

No. 2014-69

AN ACT

HB 198

Amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), entitled "An act relating to the public school system, including certain provisions applicable as well to private and parochial schools; amending, revising, consolidating and changing the laws relating thereto," providing for Dyslexia Screening and Early Literacy Intervention Pilot Program.

The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania hereby enacts as follows:

Section 1. The act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, is amended by adding an article to read:

**ARTICLE XVII-C
DYSLEXIA AND EARLY LITERACY INTERVENTION
PILOT PROGRAM**

Section 1701-C. Short title of article.

This article shall be known and may be cited as the Dyslexia and Early Literacy Intervention Pilot Program Law.

Section 1702-C. Definitions.

The following words and phrases when used in this article shall have the meanings given to them in this section unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

"Department." The Department of Education of the Commonwealth.

"Dyslexia." A condition that is characterized by difficulty with accurate or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities, which characteristics typically result from a deficit in one or more processes related to the phonological component of language, that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction and that may result in problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that may impede the growth of vocabulary and background knowledge. The term shall apply only for purposes of the pilot program.

"Intensive intervention." Explicit, multisensory, synthetic phonics instruction and a structured language program delivered with fidelity by a trained interventionist. The term shall apply only for purposes of the pilot program.

"Pilot program." The Dyslexia and Early Literacy Intervention Pilot Program established under this article.

Section 1703-C. Establishment.

(a) Pilot program.—The department shall establish a Dyslexia and Early Literacy Intervention Pilot Program to provide evidence-based early screening and multi-tier support systems, using evidence-based intervention services for students with potential risk factors for early reading

deficiencies and dyslexia, such as low phonemic awareness, low letter and symbol naming and inability to remember sequences.

(b) Program operation.—The pilot program shall operate for three full school years, beginning with the school year that begins at least six months after the effective date of this article.

(c) Eligibility.—The department shall select at least three school districts to participate in the pilot program. To be eligible for the pilot program:

(1) A school district must enroll 3,000 to 15,000 students and provide full-day kindergarten.

(2) Three months after the effective date of this section, the school district must submit a proposal to the department that identifies how it will meet the guidelines of the pilot program's:

(i) evidence-based core reading program;

(ii) evidence-based method of screening all kindergarten students;

(iii) evidence-based intervention programs; and

(iv) a methodology for evaluating the effects of the program on the students' identified risk factors.

Section 1704-C. Department responsibilities.

(a) Funds.—The department shall apply for Federal, private and other non-State funds and shall use funds appropriated or otherwise made available to it for the pilot program.

(b) Consultation.—The department shall consult with the International Dyslexia Association or any other recognized organization that specializes in and has expertise with the scientific basis of dyslexia and its intervention in establishing, operating and evaluating the pilot program.

(c) Guidelines and procedures.—No later than three months after the effective date of this article, the department shall establish guidelines and procedures for the pilot program that shall include:

(1) Evidence-based core reading programs that incorporate systematic phonemic instruction and develop basic reading skills for all students in the pilot program to use.

(2) An evidence-based screening for low phonemic awareness and other evidence-based risk factors for early reading deficiencies and dyslexia. The screening shall be given to all kindergarten students enrolled in the school district three times per school year. The first screening shall be at the beginning of the school year, the second screening during the middle of the school year and the third screening in the final quarter of the school year.

(3) Intervention measures, including multisensory structured language programs for students scoring below the benchmark that provide timely targeted instruction and strategic reteaching and intensive intervention in identified areas.

(4) Diagnostic assessments for students scoring below the benchmark that are nationally standardized, norm-referenced screening assessments of phonological awareness, alphabetic knowledge, concept of word and grapheme phoneme correspondence. The screening shall be demonstrated to have predictive validity and classification accuracy.

Section 1705-C. School district responsibilities.**(a) Notification.—**

(1) When a student is suspected of having an early reading deficiency or dyslexia, the participating school district shall notify the student's parent or guardian that the student, as part of the pilot program, is eligible to receive reading intervention services to measure the effectiveness of early reading assistance programs. The participating school district shall require the parent or guardian to indicate in writing that the parent or guardian voluntarily and knowingly consents to the student's continued participation in the pilot program. Each participating school district shall provide to the parent or guardian of the student suspected of having an early reading deficiency or dyslexia information about early reading deficiencies and dyslexia and recommended evidence-based resources and interventions.

(2) Participation in the pilot program, screening or intervention assistance does not preclude a parent or guardian from requesting an evaluation for special education at any time, including prior to or during the course of early intervention assistance.

(b) Evaluation.—

(1) Each participating school district shall annually report to the department data and information about the operation of the pilot program, in the manner prescribed by the department.

(2) The department shall contract with a nationally recognized educational evaluation institution or organization to provide an evaluation of the pilot program to review the effectiveness of evidence-based early reading assistance programs for students with risk factors for early reading deficiencies and dyslexia and to determine if the programs reduce special education costs. The evaluation shall be published on the department's publicly accessible Internet website.

Section 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

APPROVED—The 26th day of June, A.D. 2014

TOM CORBETT