Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Implementation Guide: Early Screening of Dyslexia

2020

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE: EARLY SCREENING OF DYSLEXIA

2020

Glenna Gallo, M.S., M.B.A.
Assistant Superintendent of Special Education

Kathe Taylor, Ph.D.
Assistant Superintendent of Learning and Teaching

Prepared by:

- **Aira Jackson**, Director of English Language Arts and Literacy
  aira.jackson@k12.wa.us | 360-725-6228

- **Benjamin Everett**, English Language Arts Administrative Assistant
  ben.everett@k12.wa.us | 360-725-6064

- **Dr. Alicia Roberts Frank**, Regional Administrator for Special Programs/Dyslexia Specialist
  Capital Region Educational Service District 113
  arobertsfrank@esd113.org | 360-464-6843

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WRITTEN BY THE DYSLEXIA ADVISORY COUNCIL

Dr. Alicia Roberts Frank
Capital Region ESD 113
Dyslexia Specialist Representative

Andrea Archer
International Dyslexia Association
Non-Profit Representative

Angie Withers
Richland School District
School Psychologist Representative

Annie Pennell
Office of Superintendent of Public
Instruction (OSPI)
Learning Assistance Program
Representative

Barb Casey
Prospect Point Elementary
Special Education Representative

Effie Triol
ESD 112
Literacy Coordinator Representative

Elizabeth Sorby
Private Practice
School Psychologist Representative

Heather Awbery
West Valley School
District Administrator Representative

Hilary Conville
Auburn School District
Special Education Representative

Dr. Jennifer McDonald
Steilacoom School District
School Board Representative

Jennifer Sicilia
Spokane School District
Parent & Teacher Representative

Jey Buno
Evergreen Public Schools
School Psychologist Representative

Jodi Kinzel
Bellingham School District
Literacy Specialist Representative

Julie Savelesky
Camas School District
Elementary School Representative

Justyn Poulos
OSPI
MTSS Representative

Karma Hugo
OSPI
Early Learning Representative

Kathleen Rice
Independent Contractor
Literacy Coordinator Representative

Lauren Barkley
Ferndale School District
Elementary School Representative

Dr. LaWonda Smith
Muckleshoot Tribal School
Literacy Specialist Representative

Liz Coon
Seattle Public Schools
Elementary School Representative

Liz Stewart
OSPI
Special Education Representative

Dr. Marsha Riddle Buly
Western Washington University
English Language Learner
Representative

Mary Waldron
Puget Sound ESD 121
Early Learning Coordinator
Representative

Dr. Michael Dunn
Washington State University
Vancouver
Dyslexia Expert Representative

Michelle Lewis
Sumner School District School
Administrator Representative

Dr. Molly Branson Thayer
University of Washington
Higher Education Representative

Morgan Sampson
OSPI Student Information
Representative

Nova Williams
Mercer Island School District
School Administrator Representative

Patricia Beuke
Olympic ESD 114
Literacy Coordinator Representative

Patsy Guglielmino
Colville School District
District Administrator Representative

Sara Buetow
Decoding Dyslexia
Dyslexia Non-Profit Representative

Shannon Criss
Boistfort School District
Rural School Superintendent
Representative

Shauna L Schmerer
Almira School District
Superintendent Representative

Shelley O'Dell
Shelton Public Schools
Literacy Specialist Representative

Suzanne Ender
Parent Representative

Dr. Yoshiko Schulz
University Place School District
English Language Learner
Representative

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PURPOSE OF IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

This guide has been created by the Dyslexia Advisory Council (DAC) to support Washington school districts in implementing the Early Screening of Dyslexia statute expectations, starting in fall 2021.

Visit OSPI's "**Understanding Dyslexia**" webpage to learn more about the Early Screening of Dyslexia Statute and work of the Dyslexia Advisory Council.

The guidance provided by the DAC encompasses evidence-based resources and best practices that can be used alongside the diversity of curriculum and assessment systems used by Washington school districts. It is the belief of the DAC that these recommended practices will enhance the implementation efforts of educators and school districts to support all students in their reading and literacy development.

EARLY SCREENING OF DYSLEXIA STATUTE

Definition of Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a specific learning disorder that is neurological in origin and is characterized by unexpected difficulties with accurate or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities that are not consistent with the person's intelligence, motivation, and sensory capabilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological components of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge (Senate Bill 6162 (2018)).

Dyslexia Advisory Council

"The superintendent of public instruction shall convene a dyslexia advisory council to advise the superintendent on matters relating to dyslexia in an academic setting. The council must include interested stakeholders including, but not limited to, literacy and dyslexia experts, special education experts, primary school teachers, school administrators, school psychologists, representatives of school boards, and representatives of nonprofit organizations with expertise in dyslexia. Members of the council must serve without compensation.

