

2022 -- H 7608

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2022

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A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- CHIARA'S LAW -- SCREENING AND EDUCATION OF
CHILDREN WITH DYSLEXIA

Introduced By: Representatives Quattrocchi, Nardone, Roberts, Filippi, Price, and
Fenton-Fung

Date Introduced: March 02, 2022

Referred To: House Education

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Title 16 of the General Laws entitled "EDUCATION" is hereby amended by
2 adding thereto the following chapter:

3 CHAPTER 67.3

4 CHIARA'S LAW -- SCREENING AND EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH DYSLEXIA

5 **16-67.3-1. Short title.**

6 This chapter shall be known and may be cited as "Chiara's Law -- Screening and Education
7 of Children with Dyslexia."

8 **16-67.3-2. Legislative findings.**

9 (1) Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin, characterized
10 by difficulties with accurate or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities
11 that typically result from a deficiency in the phonological component of language, and often
12 unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom
13 instruction, with secondary consequences which include problems with reading comprehension and
14 reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.

15 (2) Twenty percent (20%) of school-aged children in the United States are dyslexic.

16 (3) Approximately eighty-percent (80%) of children placed in special education for
17 learning disabilities are dyslexic.

18 (4) Dyslexia does not reflect an overall defect in language, but a localized weakness within

1 the phonologic module of the brain, where sounds of language are put together to form words or
2 break words down into sounds.

3 (5) Most children identified as having characteristics of dyslexia and related disorders can
4 be remediated successfully by explicit, systematic, multisensory instruction in phonics and
5 morphology.

6 (6) Research suggests that learning to read and write in cursive benefits the development
7 of cognitive, motor, and literacy skills.

8 (7) The instruction in cursive handwriting has been associated with improved academic
9 outcomes for students with learning disabilities such as dyslexia.

10 (8) When intervention is delayed, it takes four (4) times as long to intervene in fourth grade
11 as it does in late kindergarten because of brain development and because of the increase in content
12 for students to learn as they grow older.

13 **16-67.3-3. Screening for dyslexia and related disorders.**

14 (a) In addition to the provisions set forth in chapter 67 of this title, commencing in school
15 calendar year 2023-2024, all students in grades kindergarten through grade four (K-4) including
16 English for speakers of other languages students, enrolling in Rhode Island's public schools, shall
17 be screened using the Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP) for the
18 identification of characteristics that are associated with risk factors for dyslexia, and the related
19 disorders of dyscalculia and dysgraphia, and yearly thereafter, to monitor progress. For school
20 calendar years after 2023-2024, all students entering kindergarten, and all students who have not
21 been tested shall be tested.

22 (b) The Rhode Island department of education shall ensure the screening shall be
23 administered by personnel trained in and using the screening instruments and protocols which the
24 Rhode Island department of education shall be required to institute.

25 (c) The Rhode Island department of education shall maintain records of said testing until
26 such time as the child ascertains the age of twenty-five (25) years.

27 (d) The Rhode Island department of education shall provide a statistical analysis to the
28 general assembly, by way of the speaker of the house, senate president, house and senate chairs of
29 the respective education committees, and director of policy for dyslexia, as well as the public,
30 through a webpage designated expressly for said results, as to the percentage of children, by school
31 district, that are reading or have math skills below grade level, as well as how far below grade level
32 the child is.

33 (e) If a student is found to have the identifying characteristics for dyslexia, dyscalculia, or
34 dysgraphia, the Rhode Island department of education shall immediately notify the parent(s) or

1 guardian(s) by letter which shall state that the child has been administered the CTOPP test, has
2 been identified as having characteristics of dyslexia, dyscalculia, or dysgraphia, that the parent(s)
3 or guardian(s) should follow up with their pediatrician and seek a neuropsychological evaluation
4 of the child, and that a copy of any neuropsychological testing should be provided to the child's
5 school district, as well as the Rhode Island department of education.

6 (f) The Rhode Island department of education shall notify the school district of any child
7 who has been identified as having characteristics of dyslexia, dyscalculia, or dysgraphia, within
8 seven (7) days.

9 (g) Any school district in which a child has been identified as having characteristics of
10 dyslexia, dyscalculia, or dysgraphia shall, within seven (7) days of notification from the Rhode
11 Island department of education, meet with the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the child to discuss the
12 implementation of a phonics based instruction for dyslexia, and an appropriate program for
13 dyscalculia or dysgraphia.

14 (h) Within seven (7) days of the school district meeting with the parent(s) or guardian(s)
15 of said child, the school district shall implement phonics-based instruction for any child identified
16 as having characteristics of dyslexia.

17 (i) Within seven (7) days of the school district meeting with the parent(s) or guardian(s) of
18 said child, the school district shall implement a specific, science-based instruction, for any child
19 identified as having dysgraphia or dyscalculia.

20 (j) The school district shall provide bi-weekly progress reports as to the child's progress to
21 the parent(s) or guardian(s), as well as the Rhode Island department of education. The progress
22 reports shall state the reading level, math level, or in the case of dysgraphia provide writing
23 samples, the child started at for said two (2) week period, what instruction was provided, and what
24 reading level the child ended at for said two (2) week period.

25 (k) The school district shall meet with the parent(s) or guardian(s) of any child identified
26 as having the characteristics of dyslexia, dyscalculia, or dysgraphia within five (5) days of a request
27 from said parent or guardian, as well as in December, March, and June to discuss the child's
28 progress, or lack thereof, as well as any plan for moving forward. If said child is identified as being
29 eligible for summer instruction, than the school district shall also meet with the parent(s) or
30 guardian(s) within five (5) days of the end of said summer instruction.

31 (l) The general assembly shall allocate the necessary funds to administer this chapter
32 annually from either the general fund, any revenue generated from truck toll proceeds, or revenue
33 generation from lottery proceeds, to cover the costs of screening, pursuant to this chapter.

34 **16-67.3-4. Cursive handwriting curriculum.**

1 (a) In addition to any other curriculum requirement pursuant to chapter 22 of title 16, the
2 department of elementary and secondary education shall develop and prescribe a cursive
3 handwriting instruction program for students attending any elementary school.

4 (b) The curriculum required pursuant to subsection (a) of this section shall include activities
5 and instructional materials that help students become proficient in reading cursive and writing in
6 cursive legibly by the end of the third grade.

7 (c) For purposes of this section "cursive handwriting" means any style of penmanship in
8 which some characters are written joined together in a flowing manner.

9 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- CHIARA'S LAW -- SCREENING AND EDUCATION OF
CHILDREN WITH DYSLEXIA

1 This act would require screening for dyslexia and related disorders for public school
2 students in grades kindergarten through grade four (K-4) and would provide for instruction in
3 cursive writing.

4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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