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Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement

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Version: As Introduced

Primary Sponsor: Rep. Baldrige

Local Impact Statement Procedure Required: Yes

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Highlights

- The bill's structured literacy certification requirements for teachers may increase costs to public schools by \$2.6 million or more statewide through the 2024-2025 school year for new certifications and annual renewals, depending on the certification program chosen. Annual renewal costs thereafter may be \$740,000 or more statewide.
- School districts are likely to incur additional costs to conduct annual dyslexia screenings for students in grades K-5. Costs for screening measures and training could reach into the millions of dollars annually statewide, depending on the screening measures identified by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) and chosen by districts and schools.
- School districts and other public schools will likely incur additional costs to provide intervention or special education services if the bill's required screening program increases identification of students with dyslexia. These costs may be partially offset by increased state foundation aid for students requiring special education services.
- However, research suggests that there may be a long-term savings effect of providing students at risk for dyslexia with early screening and intervention services, which were shown to reduce the number of students requiring costlier special education services in certain districts participating in a dyslexia screening pilot project. If so, school district expenditures and state foundation formula revenues may decrease over time.
- ODE costs may increase, possibly in the millions of dollars, to provide the bill's required structured literacy program professional development for teachers in dyslexia screening and intervention practices.

Detailed Analysis

The bill regards screening and intervention for children with dyslexia and related professional development and certification requirements for teachers. Dyslexia is a neurological learning disorder characterized by unexpected difficulties with accurate or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities not consistent with the person's intelligence, motivation, and sensory capabilities. Specifically, the bill requires each school district and other public school to establish a structured literacy certification process for certain teachers and, beginning in the 2020-2021 school year, to implement an annual dyslexia screening process for students in grades K-5. The bill also requires the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) to provide structured literacy program professional development for teachers in dyslexia screening and intervention practices and to establish the six-member Ohio Dyslexia Committee (ODC), which will collaborate with ODE to produce a dyslexia guidebook for public schools to provide guidance on acceptable structured literacy professional development programs, certification processes for teachers, and acceptable universal dyslexia screening and intervention methods for students in grades K-5.

Structured literacy certification

Beginning in the 2020-2021 school year, the bill requires each school district and other public school to establish a structured literacy certification process for teachers providing instruction for students in grades K-3. According to the International Dyslexia Association (IDA), structured literacy is evidence-based instruction that emphasizes the structure of language, including speech sounds (phonology); writing and spelling (orthography); the meaningful parts of words (morphology); grammar and sentence structure (syntax), the relationship between words, phrases, and sentences (semantics); and the organization of spoken and written language (discourse). The bill requires the process to align with ODC's guidelines for dyslexia screening and intervention and to require a practicum. The bill specifies certain student to teacher ratios for the number of teachers that must be certified under the structured literacy certification process for students in grades K-3. The ratios are shown in Table 1 below.

By the End of School Year	Number of K-3 Students Per Certified Teacher
2022-2023	200
2023-2024	150
2024-2025	100

In FY 2019, there were approximately 489,000 full-time equivalent public school students enrolled in grades K-3 throughout the state. Ultimately, the student-teacher ratios required by the bill will require an estimated 5,300 teachers to be certified by the end of the 2024-2025 school year.

Cost of certification

School districts are likely to pay the cost of the certifications for their teachers, according to an official with the Buckeye Association of School Administrators. This analysis assumes that all school districts and public schools will do so. If some do not, the cost will be lower. The cost may also be lower depending on the number of teachers that already have obtained a structured literacy certification. The cost for the certifications appears to vary depending on the certification program chosen and the fees charged by providers. One option may be the Center for Effective Reading Instruction (CERI), an affiliate of IDA, which offers two types of structured literacy certifications that include a practicum: one for dyslexia interventionists and another for dyslexia specialists, the latter of which carries additional training hour and practicum requirements. The fee for these initial certifications is \$290 for interventionists and \$315 for specialists. Annualized renewal fees are up to \$115 and \$140, respectively. Certification renewal requires completion of ten hours of continuing education each year. As a baseline, the following estimates the cost of a scenario in which all districts would seek certification for their teachers through CERI, though there are other programs that a district or school may wish to use (see more on that topic below). As Table 2 below shows, the cost for initial certification at the bill's fully phased-in student to teacher ratio for the 2024-2025 school year is estimated to be between \$1.5 million and \$1.7 million, assuming a similar number of students in grades K-3 each year.

