STATE OF NEW YORK

7199

2021-2022 Regular Sessions

IN ASSEMBLY

April 29, 2021

Introduced by M. of A. THIELE -- read once and referred to the Committee on Education

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to the definition of a student with a disability

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. Subdivision 1 of section 4401 of the education law, as amended by chapter 378 of the laws of 2007, is amended to read as follows:

1. A "child with a disability" or "student with a disability" means a person under the age of twenty-one who is entitled to attend public schools pursuant to section thirty-two hundred two of this chapter and who, because of mental, physical or emotional reasons can only receive appropriate educational opportunities from a program of special education. Such term does not include a child whose educational needs are due primarily to unfamiliarity with the English language, environmental, cultural or economic factors. Lack of appropriate instruction in reading, including in the essential components of reading instruction as defined in subsection three of section twelve hundred eight of the elementary and secondary education act of nineteen hundred sixty-five, or lack of appropriate instruction in mathematics or limited English proficiency shall not be the determinant factor in identifying a student as a student with a disability. **Such disabilities shall include but not be limited to:**

(a) Autism means a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three, that adversely affects a student's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences. The term does not apply if a student's

EXPLANATION--Matter in *italics* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

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educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the student has an emotional disturbance as defined in paragraph (d) of this subdivision. A student who manifests the characteristics of autism after age three could be diagnosed as having autism if the criteria in this paragraph are otherwise satisfied.

(b) Deafness means a hearing impairment that is so severe that the student is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, that adversely affects a student's educational performance.

(c) Deaf-blindness means concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for students with deafness or students with blindness.

(d) Emotional disturbance means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a student's educational performance:

(1) an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors;

(2) an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers;

(3) inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances;

(4) a generally pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or

(5) a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems. The term includes schizophrenia. The term does not apply to students who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance.

(e) Hearing impairment means an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects the child's educational performance but that is not included under the definition of deafness in this section.

(f) Learning disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which manifests itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, and developmental aphasia. The term does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing or motor disabilities, of an intellectual disability, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage.

(g) Intellectual disability means significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a student's educational performance.

(h) Multiple disabilities means concomitant impairments (such as intellectual disability-blindness, intellectual disability-orthopedic impairment, etc.), the combination of which cause such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in a special education program solely for one of the impairments. The term does not include deaf-blindness.

(i) Orthopedic impairment means a severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a student's educational performance. The term includes impairments caused by congenital anomaly (e.g., clubfoot, absence of some member, etc.), impairments caused by disease (e.g., poliomyelitis,

bone tuberculosis, etc.), and impairments from other causes (e.g., cerebral palsy, amputation, and fractures or burns which cause contractures).

(j) Other health-impairment means having limited strength, vitality or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that is due to chronic or acute health problems, including but not limited to a heart condition, tuberculosis, rheumatic fever, nephritis, asthma, sickle cell anemia, hemophilia, epilepsy, lead poisoning, leukemia, diabetes, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or tourette syndrome, which adversely affects a student's educational performance.

(k) Speech or language impairment means a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment or a voice impairment, that adversely affects a student's educational performance.

(l) Traumatic brain injury means an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force or by certain medical conditions such as stroke, encephalitis, aneurysm, and anoxia or brain tumors with resulting impairments that adversely affect educational performance. The term includes open or closed head injuries or brain injuries from certain medical conditions resulting in mild, moderate or severe impairments in one or more areas, including cognition, language, memory, attention, reasoning, abstract thinking, judgment, problem solving, sensory, perceptual and motor abilities, psychosocial behavior, physical functions, information processing, and speech. The term does not include injuries that are congenital or caused by birth trauma.

(m) Visual impairment including blindness means an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a student's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness.

(n) Dyslexia means a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized at the level of a keen observer as frustration, withdrawal, anxiety, aversion to homework and schoolwork, underperformance, and an undoing of the personal sense of ability, psycho-somatic symptoms that are triggered by school-failure to read or perform well at spelling, written expression or other language tasks, or mixing up right and left hands. Other observable characteristics include difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.

1-a. "Special education" means specially designed instruction which includes special services or programs as delineated in subdivision two of this section, and transportation, provided at no cost to the parents to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability. A "child with a handicapping condition" means a child with a disability.