By June 1, 2019, the council must identify and describe screening tools and resources that satisfy developmental and academic criteria, including considerations of validity and reliability, that indicate typical literacy development or dyslexia, taking into account typical child neurological development, and report this information to the superintendent of public instruction.

By June 1, 2020, the council must develop recommendations and report to the superintendent of public instruction regarding:

a) Best practices for school district implementation of screenings as required under section 2 of this act, including trainings for school district staff conducting the screenings;
b) Best practices for using multitiered systems of support to provide interventions as required under section 2 of this act, including trainings for school district staff in instructional methods specifically targeting students' areas of weakness;
c) Sample educational information for parents and families related to dyslexia that includes a list of resources for parental support; and
d) Best practices to address the needs of students above grade two who show indications of, or areas of weakness associated with, dyslexia." (RCW 28A.300.710)

Early Screening in Grades K–2

"By September 1, 2019, the superintendent of public instruction, after considering recommendations from the dyslexia advisory council convened under RCW 28A.300.710, must identify screening tools and resources that, at a minimum, meet the following best practices to:
a) Satisfy developmental and academic criteria, including considerations of validity and reliability, that indicate typical literacy development or dyslexia, taking into account typical child neurological development; and
b) Identify indicators and areas of weakness that are highly predictive of future reading difficulty including phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, rapid naming skills, letter sound knowledge, and family history of difficulty with reading and language acquisition. Beginning September 1, 2019, the superintendent of public instruction must maintain on the agency's web site the list of screening tools and resources identified under this section and must include links to the tools and resources, when available." (RCW 28A.300.700)

Intervention Support and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)

"Beginning in the 2021–22 school year, and as provided in this section, each school district must use multitiered systems of support to provide interventions to students in kindergarten through second grade who display indications of, or areas of weakness associated with, dyslexia. In order to provide school districts with the opportunity to intervene before a student's performance falls significantly below grade level, school districts must screen students in kindergarten through second grade for indications of, or areas associated with, dyslexia as provided in this section. (2)(a) School districts must use screening tools and resources that exemplify best practices, as described under RCW 28A.300.700." (RCW 28A.320.260)

UNDERSTANDING ACADEMIC SCREENING TOOLS

What Academic Screening Tools Are

Screening tools are brief, reliable, and valid assessments used to assist educators with identifying students who are at-risk or not at-risk for specific academic difficulties and or dyslexia.

Universal screening tools have the following characteristics:
- Quick and targeted assessments of discrete skills that indicate whether students are making adequate progress in reading achievement.
- Alternate equivalent forms so they can be administered three to four times a year.
- Standardized directions for administration and scoring.
- Established reliability and validity standards.
- Culturally and linguistically responsive for Washington students.

Why use Academic Screening Tools

- Screening tools serve the purpose of assessing how well all students are responding to core instruction and if a student is at risk for reduced learning outcomes.
- Screening tools can provide schools and educators with data to modify or adjust core instruction or if a new or additional intervention is needed.
- Data from screening tools may help schools and districts evaluate the effectiveness of their instruction and intervention program(s).

Considerations for Using Academic Screening Tools

Screening instruments, including those for learning disabilities, have most or all of the following characteristics:
- Helpful in determining the need for future testing
- Quick to administer, score, and interpret
- Appropriate for large numbers of persons
- May sometimes be administered in group settings, narrow in focus, able to provide a superficial assessment of several areas, such as language, motor, or social skills

DYSLEXIA FACT SHEET

Beginning in the 2021–22 school year, each school district will screen students in grades K–2 for weaknesses in literacy skill(s) development that may be associated with dyslexia.

About Dyslexia

Dyslexia is:
- A difference in the brain that makes processing speech sounds difficult, specifically the ability to hear, substitute, and change individual sounds in words.
- Characterized by challenges with reading and spelling, particularly with the connections between letters and sounds.
- Likely to lead to problems learning and remembering vocabulary, understanding what is read, and getting thoughts on paper.
- Not related to overall intelligence.
- Not a visual problem or caused by a lack of motivation, interest, exposure to rich literature, or ineffective classroom instruction.

