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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2021

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A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- RHODE ISLAND CERTIFICATION STANDARDS  
BOARD--RIGHT TO READ ACT

Introduced By: Representatives O'Brien, Noret, Corvese, Costantino, Hawkins, Craven,  
Phillips, Amore, Caldwell, and Williams

Date Introduced: May 07, 2021

Referred To: House Education

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1           SECTION 1. Section 16-11.4-6 of the General Laws in Chapter 16-11.4 entitled "Rhode  
2   Island Certification Standards Board [See Title 16 Chapter 97 - The Rhode Island Board of  
3   Education Act]" is hereby amended to read as follows:

4           **16-11.4-6. Right to read act.**

5           (a) This section shall be known and may be cited as the "Right to Read Act."

6           (b) No later than ~~2025~~ 2026, the following shall have proficient knowledge and skills to  
7   teach reading consistent with the best practices of scientific reading instruction and structured  
8   literacy instruction:

9           (1) A person who completes a state-approved educator preparation program; and

10          (2) A person seeking teacher licensure by reciprocity or by adding an endorsement.

11          In addition, no later than ~~2025~~ 2026, a person who completes a state-approved educator  
12   preparation program, other than a teacher of elementary education program, shall demonstrate an  
13   awareness of the best practices of scientific reading instruction and structured literacy instruction.

14          (c) Beginning no later than the ~~2024-2025~~ 2025-2026 school year, each state-approved  
15   educator preparation program shall post on its website information describing its program to  
16   prepare teachers to teach reading with scientific reading instruction and structured literacy  
17   instruction; aligned with, but not limited to, the content measured by the stand-alone reading  
18   assessment adopted by the Rhode Island board of education act.

1 (d) Beginning with the ~~2020-2021~~ 2025-2026 school year, a public school district and an  
2 open-enrollment public charter school shall provide the following professional development in  
3 scientific reading instruction and structured literacy instruction:

4 (1) For teachers licensed at the elementary level, professional development for one of the  
5 prescribed pathways to obtaining a proficiency credential in knowledge and practices in scientific  
6 reading instruction and structured literacy instruction; and

7 (2) For teachers licensed at a level other than the elementary level, professional  
8 development for one of the prescribed pathways to obtaining an awareness credential in knowledge  
9 and practices in scientific reading instruction and structured literacy instruction.

10 (e) Beginning with the 2022-2023 school year, a public school that does not provide the  
11 professional development pursuant to the provisions of subsection (d) shall:

12 (1) Be placed on probationary status; and

13 (2) Provide notice to parents that the public school district has not met the requirements of  
14 this section.

15 (f) By the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year:

16 (1) All teachers employed in a teaching position that requires an elementary education (K-  
17 6) license or (K-12) license shall demonstrate proficiency in knowledge and practices of scientific  
18 reading and structured literacy instruction; and

19 (2) All other teachers shall demonstrate awareness in knowledge and practices of scientific  
20 reading instruction and structured literacy instruction.

21 (g) All teachers who begin employment in the 2023-2024 school year and each school year  
22 thereafter shall demonstrate proficiency or awareness in knowledge and practices in scientific  
23 reading instruction and structured literacy instruction as is applicable to their teaching position by  
24 completing the prescribed proficiency or awareness in knowledge and practices of the scientific  
25 reading instruction credential and a structured literacy instruction credential either:

26 (1) As a condition of licensure; or

27 (2) Within one year if the teacher is:

28 (i) Already licensed; or

29 (ii) Employed under a waiver from licensure.

30 (h) A provider of a state-approved educator preparation program shall include in its annual  
31 report to the department of elementary and secondary education (the "department") a description  
32 of program to prepare educators to teach reading using scientific reading instruction and structured  
33 literacy instruction.

34 (i) A public school district that employs an educator in violation of this section or that does

1 not provide the professional development as required under this section shall be in violation of the  
2 standards for accreditation of the Rhode Island board of education act, and the school district may  
3 be placed on probationary status by the department. A public school district placed on probationary  
4 status pursuant to the provisions of this subsection shall send written notification to the parents of  
5 the students in the public school district of the reason for being placed on probationary status.

