

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2021 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 126 (Senators Hester and Zucker)
 Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

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

This bill requires, by October 1, 2021, 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, 2022, 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 tools 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, 2022, 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, 2021.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by \$74,800 in FY 2022 to hire a dyslexia liaison, as explained below. Future year expenditures reflect ongoing costs for the position. No effect on revenues.

(in dollars)	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	74,800	88,600	91,300	94,500	97,900
Net Effect	(\$74,800)	(\$88,600)	(\$91,300)	(\$94,500)	(\$97,900)

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.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The reading and dyslexia handbook must include specified elements including indicators and characteristics of reading difficulties, dyslexia, and dysgraphia by developmental level and age. The reading and dyslexia handbook must be consistent with the resources developed and updated under current law.

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, 2025, and every three years thereafter, the updated reading and dyslexia handbook must be published and disseminated in the same manner.

The dyslexia liaison must (1) have experience remediating students with dyslexia; (2) have experience with English language learners; and (3) be certified, or become certified within 18 months as being designated, by the International Dyslexia Association and the Center for Effective Reading Instruction as a structured literacy dyslexia interventionist.

Current Law: In consultation with the State Superintendent of Schools, the State Board of Education 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.

Each local board must provide resources on their website that include reading screening instruments used in the jurisdiction; and a checklist of early warning signs of reading difficulty and dyslexia by age.

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.

State Expenditures: According to the bill, the dyslexia liaison may be an existing staff member; however, MSDE advises that a full-time staff member is required to meet the requirements of the bill. The Department of Legislative Services (DLS) cannot independently verify if MSDE currently 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, 2021, the bill’s effective date, so that the liaison can help the stakeholder advisory group develop the handbook. Therefore, general fund expenditures increase by \$74,791 in fiscal 2022 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, 2021 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	\$69,210
Operating Expenses	5,581
Total FY 2022 State Expenditures	\$74,791

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

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: A similar bill, HB 718 of 2020, passed the House with amendments but received no further action from the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee. Its cross file, SB 575 of 2020, received a hearing in the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, but no further action was taken.

Designated Cross File: HB 237 (Delegate Ebersole) - Ways and Means.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education; Baltimore City Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 19, 2021
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