VIDEO: **What is Dyslexia/Dyslexia Explained** by Margie Gillis with Understood.org

Focus on Strengths

A child with dyslexia may struggle with reading, writing, and speaking, but also may have talents and interests that should be encouraged. They **may** have strong verbal and thinking skills, such as:
- Creative, outside-of-the box problem-solving skills
- Listening skills
- Imagination and curiosity
- Skills recognizing patterns
- Building, assembling, and working with objects
- Athletic, artistic, or musical skills

Common Struggles

Each Child is Different

Dyslexia looks different for each child and across ages and stages. It is common for people with dyslexia to struggle pronouncing words with two or more syllables, as well as the symptoms below.

Pre-School through Kindergarten
- Delayed speech (age 2–3)
- Following directions
- Learning and remembering letter names
- Rhyming

Early School Years
- Connecting letters to sounds
- Getting thoughts on paper

- Following multi-step directions
- Memorizing math facts and solving word problems
- Slow or choppy reading, even with very small or common words
- Leaving out words, parts of words, and sounds when reading
- Poor and inconsistent spelling
- Mixing up terms for concepts and objects (i.e., bagel/doughnut)
- Avoidance behaviors

Later School Years
- Reading aloud
- Reading and writing words with two or more syllables
- Keeping up with large amounts of reading and writing
- Writing tasks (assignments, essays, emails, taking notes, etc.)
- Learning a foreign language

What Helps?

With appropriate instruction and supports, a child with dyslexia can learn to read and write. Beneficial instruction is clear and based on evidence-based practices that are aligned with educational research and science.

Connecting with Schools

A family/school partnership is essential for student success. The first step when a parent or guardian is concerned about their child's progress is to make an appointment to talk to the teacher to discuss:
- The parent or guardian's concerns and questions
- The teacher's concerns and questions
- Steps to learn more about the child's struggles and needs
- A follow-up meeting to share findings and discuss connecting instruction to the child's needs

Classroom Supports

Accommodations Create Access

In addition to appropriate instruction, accommodations help children with dyslexia in the classroom and increase their independence. Some supports that students find helpful include:
- Extended time for reading and writing
- Breaking up long assignments
- A quiet place for studying and testing
- Audiobooks (including for textbooks) or computer support for reading (i.e., Bookshare or Learning Ally)
- Computers with dictation software
- Closed captions when watching videos to reinforce word knowledge. See ORBIDA for more information.

Social/Emotional Support

Build on Strengths and Advocacy Skills

Children with dyslexia may also struggle with self-esteem, anxiety, and depression. Parents and guardians can foster positive attitudes and resiliency by:

- Discovering and encouraging their child's strengths, interests, and passions
- Pursuing hands-on learning opportunities about their community and world
- Reading to their children, watching videos, and listening to texts on current classroom topics
- Focusing on their child's progress and success
- Teaching their child:
  - that everyone has strengths and struggles
  - how to ask for help and talk about their needs (self-advocacy)

More Resources

- OSPI's Dyslexia Site and Resource Guide
- International Dyslexia Association (IDA) Washington Branch of IDA
- Spanish information on dyslexia
- National Center for Improving Literacy
- Understood
- University of Michigan Dyslexia Help
- Parents and guardians can watch this one with their kids: See Dyslexia Differently

BEST PRACTICES FOR LITERACY SCREENING: SCHOOL AND DISTRICT ADMINISTRATORS

Beginning in the 2021–22 school year, each school district will screen students in grades K–2 for weaknesses in literacy skill(s) development that may be associated with dyslexia.

Academic Screeners

Academic screeners are brief, reliable, and valid assessments used to assist educators with identifying students who may be at risk for specific academic difficulties.

Academic screening tools are:
- Quick and targeted assessments of discrete skills.
- Standardized for administration and scoring.
- Culturally and linguistically responsive for Washington students.

An academic screener is **NOT** a tool to diagnose dyslexia.

Skills that Should be Screened

Literacy screening tools should assess the following skills, as required by state law:
- Phonemic Awareness
- Phonological Awareness
- Letter Sound Knowledge
- Rapid Automatized Naming (RAN)—Please note that although RAN skills can improve, they cannot be pre-taught or remediated.

Screening Process

To assist districts in understanding how the K–2 Literacy Screening fits in the overall assessment landscape, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the Dyslexia Advisory Council have published a Recommended Timeline for the literacy skills in each grade from K–2.

The specific process for each school district will vary based on the publisher's recommendations of the screeners that the district chooses. The OSPI/Dyslexia Advisory Council created a crosswalk that can inform districts' choices. Phonological Awareness, Phonemic Awareness, and Letter Sound Knowledge should be administered each year to students in all three grade levels.

