
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ):

SCR 120

&

Comprehensive Plan for Teaching Reading in Hawai'i Schools

International
DYSLEXIA
Association

Promoting literacy through research, education, and advocacy.

HAWAII BRANCH - HIDA

On April 25, 2013 the Hawai'i Legislature adopted Senate Concurrent Resolution 120 (SCR 120) which is the first step in implementing the *Comprehensive Plan for Teaching Reading in Hawai'i Schools*.

Are reading instruction methods used in Hawai'i schools adequate?

No. Children with dyslexia or other language-based disabilities (up to 20% of the population) generally cannot be taught to read with teaching methods typically used in Hawai'i schools today. Furthermore, the 2011 NAEP reading assessments found that 41% of Hawai'i's fourth graders and 32% of Hawai'i's eighth graders read below basic reading levels. There were only 4 states/jurisdictions in the U.S. which scored significantly below Hawai'i. The reading instruction methods are not adequate for students with dyslexia or these other literacy challenges.

What is SCR 120?

SCR 120 is a concurrent resolution (meaning that it was to be adopted by both the Senate and House of Representatives) that was introduced by the Senate Committee on Education in March 2013. In SCR 120 the Legislature requests that the Department of Education address the concerns raised in the *Comprehensive Plan for Teaching Reading in Hawai'i Schools* by evaluating the following items:

- (1) the promotion of awareness of dyslexia;
- (2) professional development available to educators to support students with dyslexia or other literacy challenges;
- (3) recommended staffing options and the funding required to create licensed literacy specialist positions statewide who meet requirements to be established by the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board and related operational and professional development budgetary needs;
- (4) working with the University of Hawai'i and Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board on the feasibility of licensing requirements for literacy specialists; and
- (5) establishing targeted complex area resources to strengthen comprehensive student support systems, including data-based decision making;

The Legislature also requests that the Department of Education submit a written report prior to the 2014 Legislative Session on the status of its efforts to provide comprehensive support services for students with dyslexia and other literacy challenges.

What is the *Comprehensive Plan for Teaching Reading in Hawai'i Schools*?

The *Comprehensive Plan for Teaching Reading in Hawai'i Schools* is a 100+ page plan drafted by a Working Group that was created by the Legislature in 2010 to develop a comprehensive plan for teaching reading in Hawai'i schools that would address the needs of students with dyslexia and other literacy challenges. The Working Group worked on the *Comprehensive Plan* for three years from 2010 into January 2013, and then presented it to the 2013 Senate and House Education Committees on January 14, 2013.

The Working Group consisted of representatives from the Hawai'i Department of Education, University of Hawai'i, Teacher Education Coordinating Committee, Special Education Advisory Council, Hawai'i Government Employees Association, Hawai'i Association of Independent Schools, Learning Disabilities Association of Hawai'i, Dyslexia Tutoring Center of Hawai'i, and Hawai'i Branch of the International Dyslexia Association.

What changes does the *Comprehensive Plan* recommend?

(1) All teachers shall have specific knowledge and skills in best practices for literacy instruction, strategy, and research-validated intervention;

(2) Teacher preparation programs provided by the University of Hawai'i and other universities and colleges in Hawai'i shall include appropriate literacy instruction curriculum content and practicum experience;

(3) The Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board shall implement licensure requirements relating to literacy instruction for all teachers;

(4) The Department of Education shall promote awareness about dyslexia and other reading disabilities and make available professional development to educators to support the enhancement of reading, writing, and spelling skills of students with dyslexia or other literacy challenges;

(5) Reading instruction programs in all schools shall include direct, explicit, structured, and systematic instruction in oral and written language with (a) early screening and assessment for identification of students with literacy challenges, including those displaying risk factors for dyslexia, (b) a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) including multisensory structured language education (MSL) and other research-validated interventions, within the response to intervention (RTI) model, and (c) evidence-based progress monitoring that uses this data in evaluations and decisions for instructional changes; and

(6) There shall be, in each school, at least one literacy specialist licensed by the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board who has advanced knowledge, experience, and abilities in teaching literacy skills, including reading skills, to students.

Did every member of the Working Group approve the *Comprehensive Plan*?

Yes. All members of the Working Group approved the *Comprehensive Plan* and agreed that literacy instruction in Hawai'i schools should be guided by the principles and practices described in the *Comprehensive Plan*.

Will the changes recommended in the *Comprehensive Plan* only help dyslexic students?

No. These changes will improve reading instruction for all students in Hawai'i public schools who struggle with reading.

Has there been progress in implementing the *Comprehensive Plan*?

Yes. On April 19, 2013, the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board added "Literacy Specialist" as a new educator license category. HIDA worked with the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board on the requirements for a Literacy Specialist license and, consistent with the *Comprehensive Plan*, recommended that the standards and practices adopted by the International Dyslexia Association be included in the requirements of the Literacy Specialist license. Beginning in summer 2015, the University of Hawai'i Manoa College of Education: Special Education and Curriculum Studies is offering a M.Ed. in Special Education - Literacy Specialist.

What will happen next?

HIDA hopes to participate in the Department of Education's evaluation of the items required by SCR 120, and plans to continue working with the Department of Education, the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board, and the University of Hawai'i and other universities in Hawai'i on implementation of the *Comprehensive Plan*.

For more information, contact HIDA's Executive Director, Margaret Higa, at the below email address or phone number, and ask to be put on HIDA's email list. The *Comprehensive Plan*, SCR 120, and the history of SCR 120 in the 2013 Legislature can be found at www.dyslexia-hawaii.org.