

**Department of Legislative Services**  
 Maryland General Assembly  
 2020 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**Third Reader - Revised**

House Bill 718

(Delegate Luedtke)

Ways and Means

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

**State Department of Education - Early Literacy and Dyslexia Practices -  
 Guidance and Assistance**

This bill requires, by October 1, 2020, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to establish a stakeholder advisory group to develop a reading and dyslexia handbook with specified elements to guide local school systems in the implementation of best practices for early literacy and dyslexia. By June 1, 2021, MSDE and the stakeholder advisory group must make a completed handbook available to the public, as specified. MSDE must update and publish the handbook every three years. MSDE and the stakeholder advisory group must develop a list of recommended programs and materials that address the needs of at-risk and struggling readers and students with dyslexia. MSDE must develop professional learning opportunities and technical assistance on the content of the handbook to be published as specified. By June 1, 2021, MSDE must designate a dyslexia liaison, who may be an existing staff member, to provide technical assistance to local school systems on the content of the handbook. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2020.**

**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** General fund expenditures increase by \$95,600 in FY 2021 to hire a dyslexia liaison, as explained below. Future year expenditures reflect ongoing costs for the position. No effect on revenues.

(in dollars)	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	95,600	116,100	119,000	123,100	127,300
Net Effect	(\$95,600)	(\$116,100)	(\$119,000)	(\$123,100)	(\$127,300)

*Note:() = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate increase; (-) = indeterminate decrease*

**Local Effect:** Local school systems can publish the completed handbooks on their websites and receive any training using existing resources.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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## **Analysis**

**Bill Summary:** The reading and dyslexia handbook must include:

- evidence-based best practices and processes and procedures for comprehensive literacy instruction using an integrated tiered system of supports in reading for prekindergarten through grade 12;
- definitions of reading difficulties, dyslexia, and dysgraphia;
- indicators and characteristics of reading difficulties, dyslexia, and dysgraphia by developmental level and age;
- evidence-based procedures to screen students for risks of reading difficulties and to evaluate and identify students with dyslexia, including English language learners; specially designed instruction and interventions for students identified with specific learning disabilities in reading or dyslexia under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act that include the elements and principles of evidence-based instruction for dyslexia;
- recommendations for accommodations, including assistive technology; and
- recommendations for methods of parent engagement.

The completed reading and dyslexia handbook must be published on the websites of MSDE and each local school system and disseminated as specified. By June 1, 2024, and every three years thereafter, the updated reading and dyslexia handbook must be published and disseminated in the same manner.

MSDE and the stakeholder advisory group must develop tools that address the needs of at-risk and struggling readers and students with dyslexia, including:

- valid, reliable, and predictive reading screening measures that meet specified requirements for students in prekindergarten through grade 12;
- informal diagnostic reading measures and assessments; and
- supplemental reading and writing component checklists or rubrics that are aligned to the scientific research on reading, dyslexia, and related disabilities that meet specified requirements.

The dyslexia liaison must (1) have experience remediating students with dyslexia; (2) have experience with English language learners; and (3) be a certified dyslexia specialist as designated by the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) and the Center for Effective Reading Instruction.

MSDE may designate as dyslexia liaison an individual in a position within MSDE that existed on June 30, 2020. Such an individual must perform the duties required by the bill in addition to any other assigned duties.

**Current Law:** In consultation with the State Superintendent of Schools, the State Board of Education (State board) must develop and periodically update an overall plan that must identify, in part, the methods to improve the diagnosis of basic reading skill deficiencies of elementary and secondary school students and to improve the literacy rates of these students.

Chapter 512 of 2019 requires, beginning with the 2020-2021 school year, each local school board to ensure that specified students are screened to identify if the student is at risk for reading difficulties. If the screening results indicate that the student is at risk of reading difficulties, the local board must provide supplemental reading instruction, as appropriate, and provide a notification letter to the student's parent as specified. MSDE must develop and update resources for local boards every four years and provide technical support to local boards allowing them to provide training opportunities annually. Local boards must report annually to MSDE beginning with the 2020-2021 school year.

