



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Dyslexia Guidance: Implementing MTSS for Literacy

2024

DYSLEXIA GUIDANCE: IMPLEMENTING MTSS FOR LITERACY

2024

Jon R. Mishra, Ed.D.

Assistant Superintendent of Elementary, Early Learning, and Federal Programs

Tania May, Ed.D.

Assistant Superintendent of Special Education

Maria Flores, M.P.A.

Executive Director of Center for the Improvement of Student Learning

Prepared by:

- **Alicia Roberts Frank, Ed.D.**, Regional Administrator for Special Programs/Dyslexia Specialist with Capital Region Educational Service District 113
arobertsfrank@esd113.org | 360-464-6843
- **Annie Pennell, M.Ed.**, Learning Assistance Program Supervisor
annie.pennell@k12.wa.us | 360-725-6190
- **Carey Kirkwood, M.Ed.**, Associate Director of Elementary English Language Arts
carey.kirkwood@k12.wa.us | 360-995-3235
- **Rebecca Estock, M.S.**, Integrated Student Supports Program Supervisor
rebecca.estock@k12.wa.us | 360-972-5258



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background and Requirements	5
Purpose of Guide	5
Legislation.....	5
Definition of Dyslexia.....	5
Requirements	5
Implementation of Best Practices	7
Multi-Tiered System of Supports	7
Components of MTSS	7
Recommendations.....	7
Family and Caregiver Engagement	8
Sample Communication Talking Points.....	9
Resources for Families.....	10
Screening.....	10
Characteristics of Screeners	11
The Screening Process.....	11
Screening Considerations for Multilingual Learners.....	15
Instruction and Intervention	18
Structured Literacy.....	18
Instruction & Intervention Considerations for Multilingual Learners	26
Supporting Educators.....	26
Appendices.....	28
Technical Assistance.....	28
References	28
Contributors	29
Resources and Tools	31
Dyslexia Fact Sheet.....	31
More Resources.....	33
Components of MTSS Recommendations	34
Sample Communication Talking Points.....	35
Resources for Families.....	36
Structured Literacy Implemented through MTSS	37

Elements of Structured Literacy.....	38
Legal Notice	41

BACKGROUND AND REQUIREMENTS

Purpose of Guide

The Dyslexia Advisory Council (DAC) and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) created this guide to support local education agencies (LEAs) and schools in implementing the requirements of [ESSB 6162](#).

Visit OSPI's [About Dyslexia](#) webpage to learn more about ESSB 6162 and the work of the DAC.

Every child—regardless of income level, zip code, or the education level of their parents—has the right to learn to read. Learning to read and write is imperative for academic success; students who complete K–12 education without adequate literacy skills can face social and economic inequities compared to their peers. Ensuring educational equity requires that educational leaders examine current literacy policies and practices and make decisions based on the needs of their students and communities.

This guide supports educational leaders and practitioners by outlining best practices and evidence-based resources that support the wide variety of curriculum and assessment practices used throughout Washington state. The DAC recommends these practices to enhance the implementation efforts of educators and LEAs to support all students in their reading and literacy development, including students with reading difficulties such as dyslexia.

Legislation

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 or 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. In addition, the difficulties are not typically the result of ineffective classroom practices. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge" ([RCW 28A.320.250](#)).

Requirements

- **Screen:** Administer screening to students in grades K–2 for risk indicators that are associated with dyslexia and 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 development. LEAs must use screening tools and resources that exemplify best practices, as described under [RCW 28A.300.700](#).

- **Intervene:** Provide evidence-based multisensory structured literacy interventions to students in grades K–2 who are at risk for reading difficulties, such as dyslexia. These interventions must be provided by an educator trained in instructional methods specifically targeting students' areas of weakness and must be consistent with the MTSS recommendations from the DAC. The DAC recommends that LEAs provide all students with universal instruction and supports that are evidence-based, universally designed, culturally and linguistically responsive, and aligned to interventions, as part of their MTSS. If screening tools and resources indicate that a student needs targeted or intensive intervention, the LEA may provide the interventions in coordination with other programs in the setting that works best for the student. If after receiving interventions, further screening tools and resources indicate that the student continues to display risk indicators associated with dyslexia, the LEA must recommend to the student's family and caregivers that the student be evaluated for a specific learning disability, such as dyslexia. Evaluations for special education eligibility under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) are coordinated through a special education referral with the school administrator, student support team, or LEA special education program. In accordance with child-find under IDEA (34 CFR §300.301(b)), a warranted full evaluation cannot be delayed.
- **Communicate:** For students who are at risk for reading difficulties, such as dyslexia, LEAs must notify the student's family and caregivers of the identified indicators from the literacy screening results and the intervention plan. They must also regularly update the family and caregiver on the student's progress.

LEAs annually report to OSPI the number and grade levels of students who were screened for risk associated with reading difficulties, including dyslexia ([RCW 28A.320.270](#)).