School Type	Number of Students in Grades K-3 FY 2019	New Interventionist Certification Cost (\$290)	New Specialist Certification Cost (\$315)
Traditional	455,000	\$1.4 million	\$1.5 million
Community or STEM	34,000	\$129,000	\$140,000
Total	489,000	\$1.5 million	\$1.7 million

Table 3 below shows the range of total estimated costs for each school year for both structured literacy certifications and renewals at CERI fee levels. The actual cost would likely be somewhere in between depending on the mix of interventionist and specialist certifications. Across the first three school years, the total cost is estimated to be between \$2.3 million and \$2.6 million. Each year thereafter, the primary cost would be certification renewal. Annual renewal costs after the 2024-2025 school year are estimated to range from about \$608,000 to \$740,000.

Table 3. Total Estimated Annual Costs for Structured Literacy Certifications and Renewals		
School Year	Low Estimate	High Estimate
2022-2023	\$825,000	\$896,000
2023-2024	\$565,000	\$657,000
2024-2025	\$892,000	\$1.0 million
Total for First Three Years	\$2.3 million	\$2.6 million
Each Subsequent Year	\$608,000	\$740,000

Other structured literacy certification programs, such as the Wilson Language Program or Orton-Gillingham, may carry a higher cost per teacher. Training for the Wilson Language Program is provided at only select locations across the country. One district that participated in this program estimated that it cost \$5,200 per teacher to become fully certified, which includes covering accommodations and travel to training sessions. According to Wilson Language Training, the organization offers a limited number of comprehensive programs each year for school districts and schools considering certification for a group of educators though it is unclear if there are discounted fees for this option. A credential earned through the Wilson Language Program is valid for five years and may be renewed at a cost of \$150. The Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators indicates that the cost of training for the Orton-Gillingham approach, including coursework and practicum, varies by provider. Some anecdotal information obtained through an internet search suggests that the cost of Orton-Gillingham certification may be somewhat similar to the cost for the Wilson Language Program.

Dyslexia screening

Beginning in the 2020-2021 school year, the bill requires schools to administer a “tier one” dyslexia screening measure to each student in grades K-5 each school year. Districts may also administer a “tier two” screening measure at the same time. Districts must also report to each student’s parents or guardian the student’s result on the tier one screening within 60 days.

Students who are identified as at risk of dyslexia must be identified and have their progress monitored for six weeks. If the student does not show progress by the end of six weeks, the district must administer a tier two screening measure to the student (this requirement does not apply to districts that administer a tier two measure at the same time as a tier one measure). If the student scores below the 20th percentile and demonstrates markers for dyslexia, the district must provide his or her parents or guardian with information both about dyslexia’s risk factors and evidence-based interventions as well as the district’s structured literacy program.

School district expenditures are likely to increase to administer the screenings, report results and information to parents and guardians, and report data to ODE. In FY 2019, there

were approximately 746,000 full-time equivalent public school students enrolled in grades K-5 throughout the state. The cost to districts will vary depending on the screening methods ODC approves and schools choose. It may be that a single screening tool will not meet all of the bill's required screening elements. Thus, a blend of screening measures may be necessary. Nevertheless, as a point of reference, a common dyslexia screening tool, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) 8th Edition, which was developed and is maintained by the University of Oregon, provides reading benchmark screening and progress monitoring for \$1 per student per year. Another option, aimswebPlus Reading, published by Pearson, is offered for \$6.50 per student per year, which also offers screening and progress monitoring. There are a host of other screening measures that may be approved. There are also likely to be additional training costs associated with the particular screening measure and monitoring solution chosen. Therefore, it seems possible that school district and other public school costs for screening tools could reach into the millions of dollars annually statewide. New costs may be less to the extent that districts and schools are already in compliance with the bill's requirements.

Intervention services

According to the International Dyslexia Association, as many as 15% to 20% of the population has some symptoms of dyslexia. The bill's required screenings may increase the identification of students exhibiting signs of dyslexia. If so, district and other public school costs may increase to provide intervention services to more students. These costs will depend on how the intervention services are implemented. As a point of reference, the eight school districts that participated in a dyslexia screening and intervention pilot program from the 2012-2013 school year to the 2014-2015 school year were required to design and implement a tiered program of reading instructional support that included core instruction (tier I), core instruction plus strategic, small group reading intervention (tier II), and core instruction plus individualized, intensive instruction (tier III). In addition, the pilot project evaluation reports indicate that participating school districts were required to provide professional development in evidence-based reading instruction and multi-sensory structured language instruction to both general education teachers and intervention specialists serving students in grades K-2.