§ 2. Subdivision 1 of section 4401 of the education law, as amended by chapter 311 of the laws of 1999, is amended to read as follows:

1. A "child with a disability" or "student with a disability" means a person under the age of twenty-one who is entitled to attend public schools pursuant to section thirty-two hundred two of this chapter and who, because of mental, physical or emotional reasons can only receive appropriate educational opportunities from a program of special education. Such term does not include a child whose educational needs are due

primarily to unfamiliarity with the English language, environmental, cultural or economic factors. Lack of instruction in reading or mathematics or limited English proficiency shall not be the determinant factor in identifying a student as a student with a disability. Such disabilities shall include but not be limited to:

(a) Autism means a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three, that adversely affects a student's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences. The term does not apply if a student's educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the student has an emotional disturbance as defined in paragraph (d) of this subdivision. A student who manifests the characteristics of autism after age three could be diagnosed as having autism if the criteria in this paragraph are otherwise satisfied.

(b) Deafness means a hearing impairment that is so severe that the student is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, that adversely affects a student's educational performance.

(c) Deaf-blindness means concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for students with deafness or students with blindness.

(d) Emotional disturbance means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a student's educational performance:

(1) an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors;

(2) an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers;

(3) inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances;

(4) a generally pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or

(5) a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems. The term includes schizophrenia. The term does not apply to students who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance.

(e) Hearing impairment means an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects the child's educational performance but that is not included under the definition of deafness in this section.

(f) Learning disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which manifests itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, and developmental aphasia. The term does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing or motor disabilities, of an intellectual disability, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage.

(g) Intellectual disability means significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adap-

tive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a student's educational performance.

(h) Multiple disabilities means concomitant impairments (such as intellectual disability-blindness, intellectual disability-orthopedic impairment, etc.), the combination of which cause such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in a special education program solely for one of the impairments. The term does not include deaf-blindness.

(i) Orthopedic impairment means a severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a student's educational performance. The term includes impairments caused by congenital anomaly (e.g., clubfoot, absence of some member, etc.), impairments caused by disease (e.g., poliomyelitis, bone tuberculosis, etc.), and impairments from other causes (e.g., cerebral palsy, amputation, and fractures or burns which cause contractures).

(j) Other health-impairment means having limited strength, vitality or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that is due to chronic or acute health problems, including but not limited to a heart condition, tuberculosis, rheumatic fever, nephritis, asthma, sickle cell anemia, hemophilia, epilepsy, lead poisoning, leukemia, diabetes, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or tourette syndrome, which adversely affects a student's educational performance.

(k) Speech or language impairment means a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment or a voice impairment, that adversely affects a student's educational performance.

(l) Traumatic brain injury means an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force or by certain medical conditions such as stroke, encephalitis, aneurysm, and anoxia or brain tumors with resulting impairments that adversely affect educational performance. The term includes open or closed head injuries or brain injuries from certain medical conditions resulting in mild, moderate or severe impairments in one or more areas, including cognition, language, memory, attention, reasoning, abstract thinking, judgment, problem solving, sensory, perceptual and motor abilities, psychosocial behavior, physical functions, information processing, and speech. The term does not include injuries that are congenital or caused by birth trauma.

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(n) Dyslexia means a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized at the level of a keen observer as frustration, withdrawal, anxiety, aversion to homework and schoolwork, underperformance, and an undoing of the personal sense of ability, psycho-somatic symptoms that are triggered by school-failure to read or perform well at spelling, written expression or other language tasks, or mixing up right and left hands. Other observable characteristics include difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.

1-a. "Special education" means specially designed instruction which includes special services or programs as delineated in subdivision two of this section, and transportation, provided at no cost to the parents to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability. A "child with a handicapping condition" means a child with a disability.

§ 3. This act shall take effect immediately; provided, however, that it shall not affect any student's individualized education program that has been approved for the 2021-2022 school year; provided, further, that the amendments to subdivision 1 of section 4401 of the education law made by section one of this act shall be subject to the expiration and reversion of such subdivision pursuant to section 22 of chapter 352 of the laws of 2005, as amended, when upon such date the provisions of section two of this act shall take effect.