
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 6517

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

SUMMARY

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

1. establishes an Office of Training Compliance (hereafter “the office”) in the State Department of Education (SDE) to verify whether teacher preparation programs and teacher certification applicants comply with requirements in state law relating to dyslexia instruction and training (§§ 1-4);
2. bars the State Board of Education (SBE) from approving any new teacher preparation programs, beginning January 1, 2022, unless the office verifies the program complies with state law relating to dyslexia instruction and training (§ 3);
3. bars SDE from issuing any level of teaching certificate (initial, provisional, or professional) to an applicant, beginning July 1, 2021, until the office verifies 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 whether practicum hour supervisors have obtained certain qualifications (§ 6);

6. requires SDE to revise previously-developed reading assessments for grades kindergarten through 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); and
8. requires each local or regional board of education to develop a voluntary family history questionnaire to help identify students who are at risk of reading proficiency challenges (§ 8).

The bill also makes various technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2021

§§ 1-4 — OFFICE OF TRAINING COMPLIANCE

The bill establishes the office in SDE and tasks it with verifying whether teacher preparation programs and teacher certification applicants (1) fulfill the requirements in existing law about teacher instruction and training and (2) meet compliance standards relating to dyslexia instruction and training in existing law and established by the bill.

Development of Compliance Measures and Audit Procedures (§ 1)

The bill requires the office to develop compliance measures and audit procedures by September 1, 2021, for determining whether teacher preparation programs fulfill requirements in state law about (1) instruction in literacy skills and processes (see BACKGROUND) and (2) teacher certification applicants passing an SBE-approved reading instruction exam and completing a program of study in the diagnosis and remediation of reading and language arts (see COMMENT). The office must submit these measures and procedures to the Higher Education and Employment Advancement and the Education committees by that same date.

Additionally, the bill requires the office to develop the following

items by January 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;
2. a list of sample course assignments and evaluations for higher education institutions and other teacher preparation programs to 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 bill, the office must use the compliance measures and audit procedures it develops to verify, by January 1, 2022, whether any SBE-approved teacher preparation program is complying with existing law about the following:

1. instruction in dyslexia detection and recognition and
2. inclusion of supervised practicum hours and instruction in evidence-based structured literacy interventions for students with dyslexia in programs of study in the diagnosis and remediation of reading and language arts.

By that same date, the office must report on the compliance verification results to the Higher Education and Employment Advancement and Education committees.

Additionally, the bill requires the office to review and request updates about webinar modules developed by the Capitol Region Education Council and the State Education Resource Center to align the modules with the office's compliance measures.

Approval of New Teacher Preparation Programs (§ 3)

The bill prohibits SBE from approving any new teacher preparation programs until the office verifies whether the program complies with the state laws described above (§ 2). The office must use the compliance measures and audit procedures it develops to verify any new program's compliance.

Proof of Teacher Preparation Program Compliance (§ 3)

Under the bill, the office must accept the following items from a higher education institution or any other teacher preparation program provider as proof of compliance:

1. a self-examination report that addresses how the program complies with the requirements in state law or
2. course syllabi showing assignments and evaluations relevant to these requirements, including details such as full citations with specific page numbers of reading assignments and the final grade percentage attributed to these assignments and evaluations.

The bill also requires the office to evaluate the self-examination reports or course syllabi that programs submit to the office to verify whether they fulfill the compliance measures. It allows the office to complete this verification by requiring a national accrediting agency that accredits teacher preparation programs for SDE to use these audit procedures to determine compliance.

Teacher Certification Applicant Compliance Measures and Verification (§ 4)

Beginning July 1, 2021, the bill prohibits SDE from issuing any level of teaching certificate (initial, provisional, or professional) to an applicant until the office makes two types of verifications (see COMMENT). (By instituting this prohibition on the same day the provision creating the Office of Training Compliance takes effect, it could delay the process of issuing teaching certificates for an uncertain amount of time. It is unclear how soon the office, which would be in

the process of being formed, could begin making verifications.)

First, if the applicant is seeking an initial certificate and has graduated from a Connecticut teacher preparation program, the bill 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 a certified employee or an applicant for certification seeking an endorsement in remedial reading, remedial language arts, reading consultant, comprehensive special education, or integrated early childhood and special education, the bill requires the office to certify that he or she has complied with the requirements in state law about receiving a passing score on a reading instruction exam and completing a program of study in the diagnosis of reading and language arts (see BACKGROUND).