Special education services and state revenues

Additional students identified as at risk for dyslexia may lead to an increase in the number of students receiving special education services for a learning disability. As a result, school district and other public school expenditures and revenues may increase. For school funding purposes, students with dyslexia are included in special education category two, which includes students identified as specific learning disabled or developmentally disabled or identified as having a minor health impairment. Statewide, school districts and community schools reported 99,000 students as having a specific learning disability in FY 2019, representing 6.0% of statewide enrollment.

Increased costs for special education and related services for students with dyslexia may be partially offset by a gain in revenue from state foundation aid. The school foundation aid formula provides special education aid to assist districts to educate students with disabilities. In

general, the formula provides additional aid of \$4,005 per pupil for students in special education category two. This amount is equalized according to the district's state share index, which provides larger shares of state aid to low-wealth districts.¹ Community school students are provided the full per-pupil amount through a transfer from the resident district's state foundation aid.

Potential long-term savings

There may be longer term savings associated with providing early intervention services under the bill. Research on outcomes from the pilot project suggests that early identification and intervention services may prevent students from needing costlier interventions when they are older. An evaluation of the three years of the pilot project and a follow-up year for certain districts indicated "that the percentage of students identified as having an educational disability (which includes all disability types, not just a Specific Learning Disability in Reading) decreased for all three years of the Dyslexia Pilot Project and remained lower than the baseline in the follow-up year. Although the decreases in the percentage of students with disability are modest relative to the baseline, they indicate a promising outcome: The number of at-risk students entering special education eligibility as a result of their needs not being fully met in the general education program was less than it had been in the year prior to the Dyslexia Pilot Project, thus lowering the overall percentage of students with disabilities over the course of the Project."² If fewer students, therefore, require special education services as a result of more proactive intervention at an earlier age, school district costs for those services may decrease over time. Accordingly, state foundation formula revenues may decrease.

Multidisciplinary teams

The bill requires districts to establish a multidisciplinary team consisting of trained and certified personnel and a stakeholder with expertise in the identification, intervention, and remediation of dyslexia. This team will administer the screening and intervention measures and assess the results. The creation and operation of this team may increase administrative costs to districts dependent on the guidelines ODC provides.

Teacher professional development

Beginning in the 2020-2021 school year, the bill requires public school teachers providing instruction to students in grades K-1, including those providing special education instruction in those grades and grades 4-12, to complete an initial professional development course from a list of the courses approved by ODC. In the 2021-2022 school year, the provision extends to teachers providing instruction to students in grades 2-3, also including those

¹ H.B. 166 of the 133rd General Assembly suspends the operation of the current law state foundation formula during FY 2020 and FY 2021 and, instead, allocates to each school district, in both of those years, the same amount of state foundation aid received in FY 2019.

² Morrison, Julie Q. et al., Evaluation of the Dyslexia Pilot Project: Year 4. University of Cincinnati, October 2016, pg. 5. Accessible online at <https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Special-Education/Students-with-Disabilities/Specific-Learning-Disability/Dyslexia-Pilot-Project/DPP-Year-4-Evaluation-Report-10-27-16.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US>.

providing special education instruction in those grades. The courses must be from a list of those approved by ODE and must meet certain requirements. Teachers must complete at least 18 clock hours of instruction in approved courses to meet the requirement. The professional development must also include a practicum.

The bill requires ODE to provide this professional development. According to public school staffing data reported to ODE, school districts and community schools reported employing about 106,000 full-time equivalent teachers in FY 2019. Tens of thousands of teachers are likely to be required to complete the required courses. Given the breadth of the program, the costs could be significant. An internet search indicates, anecdotally, that such courses, which did not include a practicum, may total several hundred dollars or more. The practicum requirement, which may require a teacher to be supervised working with a student, would appear to increase costs further, perhaps substantially so. Thus, ODE's cost to deliver or pay for these programs could be in the millions of dollars.

Department of Education administrative costs

Several other provisions of the bill appear likely to lead to additional administrative costs for ODE, which is required to:

- Establish, in collaboration with IDA, the six-member Ohio Dyslexia Committee.
- Produce by June 30, 2020, a dyslexia guidebook regarding the best practices and methods for universal screening, intervention, and remediation.
- Assist school districts and other public schools in establishing multidisciplinary teams to support the identification, intervention, and remediation of dyslexia.
- Develop reporting mechanisms for districts and schools to submit the required information and data to the Department.
- Develop academic standards for kindergarten in reading and writing that incorporates a structured literacy program. The bill further requires that the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment adopted by the State Board of Education be aligned with these standards.