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Office

S.B. 102
133rd General Assembly

Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement

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Version: As Introduced

Primary Sponsors: Sens. Brenner and Lehner

Local Impact Statement Procedure Required: Yes

Jason Glover, Budget Analyst

Highlights

- School districts and community 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 an increase in state foundation aid for students receiving 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 more costly 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.
- State expenditures will increase to furnish the assessments school districts and community schools will use to screen children and ascertain the effectiveness of intervention services. This cost may be about \$177,000 per year based on the cost for an early literacy skill and progress monitoring assessment commonly used by districts.

Detailed Analysis

The bill requires each school district and community school to conduct early screenings and provide intervention services for children with risk factors for dyslexia under the Dyslexia Screening Program, expanding statewide a pilot program that operated in eight school districts from the 2012-2013 school year to the 2014-2015 school year. The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) must establish guidelines and procedures for the program in consultation with the International Dyslexia Association or another nationally recognized organization that specializes in the treatment of dyslexia. The bill also requires ODE to furnish any approved assessment used by a school district or school for purposes of the program.

School districts

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. The bill requires each district or school to do the following to identify and support children exhibiting signs of dyslexia: (1) screen children six years or younger for indications of dyslexia, (2) provide intervention services to children suspected of having dyslexia, and (3) administer assessments to determine whether the services have improved students' reading and learning. Districts or schools may establish a partnership with a library or library system for purposes of the program.

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 community 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 districts that participated in the pilot program 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 community 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 98,900 students as having a specific learning disability in FY 2018, representing 5.9% of statewide enrollment.

Increased school district and community school costs for special education and related services for students with dyslexia may be partially offset through a gain in revenues through the state foundation formula, which provides additional special education aid for students with disabilities. The formula currently assigns an additional amount of \$4,005 per pupil for students in special education category two. This amount is equalized according to the resident district's state share index, which provides larger shares of state aid to lower wealth districts. 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 more costly 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.”¹ 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.

Administrative costs

School district and community school administrative costs may increase to perform the following actions required by the bill: (1) notify the parents of a child who is suspected of having dyslexia that the child is eligible to receive reading intervention services, (2) provide parents of children suspected of having dyslexia with certain information related to dyslexia and treatment options, and (3) report annually to ODE about the operation and results of the program.

Ohio Department of Education

Assessments

As noted above, the bill requires ODE to furnish any assessment used by a school district or school for purposes of the screening and intervention program if it is approved by the Superintendent of Public Instruction, increasing the state’s assessment costs. In October 2018, there were over 177,000 students by headcount enrolled in preschool or kindergarten in public schools. One of the most common dyslexia screening tools, 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. If ODE were to furnish this product, the state’s cost would be about \$177,000 annually. The costs may be different if additional products are approved by the Superintendent of Public Instruction, depending on pricing negotiations with the vendors.

Administrative costs

ODE’s administrative costs may increase to establish guidelines and procedures for the program and to submit a report to the General Assembly by December 31, 2020 that evaluates the results of the program and provides legislative recommendations, if any.

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¹ Morrison, Julie Q. et al., *Evaluation of the Dyslexia Pilot Project: Year 4*. University of Cincinnati, October 2016, pg. 5. Accessible online at <http://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>.