6 (j) A provider of a state-approved educator preparation program that does not comply with  
7 the requirements of this section may be subject to penalties up to and including having the  
8 provider's approval status revoked.

9 (k) The department is vested with the authority to, and shall enforce, this section.

10 (l) The department shall promulgate rules to implement the provisions of this section.

11 (m) As used in this section:

12 (1) The term "scientific reading instruction" means instruction that is instructional  
13 centered, empirically based, and further based on the study of the relationship between cognitive  
14 science and educational outcomes; and

15 (2) The term "structured literacy instruction" means an approach by which licensed  
16 personnel teach reading, which includes syllables, morphology, sound-symbol correspondence,  
17 semantics, and syntax, in an explicit, systematic, and diagnostic manner.

18 SECTION 2. Sections 16-67.2-4 and 16-67.2-5 of the General Laws in Chapter 16-67.2  
19 entitled "Education of Children with Dyslexia and Related Disorders" are hereby amended to read  
20 as follows:

21 **16-67.2-4. Dyslexia and related disorder education in teacher preparation programs.**

22 No later than the ~~2021-2022~~ 2022-2023 school year, the department of elementary and  
23 secondary education (the "department") shall collaborate with the board of education to require that  
24 all department-approved undergraduate educator preparation programs for licensure as a teacher of  
25 elementary education and as a reading specialist/consultant include instruction in:

26 (1) Dyslexia professional awareness of the characteristics of dyslexia and related disorders;

27 (2) Evidence-based interventions and accommodations for dyslexia and related disorders;

28 and

29 (3) Completion of a classroom educator program providing instruction in the use of specific  
30 dyslexia- and related disorder-targeted methods of teaching.

31 **16-67.2-5. Research commission.**

32 (a) No later than January 1, ~~2020~~ 2022, the general assembly shall form a joint study  
33 research commission (the "commission") consisting of nine (9) members to be appointed as  
34 follows: one with expertise in educating students with learning disabilities to be appointed by the

1 speaker of the house; one with expertise in educating students with learning disabilities to be  
2 appointed by the president of the senate; one with expertise in educating students with learning  
3 disabilities to be appointed by the governor; one member of the house of representatives, who shall  
4 be appointed by the speaker of the house; one member of the senate, who shall be appointed by the  
5 president of the senate; three (3) teachers with expertise in dyslexia to be appointed jointly by the  
6 speaker of the house and the president of the senate; and one parent of a student with dyslexia, who  
7 shall be appointed by the speaker of the house.

8 (b) The purpose of the commission shall be to study the possibility and feasibility of  
9 establishing two (2) schools, to be located on the university of Rhode Island and Rhode Island  
10 college campuses, that would be dedicated to the instruction of dyslexic children and the  
11 development of instructional techniques and professional development programs used to improve  
12 the instruction and identification of dyslexia and other learning disabilities.

13 (c) The commission shall be funded by the general assembly, and shall visit no fewer than  
14 four (4) schools dedicated to the education of dyslexic children, provided that if a school selected  
15 for visitation is greater than forty (40) miles away from the state of Rhode Island's capitol building,  
16 the visit may be conducted virtually.

17 (d) The commission shall render a report to the governor and to the general assembly prior  
18 to the commencement of the ~~2021~~ [2022](#) legislative session on the ways in which the department  
19 can enforce realistic goals pertaining to the increased availability of quality instruction for:

20 (1) Students with dyslexia and other learning disabilities; and

21 (2) Instructors, administrators, and special educators regarding dyslexia and other learning  
22 disabilities.

23 SECTION 3. 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 -- RHODE ISLAND CERTIFICATION STANDARDS  
BOARD--RIGHT TO READ ACT

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1           This act extends the dates for the creation of a program to prepare teachers to teach reading  
2 with scientific reading instruction and structured literacy instruction and various reporting periods,  
3 as well as teacher awareness of the characteristics of dyslexia and related disorders, due to the  
4 COVID-19 pandemic.

5           This act would take effect upon passage.

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