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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

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A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- RHODE ISLAND LITERACY AND DROPOUT
PREVENTION ACT

Introduced By: Representatives O'Brien, Shallcross Smith, Solomon, Alzate, Baginski,
Furtado, Voas, Serpa, Biah, and Dawson

Date Introduced: February 27, 2026

Referred To: House Education

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 16-67-2 of the General Laws in Chapter 16-67 entitled "Rhode Island
2 Literacy and Dropout Prevention Act [See Title 16 Chapter 97 — The Rhode Island Board of
3 Education Act]" is hereby amended to read as follows:

4 **16-67-2. The literacy program.**

5 (a) Activities under this section shall include strategies to improve the performance of
6 students in mathematics, reading and writing, and to specifically address issues of dyslexia. Such
7 activities must be founded on a scientific research base, as described in the No Child Left Behind
8 Act of 2001, title I, part B, § 1208 (20 U.S.C. § 6368). Reading instruction to improve the reading
9 skills of all students in the early grades (specifically kindergarten (K) through to and including
10 grade five (5)) shall be consistent with the council on elementary and secondary education's reading
11 policy. This legislation requires that the following six (6) activities, which comprise the literacy
12 program, be conducted:

13 (1) Screening for all children first entering school. All school districts that provide
14 elementary education are required to screen all children prior to, or upon, their first entry to school
15 to determine their level of educational readiness. All children are required to participate in this
16 screening. Screening shall address the child's educational development and shall be used to
17 determine whether he or she is educationally disadvantaged in terms of readiness for instruction in
18 the literacy skills of reading, writing, speaking, listening, or mathematics.

1 (2) Literacy focus in instruction in kindergarten through grade three (3) for all students. All
2 school districts that provide elementary education shall focus their kindergarten through grade three
3 (3) instruction for all students on literacy: reading, writing, speaking, listening, and mathematics.
4 All instruction shall be geared to helping students achieve the outcomes in literacy that have been
5 specified by the commissioner of elementary and secondary education. School districts are
6 encouraged to consider reducing class size to no more than fifteen (15) students as one means to
7 achieving these outcomes. School districts will be held accountable for student achievement of the
8 literacy outcomes.

9 (3)(i) Supplementary literacy instruction for educationally disadvantaged students in
10 grades kindergarten through twelve (12).

11 (ii) Supplementary literacy (reading, writing, speaking, listening, and mathematics)
12 instruction may be required for educationally disadvantaged students. The commissioner of
13 elementary and secondary education shall stipulate for each school district the specific cutoff points
14 and the grades for required service each year. Services must be provided first to students who are
15 most educationally disadvantaged. Services shall focus on instruction in reading, writing, speaking,
16 listening, and mathematics. Program emphasis shall be as follows:

17 (A) Intensive development in literacy. Kindergarten through grade three (3).

18 (B) Early intervention in literacy. Grades four (4) through six (6).

19 (C) Remediation in literacy. Grades seven (7) through eight (8).

20 (D) Intensive remediation in literacy. Grades nine (9) through twelve (12).

21 (iii) School districts will be held accountable for student achievement of the literacy
22 outcomes.

23 (4) Dropout prevention programs. Programs shall address the academic, social, or personal
24 needs of potential dropouts. Projects shall be selected at the discretion of the commissioner of
25 elementary and secondary education.

26 (5) State-level program support. Activities shall provide for necessary planning and
27 administrative functions and for a broadly representative advisory council.

28 (6) Dyslexia-targeted assistance. The literacy program shall also include assistance to
29 students by providing strategies that formally address dyslexia, when appropriate. In addition, the
30 department of elementary and secondary education shall offer to school districts, at no cost to the
31 school district or to participants in the training, professional development services to enhance the
32 skills of elementary teachers in the use of evidence-based strategies to improve the literacy skills
33 of students with dyslexia.

34 (b) As used in this section, the term “dyslexia” means a specific **and significant impairment**

1 ~~in the development of reading, including, but not limited to, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency,~~
2 ~~vocabulary, and comprehension that is not solely accounted for by intellectual disability, sensory~~
3 ~~disability or impairment, or lack of appropriate instruction.~~ learning disability characterized by
4 difficulties in word reading and/or spelling that involve accuracy, speed, or both and vary
5 depending on the orthography. These difficulties occur along a continuum of severity and persist
6 even with instruction that is effective for the individual's peers. The causes of dyslexia are complex
7 and involve combinations of genetic, neurobiological, and environmental influences that interact
8 throughout development. Underlying difficulties with phonological and morphological processing
9 are common but not universal, and early oral language weaknesses often foreshadow literacy
10 challenges. Secondary consequences include reading comprehension problems and reduced reading
11 and writing experience that can impede growth in language, knowledge, written expression, and
12 overall academic achievement. Psychological well-being and employment opportunities also may
13 be affected. Although identification and targeted instruction are important at any age, language and
14 literacy support before and during the early years of education is particularly effective.

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

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

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1 This act would redefine dyslexia to mean a specific learning disability characterized by
2 difficulties in word reading and/or spelling that involve accuracy, speed, or both and vary
3 depending on the orthography.

4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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