- Students who enroll mid-year should be screened with their peers at the next screening date.
- Students should complete the Rapid Automatic Naming assessment only once, at least four weeks after enrollment.
- If a student in K–2 demonstrates a deficit area on the initial screener, progress should be monitored.
- A team should analyze the reports and determine interventions via multi-tiered system of support.
- Families should always be engaged in decision making and informed of student performance.
- If, after providing multi-tiered interventions, the student continues to have indications of

dyslexia then the school district must recommend to the student's parents and family that the student be evaluated for dyslexia or a specific learning disability.

Who Receives Screening

Students in grades K–2 will be screened.

Guidance for students who are English language learners: A screening tool should be a translated assessment (by the publisher) and be administered by a fluent speaker in the student's strongest language.

Administration of Literacy Screening Tools

- In order to most effectively provide instruction and interventions, screening tools should be administered by the certificated classroom teacher of record.
- It is the local education agency (LEA) building administrator's responsibility to ensure that all teachers in grades K–2 attend the district's selected screener's professional learning and are trained in administration of screening tools according to the recommendations of the publisher.
- The LEA along with building administrators should develop a professional learning and training schedule for the onboarding of new educators and staff.

Why Early Screening is Essential

Three important research findings support early screening for risk of dyslexia:
- Patterns of reading development are established early.
- Reading problems can be prevented and remediated through early identification and intervention.
- Without intense interventions, struggling readers do not eventually "catch up" and may be at risk for further academic failure.

See Screening for Dyslexia for more information.

About Dyslexia

Dyslexia is:
- An often-inherited neurological difference that impairs processing the phonological (sound) aspect of language, specifically the ability to perceive and manipulate the individual sounds in words, which can lead to problems with vocabulary development, reading comprehension, and written expression.
- Characterized by challenges with reading and spelling, particularly with the development of the connections between letters and sounds.
- Not related to overall intelligence or sensory capabilities.
- Not caused by a lack of motivation, interest, or ineffective classroom instruction.

VIDEO: What is Dyslexia/Dyslexia Explained by Margie Gillis with Understood.org

More Resources

- OSPI's Dyslexia Webpage
- OSPI's Multi-Tiered System of Supports Webpage
- OSPI's Frequently Asked Questions: Early Literacy Screening
- OSPI's English Language Arts Best Practices Menu
- National Center for Improving Literacy: Dyslexia Toolkit
- Washington Branch of the International Dyslexia Association

BEST PRACTICES FOR LITERACY SCREENING: EDUCATORS

Beginning in the 2021–22 school year, each school district will screen students in grades K–2 for weaknesses in literacy skill(s) development that may be associated with dyslexia.

Who Receives Screening

Students in grades K–2 will be screened. English learners should receive screenings in their strongest/home language whenever possible.

Academic Screeners

Academic screeners are brief, reliable, and valid assessments used to assist educators with identifying students who may be at risk for specific academic difficulties.

Academic screening tools are:
- Quick and targeted assessments of discrete skills.
- Standardized for administration and scoring.
- Culturally and linguistically responsive for Washington students.

An academic screener is **NOT** a tool to diagnose dyslexia.

Administration of Literacy Screenings

- In order to most effectively provide instruction and interventions, screening tools should be administered by the certificated classroom teacher of record.
- It is the local education agency (LEA) building administrator's responsibility to ensure that all teachers in grades K–2 attend the district's selected screener's professional learning and are trained in administration of screening tools according to the recommendations of the publisher.
- The LEA along with building administrators should develop a professional learning and training schedule for the onboarding of new educators and staff.

Screening Process

Each school district's process will vary based on the recommendations of the publishers of the screening tools they choose.

The OSPI/Dyslexia Advisory Council published a Recommended Timeline for the literacy skills in each grade from K–2. These recommendations include:
- Phonological Awareness, Phonemic Awareness, and Letter Sound Knowledge should be assessed each year in all three grade levels.
- Students who enroll mid-year should be screened with their peers at the next screening date.
- The Rapid Automatic Naming should be administered only once, at least four weeks after

enrollment.
- If a student in K–2 demonstrates a deficit area on the initial screener, progress should be monitored.
- Following the screening and/or progress monitoring, a designated staff person should compile the data and distribute screening reports to the school's support team.
- The school's support team should analyze the reports to determine interventions via a multi-tiered system of support.
- Families should always be engaged in decision making and updated on student performance.
- If students continue to display weaknesses consistent with dyslexia after receiving tiered interventions, the school district must recommend an evaluation for the presence of a specific learning disability.