A local board must select one or more screening instruments that accurately and reliably identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes; are developmentally appropriate; are economical in time and cost to administer; and use norm-referenced or criterion-based scores. The screenings may not be included in the time limitation for assessments required by State law. The screening instruments must be based on foundational reading skills that include phonological and phonemic awareness and processing. On registration of a student, the local board of education must provide the parent or guardian of the student with a description of the screening and supplemental instruction process in the county and any checklists or forms needed to support the screening protocol. Supplemental reading instruction must be evidence-based, sequential, systematic, explicit, and cumulative instruction or intervention toward mastery of foundational reading skills. MSDE must provide technical support for local boards, allowing them to provide annual training opportunities for school administrators and individuals who conduct the screenings.

Training opportunities may include training on:

- administration and interpretation of screenings, informal diagnostic assessments, progress monitoring instruments, and student data;
- interpreting screenings and assessments for parents;
- best practices for designing and implementing supplemental reading instruction; and
- the elements, principles, and best practices of supplemental reading instruction.

**Background:** Dyslexia is characterized by an unexpected difficulty in reading in individuals who otherwise possess the intelligence and motivation needed for accurate and fluent reading. An often cited *New England Journal of Medicine* article indicates that the prevalence of dyslexia among school-age children in the United States is estimated to range from 5% to 17%.

### *Center for Effective Reading Instruction*

The Center for Effective Reading Instruction (CERI), an affiliate of the International Dyslexia Association, issues certifications to those who possess the knowledge and skill necessary to implement Structured Literacy practices.

Select CERI certifications are awarded only to those educators who have demonstrated the ability to have a meaningful impact on the rate of improvement for students identified as “at risk” for reading failure or identified with a Specific Learning Disability, including dyslexia.

According to the [CERI handbook](#), to be a CERI structured literacy dyslexia specialist an individual must have:

- earned a bachelor’s degree;
- a passing score on the Knowledge and Practice Examination for Effective Reading Instruction exam developed by CERI;
- graduated from an IDA accredited program or college/university; and
- been certified by one of several specified organizations or follow a specified alternative route.

**State Expenditures:** The bill specifies that the dyslexia liaison must be designated by June 1, 2021. According to the bill, the liaison may be an existing staff member; however, MSDE advises that a full-time staff member is required to complete the requirements of the bill. The Department of Legislative Services (DLS) cannot independently verify if MSDE has a staff member that meets the requirements of the bill and the current workload of such a person; however, DLS agrees that a new full-time staff member is likely required. Therefore, this analysis assumes that MSDE hires a full-time liaison dedicated to meeting the requirements of the bill. To the extent that an existing staff member meets the requirements of the bill and is not fully subscribed with existing duties, general fund expenditures for the liaison position will not increase.

This analysis assumes that MSDE designates the liaison beginning October 1, 2020, so that the liaison can help the stakeholder advisory group develop the handbook. Therefore, general fund expenditures increase by \$95,550 in fiscal 2021 for MSDE to hire one

full-time dyslexia liaison to staff the stakeholder group, develop and update the reading and dyslexia handbook once every three years, identify and provide resources to local school systems, and conduct other duties required by the bill. This estimate reflects a 90-day start-up delay from the bill's July 1, 2020 effective date. It includes a salary and fringe benefits for the educational specialist, one-time start-up costs, and other ongoing operating expenses.

Position	1
Salary and Fringe Benefits	\$90,184
Operating Expenses	5,366
<b>Total FY 2021 State Expenditures</b>	<b>\$95,550</b>

Future year expenditures reflect annualization, annual increases, employee turnover, ongoing operating expenses, and elimination of one-time costs.

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### Additional Information

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Designated Cross File:** SB 575 (Senator Hester) - Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland State Department of Education; Baltimore City Public Schools; Montgomery County Public Schools; *New England Journal of Medicine*; Center for Effective Reading Instruction; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 17, 2020  
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