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

Introduced By: Representatives Quattrocchi, and Place

Date Introduced: February 26, 2020

Referred To: House Health, Education & Welfare

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

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

CHAPTER 67.3

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

16-67.3-1. Short title.

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

16-67.3-2. Legislative findings.

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

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

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

(4) Dyslexia does not reflect an overall defect in language, but a localized weakness within
the phonologic module of the brain, where sounds of language are put together to form words or
break words down into sounds.

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

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

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

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

16-67.3-3. Screening for dyslexia and related disorders.
(a) In addition to the provisions set forth in chapter 67 of this title, commencing in school
calendar year 2021-2022, all students in grades kindergarten through grade four (K-4) including
English for speakers of other languages students, enrolling in Rhode Island's public schools, shall
be screened using the Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP) for the
identification of characteristics that are associated with risk factors for dyslexia, and the related
disorders of dyscalculia and dysgraphia, and yearly thereafter, to monitor progress. For school
calendar years after 2021-2022, all students entering kindergarten, and all students who have not
been tested must be tested.

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

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

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

(e) If a student is found to have the identifying characteristics for dyslexia, dyscalculia, or
dysgraphia, the Rhode Island department of education shall immediately notify the parent(s) or
guardian(s) by letter which shall state that the child has been administered the CTOPP test, has
been identified as having characteristics of dyslexia, dyscalculia, or dysgraphia, that the parent(s)
or guardian(s) should follow up with their pediatrician and seek a neuropsychological evaluation
of the child, and that a copy of any neuropsychological testing should be provided to the child's
school district, as well as the Rhode Island department of education.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

16-67.3-4. Cursive handwriting curriculum.
(a) In addition to any other curriculum requirement pursuant to chapter 22 of title 16, the department of elementary and secondary education shall develop and prescribe a cursive handwriting instruction program for students attending any elementary school.

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

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

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.
This act would require screening for dyslexia and related disorders for public school students in grades kindergarten through grade four (K-4) and would provide for instruction in cursive writing.

This act would take effect upon passage.