

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE BILL

No. 873 Session of 2013

INTRODUCED BY WILEY, FOLMER, TOMLINSON, DINNIMAN, COSTA, HUGHES, WILLIAMS, TARTAGLIONE, KASUNIC, FONTANA, BOSCOLA, ALLOWAY, BROWNE, GREENLEAF, McILHINNEY, VULAKOVICH, WARD, BLAKE, BREWSTER, FARNESE, FERLO, KITCHEN, LEACH, SCHWANK, SMITH, SOLOBAY, STACK, TEPLITZ, WASHINGTON, WOZNIAK, YUDICHAK AND WAUGH, JUNE 5, 2013

REFERRED TO EDUCATION, JUNE 5, 2013

AN ACT

1 Amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), entitled "An  
 2 act relating to the public school system, including certain  
 3 provisions applicable as well to private and parochial  
 4 schools; amending, revising, consolidating and changing the  
 5 laws relating thereto," providing for Dyslexia Screening  
 6 Pilot Program.

7 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
 8 hereby enacts as follows:

9 Section 1. The act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known  
 10 as the Public School Code of 1949, is amended by adding an  
 11 article to read:

12 ARTICLE XVII-C

13 DYSLEXIA SCREENING PILOT PROGRAM

14 Section 1701-C. Short title of article.

15 This article shall be known and may be cited as the Dyslexia  
 16 Screening Pilot Program Law.

17 Section 1702-C. Definitions.

18 The following words and phrases when used in this article

1 shall have the meanings given to them in this section unless the  
2 context clearly indicates otherwise:

3 "Department." The Department of Education of the  
4 Commonwealth.

5 "Dyslexia." A specific learning disorder that is  
6 neurological in origin and that is characterized by unexpected  
7 difficulties with accurate or fluent word recognition and by  
8 poor spelling and decoding abilities not consistent with the  
9 person's intelligence, motivation and sensory capabilities,  
10 which difficulties typically result from a deficit in the  
11 phonological component of language.

12 "Pilot program." The Dyslexia Screening Pilot Program  
13 established under this article.

14 "Secretary." The Secretary of Education of the Commonwealth.  
15 Section 1703-C. Establishment.

16 (a) Pilot program.--The department shall establish a  
17 Dyslexia Screening Pilot Program to provide evidence-based early  
18 screening and evidence-based intervention services for children  
19 with risk factors for dyslexia, such as low phonemic awareness.

20 (b) School districts.--The department shall select at least  
21 three school districts to participate in the pilot program. To  
22 be considered for the pilot program, a school district shall  
23 submit a proposal to the department that identifies an evidence-  
24 based method of screening children for low phonemic awareness  
25 and other evidence-based risk factors for dyslexia, provides for  
26 the enrollment of children identified as having evidence-based  
27 risk factors for dyslexia in a reading program staffed by  
28 teachers trained in evidence-based intervention programs, for  
29 example, multisensory structured language programs, and includes  
30 a methodology for evaluating the effects of the reading program

1 on the children's identified risk factors.

2 (c) Program operation.--The pilot program shall operate for  
3 three full school years, beginning with the school year that  
4 begins at least six months after the effective date of this  
5 article.

6 (d) Evaluation.--The goal of the pilot program shall be to  
7 evaluate the effectiveness of evidence-based early reading  
8 assistance programs for children with risk factors for dyslexia  
9 and to evaluate whether those programs can reduce future special  
10 education costs.

11 Section 1704-C. Departmental responsibilities.

12 (a) Funds.--The department shall apply for Federal, private  
13 and other non-State funds and shall use available State funds  
14 appropriated by the General Assembly for the pilot program.

15 (b) Consultation.--The department shall consult with the  
16 International Dyslexia Association, or any other nationally  
17 recognized organization that specializes in and has expertise in  
18 the scientific basis of dyslexia and its treatments, in  
19 establishing and operating the pilot program.

20 (c) Report.--Not later than December 31 of the third school  
21 year in which the pilot program is operating, the secretary  
22 shall submit a report to the General Assembly containing the  
23 secretary's evaluation of the pilot program and legislative  
24 recommendations whether to continue, expand or make changes to  
25 the pilot program.

26 (d) Guidelines and procedures.--The department shall  
27 establish guidelines and procedures for the pilot program not  
28 later than three months after the effective date of this  
29 article.

30 Section 1705-C. School district responsibilities.

1     (a) Responsibilities.--Under the pilot program, each  
2 participating school district, through early childhood reading  
3 instruction and reading assistance programs, shall screen  
4 children upon school entry in kindergarten through second grade  
5 for indications of dyslexia, provide appropriate evidence-based  
6 reading intervention services for those children suspected of  
7 having dyslexia and administer assessments, approved by the  
8 department, to ascertain whether the intervention services  
9 improve those students' reading and learning.

10    (b) Notification.--When a child is suspected of having  
11 dyslexia, the participating school district shall notify the  
12 child's parent or guardian that the child, as part of the pilot  
13 program, is eligible to receive reading intervention services to  
14 measure the effectiveness of early reading assistance programs.  
15 The participating school district shall require the parent or  
16 guardian to indicate in writing that the parent or guardian  
17 voluntarily and knowingly consents to the child's participation  
18 in the pilot program. Each participating school district shall  
19 provide to the parents of children suspected of having dyslexia  
20 information about dyslexia and recommended evidence-based  
21 treatments.

22    (c) Report.--Each participating school district shall  
23 annually report to the department data and information about the  
24 operation of the pilot program, in the manner prescribed by the  
25 department.

26    Section 2. This act shall take effect immediately.