Introduced by Senators Terenzini, Benning, Brock, Collamore, Cummings, Hooker, Lyons, McCormack, Parent, Pollina and White

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Education; dyslexia; screening

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to require that students in public schools be screened for markers of dyslexia.

An act relating to screening students for dyslexia

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

Sec. 1. 16 V.S.A. chapter 1, subchapter 10 is added to read:

Subchapter 10. Dyslexia

§ 141. DYLEXIA SCREENING

(a) Definitions. As used in this section:

(1) “Dyslexia” means a specific learning disability that is neurological in origin, characterized by difficulties with accurate or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities, that typically results from a deficit in the phonological component of language and that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities. Secondary consequences may include
problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can 
impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.

(2) “Evidence-based methods of instruction” consist of specialized 
reading, writing, and spelling instruction that is multisensory in nature, 
equipping students to simultaneously use multiple senses, including vision, 
hearing, touch, and movement. Evidence-based methods of instruction employ 
direct instruction of systematic and cumulative objectives, with the sequence 
beginning with the student’s easiest and most basic elements and progressing 
methodically to more difficult material, as indicated by systematic progress 
monitoring. Each step is built on those steps previously learned. Components 
of evidence-based methods of instruction include instruction targeting 
phonological awareness, sound symbol association, syllable structure, 
morphology, syntax, and semantics.

(b) Early screening for markers of dyslexia.

(1) Students enrolled in public schools in Vermont shall be screened for 
markers of dyslexia:

(A) during the fall semester of kindergarten and first grade; and 

(B) during the spring semester of kindergarten, first grade, second 
grade, and third grade if a student does not meet the expected literacy 
standards for those grades.
(2) In addition to these screening times, a student at any grade level, kindergarten through grade 12, shall be screened for markers of dyslexia upon the request of the student’s parent, guardian, teacher, counselor, or school psychologist to determine if the student would benefit from intervention within the school’s multi-tiered system of supports.

(c) Students identified with markers of dyslexia. If a student is identified as having markers of dyslexia by the school, the school shall:

(1) notify the student’s parent or guardian;

(2) provide the student’s parent or guardian with information and resource material about dyslexia;

(3) provide the student with appropriate evidence-based methods of instruction; and

(4) monitor and, subject to State and federal privacy laws, report the student’s progress to the parent or guardian and all involved parties.

(d) Notification.

(1) Each public school shall, at the beginning of each school year, notify all parents or guardians of enrolled students of, if relevant to the grades offered by the school:

(A) the required screenings and the screenings that may be requested under subsection (b) of this section, and
(B) the school’s duties to address dyslexia under subsection (c) of this section.

(2) The notification required under this subsection may be included with other information provided by the school to parents or guardians and students at the beginning of the school year.

Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2021.