§ 5 — APPLICANT REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTAIN TEACHING CERTIFICATE ENDORSEMENTS

The bill allows applicants for the following teacher certification endorsements to complete a student teaching experience as an alternative to completing supervised practicum hours: remedial reading, remedial language arts, or reading consultant. Existing law requires applicants for these endorsements to complete practicum hours as part of a program of study in the diagnosis and remediation of reading and language arts.

Additionally, the bill allows applicants for an initial (i.e., entry-level) teaching certificate with a primary endorsement in comprehensive special education or integrated early childhood and special education to complete a student teaching experience as an alternative to completing supervised practicum hours. It removes the practicum hours completion requirement for the following applicants seeking these endorsements: certified employees and applicants for provisional or professional (i.e., mid- or upper-level) teaching certificates.

§ 6 — SUPERVISORS OF PRACTICUM HOURS

Beginning January 1, 2022, the bill requires the office to provide guidance to higher education institutions and other teacher preparation program providers about how to verify whether practicum hour supervisors have obtained the following:

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 about structured literacy principles and practices;
5. training for practicum supervision, coaching, and evaluation of reading interventionists; and
6. at least three years' work experience providing structured literacy interventions for students with remedial reading needs, including students with dyslexia.

Under the bill, higher education institutions and other teacher 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. Current law is silent regarding qualifications for practicum supervisors.

§ 7 — KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 3 READING ASSESSMENTS

Under the bill, SDE must revisit the reading assessments for grades kindergarten through 3 that it previously developed and approved by January 1, 2016. The department must now reconsider these assessments by January 1, 2022, in light of the recommendations made in Appendix G of the final report of the Task Force to Analyze the

Implementation of Laws Governing Dyslexia Instruction and Training (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 bill makes changes to the assessment's methodology for identify students below proficiency in reading. Specifically, it requires that the assessment:

1. measure (a) phonics through real and pseudo words, (b) phonemic awareness through deletion and blending, and (c) rapid automatic naming, in addition to the methods in current law (i.e., fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension), and
2. 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 required under current law.

The bill 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 her or her native language.

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

Data Center

The bill allows SDE to partner with a public college or university to establish a data center to guide SDE and board of education in the use and effectiveness of reading assessments. The center may track the following types of data:

1. which reading assessment are used by each board of education and
2. student information, disaggregated by categories to keep it nonidentifiable (presumably, to protect student identities), including (a) student demographic background, (b) school district, (c) reading assessment dates, and (d) scores on reading assessment.

§ 8 — VOLUNTARY FAMILY HISTORY QUESTIONNAIRE

The bill requires each local or regional board of education to develop 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.

BACKGROUND

Literacy Skills and Processes Instruction in Teacher Preparation Programs

Any teacher preparation program that leads to professional teacher certification must include in its curriculum instruction in literacy skills and processes that reflects current research and best practices in the field of literacy training. 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)).

Reading Instruction Exam and Practicum Hours for Teacher Certification Applicants

Any certified employee applying for a remedial reading, remedial language arts, or reading consultant endorsement, or any applicant for an initial, provisional, or professional educator certificate and one of the same endorsements must have fulfilled the following requirements:

1. achieved a satisfactory score on the SBE-approved reading instruction exam or a comparable exam and
2. completed a program of study in the diagnosis and remediation of reading and language arts that includes supervised practicum hours and instruction in the detection and recognition of, and evidence-based structured literacy interventions for, students with dyslexia (CGS § 10-145d(i)).

Final Task Force Report, Appendix G

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 G of this report 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 the grades during which the tests should be administered (final report, pages 85-86).

Related Bill

HB 6620, reported out favorably by the Education Committee on March 29 with a change of reference to the Appropriations Committee, also changes the law regarding reading assessments for kindergarten through grade 3 students. Under HB 6620, § 5, the Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success, which the bill establishes, must compile a list of approved reading assessments for school districts to

use beginning with the 2023-24 school year.

COMMENTS

Conflict

The bill requires the Office of Training Compliance to verify whether any SBE-approved teacher preparation program is complying with CGS § 10-145d(i), which requires teacher certification applicants to pass an SBE-approved reading instruction exam and complete a program of study in the diagnosis and remediation of reading and language arts. Since this law imposes a requirement on teacher certification applicants, the bill should not cite to it when requiring the office to verify compliance by teacher preparation programs.

Conflict

The bill prohibits SDE from issuing any level of teaching certificate (initial, provisional, or professional) to an applicant until the office makes two types of verifications. However, it is SBE that issues this certification under state law (CGS §§ 10-144o & 10-145b).

COMMITTEE ACTION

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 22 Nay 0 (03/18/2021)