Skills that Should be Screened

- Phonemic Awareness: the ability to hear, identify, delete and change the sounds of spoken words.
- Phonological Awareness: ability with recognizing broader speech sounds such as rhyme, alliteration, the number of words in a sentence, and the syllables within words.
  For more information on these skills, see Reading Rockets and National Center for Improving Literacy.
- Letter Sound Knowledge: knowledge of the sounds represented by the letters of the alphabet. (This also includes combinations of letters that represent speech sounds.)
  For more information on these skills, see Reading Rockets and National Center for Improving Literacy.
- Rapid Automatized Naming (RAN): the ability to quickly name aloud a series of familiar items. This includes letters, numbers, colors, and objects found in a classroom.
  Please note that although RAN skills can improve, they cannot be pre-taught or remediated. For more information on RAN, see Understood.org.

About Dyslexia

Dyslexia is:
- An often-inherited neurological difference that makes processing speech sounds difficult, specifically the ability to hear, substitute, and change individual sounds in words, which can lead to problems with vocabulary development, reading comprehension, and written expression.
- Characterized by challenges with reading and spelling, particularly with the development of the connections between letters and sounds.
- Not related to overall intelligence or sensory capabilities.
- Not caused by a lack of motivation, interest, or ineffective classroom instruction.

VIDEO: What is Dyslexia/Dyslexia Explained by Margie Gillis with Understood.org

Fact Sheets

- Dyslexia Fact Sheet
- Defining Dyslexia
- ORBIDA Dyslexia Fact Sheet
- Understood Fact Sheet

More Resources

- OSPI's Dyslexia webpage
- OSPI's MTSS webpage
- OSPI's English Language Arts Menu of Best Practices
- National Center for Improving Literacy: Dyslexia Toolkit
- Washington Branch of the International Dyslexia Association
- Reading Rockets

UNDERSTANDING LITERACY SCREENING: PARENTS AND FAMILIES

Beginning in the 2021–22 school year, each school district will screen students in grades K–2 for weaknesses in literacy skill(s) development that may be associated with dyslexia.

About Literacy Screeners

An academic screener is:

- A short, informal test that is given to all students to determine whether further testing is needed.
- Not a formal evaluation for learning difficulties.

Why Children are Screened

- Early and intense intervention to address reading difficulties is the best way to prevent early problems from becoming more severe over time.
- With early identification and early intervention, students at risk for reading difficulties, including dyslexia, can succeed in school and graduate ready for college, career, and civic life.

Administration of the Screening

- Students should be screened by their classroom teachers. Children do their best work when they are comfortable and feel safe with familiar adults.
- The information that teachers learn through the screening will help them plan instruction and determine when additional help is needed.

Skills that will be Screened

- Phonemic Awareness: the ability to hear, identify, move, and change the smallest units of sound in spoken words
- Phonological Awareness: knowledge of speech sounds such as rhyming, alliteration (words that start with the same sound), the number of words in a sentence, and syllables within words
- Letter Sound Knowledge: the sounds represented by the letters of the alphabet. This also includes combinations of letters that represent speech sounds.
- Rapid Automatic Naming: the ability to quickly name aloud a series of familiar items. This includes letters, numbers, colors, and objects found in a classroom.

Screening Process

Each school district will choose their own academic screeners and adopt their own timelines. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the Dyslexia Advisory Council recommend the following administration of academic screening:

- Schools should screen students' Phonemic Awareness, Phonological Awareness, and Letter Sound Knowledge at least once a year.
    - o Kindergarten: January
    - o 1st and 2nd grade: Fall

- Students who enroll mid-year should be screened with their peers at the next screening date.
- Schools should screen students' Rapid Automatic Naming Skills only once.
- Students who demonstrate deficit areas on the initial screener will receive additional interventions and their progress will be monitored.
- Teachers administering the screener will be trained to use the screening tools according to the publisher's recommendations.
- Families will be engaged in decision making and updated on student performance.

About Dyslexia

Dyslexia is:

VIDEO: [What is Dyslexia/Dyslexia Explained](#) by Margie Gillis with Understood.org

- A difference that makes processing speech sounds difficult, specifically the ability to hear, substitute, and change individual sounds in words.
- Characterized by challenges with reading and spelling, particularly with the connections between letters and sounds.
- Likely to lead to problems learning and remembering vocabulary, understanding what is read, getting thoughts on paper.
- Not related to overall intelligence.
- Not a visual problem or caused by a lack of motivation, interest, or exposure to rich literature.

Learn More

Your child's teacher can answer questions about the screening tools used at your school.

Below are links to helpful websites about dyslexia (a common reading and writing disability) and other learning disabilities:

- [National Center on Improving Literacy: Dyslexia Toolkit](#)
- [Washington Branch of the International Dyslexia Association](#)
- [Understood.org](#)
- [LDOnline](#)
- [OSPI Dyslexia Page](#)

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