

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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Source of Report: MRS, Title 20-A, § 4710-B: Requiring school administrative units to screen students in kindergarten through second grade who have difficulty as identified by a classroom teacher. Requiring school administrative units to screen students in kindergarten through second grade who have difficulty as identified by a classroom teacher.

Topic: Dyslexia awareness, screening protocols, and School Administrative Unit needs for implementing evidence-based practices

Context

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurological in origin. MRS, Title 20-A, § 4710-B, section 1 defines dyslexia as a condition that is neurological in origin and characterized by difficulties with accurate or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities that typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and in relation to the provision of effective classroom instruction; the secondary consequences of dyslexia may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge. Title 20-A, § 4710-B, section 2 requires school administrative units to screen K-2 students for dyslexia upon a classroom teacher's identification of difficulty in the following areas:

- Phonological and phonemic awareness;
- Sound-symbol recognition;
- Alphabet knowledge;
- Decoding skills;
- Rapid naming skills; and
- Encoding skills.

The statute also establishes the creation of a state-level dyslexia coordinator within the Department of Education to address dyslexia awareness, screening for characteristics of dyslexia, and identifying needs of School Administrative Units for implementing evidence-based practices. The dyslexia coordinator must have a background in reading and language difficulties, including dyslexia and in language and literacy. The dyslexia coordinator shall annually develop a plan that:

- Implements dyslexia awareness training for teachers;
- Implements professional development in evidence-based screening practices; and
- Identifies needs of school administrative units for implementing evidence-based practices and responses to scientific, research-based intervention strategies for reading and language-based learning difficulties.

Actions

Dyslexia Stakeholder Group Meetings: 90-minute meetings every other month

The Dyslexia Stakeholder Group, which includes parents of students with dyslexia, literacy specialists, school psychologists, university faculty, speech pathologists, special and general educators, meets quarterly to review the state of literacy and dyslexia supports in Maine. The stakeholder group is provided with updates on the programming developed by the department and provides feedback and guidance.

Continuation of Dyslexia Screening Project

Expanded the dyslexia screening project by providing incentives to SAUs that implement evidence and research based early literacy screeners that flag for characteristics of dyslexia. Screeners must be accompanied by individual classroom focused data workshops for educators and identification of best practices for interventions.

<https://www.maine.gov/doe/learning/specialed/initiatives/dyslexia/screening>

Dyslexia Coordinator

After adding the position of a Literacy Specialist to the Office of Special Services and Inclusive Education the role of State Dyslexia Coordinator was combined with the Inclusive Education Literacy Specialist to increase focus on communication, messaging, and training in evidence-based practices in the Science of Reading.

The Right to Read Documentary Screening

Five in-person screenings and a virtual opportunity to view [The Right to Read Documentary](#). The Right to Read shares the stories of an NAACP activist, a teacher, and two American families who fight to provide our youngest generation with the most foundational indicator of life-long success: the ability to read.

Dyslexia Awareness Month

Professional texts, resources and information shared with schools during the month of October 2023 to celebrate Dyslexia Awareness Month and increase awareness related to myths and facts associated with Dyslexia.

Recommendations

The actions of the Dyslexia Stakeholder Group and the Maine Department of Education are helping to spread awareness and understanding of dyslexia throughout the state and supporting students with dyslexia and their families. Recommendations include the continued implementation of dyslexia awareness training for teachers, including professional development in evidence-based screening practices, by the Department. Further recommendations include continued support for school administrative units in implementing evidence-based practices and responses to scientific, research-based intervention strategies for reading and language-based learning difficulties.

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