of this section shall not include those that employ  
12          the three-cueing system model of reading, visual memory as the primary basis  
13          for teaching word recognition, or the three-cueing system model of reading  
14          based on meaning, structure and syntax, and visual cues.

15          (f) The parent of any kindergarten through grade three student who exhibits  
16          a deficiency in reading at any time during the school year must be notified in  
17          writing not later than 15 days after the identification of the reading deficiency,  
18          and the written notification must include the following:

19               (1) that the parent’s child has been identified as having a deficiency in  
20               reading, and a reading improvement plan will be developed by the teacher,  
21               principal, other pertinent school personnel, and the parent or parents;

- 1           (2) the importance of reading proficiency at the end of the third grade;  
2           (3) a description of the current services that are provided to the child;  
3           (4) a description of the proposed evidence-based reading interventions  
4           and supplemental instructional services and supports that will be provided to  
5           the child that are designed to remedy the identified areas of reading deficiency;  
6           (5) notification that the parent will be informed in writing of the child's  
7           progress towards grade-level reading at least every 10 weeks; and  
8           (6) strategies and programs for parents to use at home to help their child  
9           succeed in reading.
- 10          (g) Each local school district shall engage local stakeholders to discuss the  
11          importance of reading and solicit stakeholder suggestions for improving  
12          literacy and district plans to increase reading proficiency.
- 13          (h) The Agency shall provide periodic workshops for educators and parents  
14          in evidence-based reading instructional programming addressing the areas of  
15          phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary and comprehension.
- 16          (i) Each school board and approved independent school shall annually  
17          report, in writing, to the Agency on or before September 1 of each year the  
18          following information on the prior school year, by grade, school, and town, or  
19          approved independent school:
- 20               (1) the number and percentage of students in kindergarten through grade  
21               three performing below grade level on local or statewide reading assessments;

1           (2) the number of universal reading screeners performed and the number  
2           of pupils screened; and

3           (3) the number and percentage identified with a potential reading  
4           deficiency.

5           (j) On or before December 1 of each year, the Agency shall issue a written  
6           report to the Governor and the Senate and House Committees on Education on  
7           the status of reading interventions and outcomes, including:

8           (1) State progress on improving reading literacy;

9           (2) third grade reading assessment results by district and approved  
10          independent school;

11          (3) percentages of pupils identified with a potential reading deficiency  
12          by district and approved independent school; and

13          (4) the Vermont educator preparation programs' implementation of  
14          reading instructional programs.

15          (k) Students who do not make meaningful gains to lessen a reading  
16          deficiency after a general education intervention program shall be referred for  
17          special education evaluation, or sooner if an educational disability is suspected.

18          Sec. 2. 16 V.S.A. § 2903(a) is amended to read:

19           (a) Statement of policy. The ability to read is critical to success in learning.  
20          Children who fail to read by the end of the first grade will likely fall further  
21          behind in school. The personal and economic costs of reading failure are

1 enormous both while the student remains in school and long afterward. All  
2 students need to receive systematic, explicit, direct, sequential, and cumulative  
3 reading instruction in the early grades from a teacher who is skilled in teaching  
4 the foundational components of reading ~~through a variety of instructional~~  
5 ~~strategies that take into account the different learning styles and language~~  
6 ~~backgrounds of the students,~~ phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency,  
7 vocabulary, and comprehension. Some students ~~may~~ require intensive  
8 supplemental instruction tailored to the unique difficulties encountered, which  
9 a school reading specialist shall provide.

10 Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

11 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2024.