IMPLEMENTATION OF BEST PRACTICES

Multi-Tiered System of Supports

[Multi-Tiered System of Supports \(MTSS\)](#) is a prevention-based framework by which LEAs and schools create equitable, consistent, and flexible systems and supports that empower educators, students, families, and communities to ensure growth for every student. Implementation of [MTSS](#) includes universal screening, early intervention within a continuum of supports, and regular progress monitoring. In accordance with [RCW 28A.320.260](#), LEAs must use MTSS consistent with the DAC's recommendations to provide screening and interventions to students in kindergarten through second grade who are at risk for reading difficulties, such as dyslexia. LEAs and schools use MTSS to provide timely and accessible interventions and supports to every PK–12 student.

Components of MTSS

When creating a framework for literacy within MTSS, LEAs need to consider their current policies, resources, and capacity. The DAC recommends using the [Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory \(R-TFI\)](#) to guide school leadership teams in the development of a continuum of literacy instruction and supports within MTSS. The R-TFI can also support LEAs in assessing the extent to which the literacy components of MTSS are implemented; it provides guidance for continuous improvement (St. Martin et al., 2022). Below are best practices and evidence-based resources aligned with the R-TFI to help school teams intentionally assess, plan, and implement MTSS with intention.

Recommendations

Teams

- Coordinate [teams across the LEA and within schools](#) to provide integrated academic, behavioral, and social emotional supports.
- Lead meetings with a clear purpose, [structured agenda](#), and defined roles to efficiently problem-solve together.
- Engage families, caregivers, and community partners throughout the problem-solving process to ensure the provision of integrated supports.

Implementation

- Use a [formal process](#) to select reading programs and practices that are [scientifically validated](#) and aligned to [the science of reading](#) and [state learning standards](#).
- Provide a [continuum of evidence-based and culturally responsive supports](#) matched to student needs.
- Create a [welcoming and structured learning environment](#) that communicates high expectations for all students.

Resources

- Provide written guidelines for [delivering literacy instruction and intervention](#) to all instructional staff.
- Coordinate [scheduling](#), training, and [data collection](#) across the LEA and school to align resources and practices.
- Provide training to ensure all staff know how to deliver literacy instruction and intervention as designed.

- Offer coaching to staff to ensure all literacy instruction and intervention are delivered as designed.

Evaluation

- Collect high-quality data from multiple sources to assess the quality of implementation and [student responses](#) to literacy instruction and intervention.
- Study student and [fidelity \(implementation\) data](#) to create a plan that meets student literacy needs on a continuum.
- Review the intervention plan regularly to determine which supports to stop, continue, or [intensify based on student and fidelity data](#).

Components of MTSS recommendations are listed in table format in the appendices. For more information and resources related to MTSS, please visit OSPI's [MTSS webpage](#). Additionally, the developer of the R-TFI, [Michigan's MTSS Technical Assistance Center](#), provides resources for the R-TFI. The R-TFI results inform the next steps in implementation and professional learning.

Family and Caregiver Engagement

Families and caregivers are essential partners in supporting students' overall well-being, socio-emotional needs, and academic growth. Strong relationships with ongoing communication contribute to the success of every child. Washington state requires family and caregiver communication, as found in the [Second Grade Reading Assessment](#) and [K–4 Literacy Requirements](#). LEAs should integrate [ESSB 6162](#) requirements into the school's family and caregiver engagement plan within MTSS to ensure responsive, inclusive, and empowering family and caregiver involvement.

LEAs should communicate with all families and caregivers throughout the screening process. This process includes notification prior to and after screening. For students whose results indicate risk associated with reading difficulties, including dyslexia, schools must notify the families and caregivers of the following ([RCW 28A.320.260](#)):

- **Screening Results:** The specific risk indicators identified during the screening process, including but not limited to phonemic awareness, phonological awareness, letter-sound knowledge, rapid automatized naming, and family history.
- **Interventions:** The plan for using MTSS to provide interventions, which includes but is not limited to: (1) intervention programs and practices, (2) frequency and duration, (3) intervention staff, (4) process for progress monitoring, and (5) plan for communicating progress.
- **Resources:** Information on reading development and difficulties, including dyslexia. LEAs may use the [Dyslexia Fact Sheet](#) included in the Resources and Tools section below.

The DAC recommends notification that begins with an accessible, culturally, and linguistically responsive conversation that builds upon already-established relationships and is embedded in a conversation about the whole child's strengths and needs. This conversation can include a discussion of family history if it is not already known. Ideally, family history information should be collected during the administration of the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) Family Connection Meetings. The conversation should include an explanation of the assessed skills, with examples as necessary. Educators should explain that the required K–2

screeners focus on the skills necessary for word-recognition, which, when combined with oral language knowledge, leads to reading fluently with comprehension.

For Multilingual/English Learners and students who have an already recognized disability, schools must provide additional explanation and interpretation. Screeners compare students' results to national norms; educators should view the results as part of the whole-student's profile, taking into consideration the unique circumstances of each child.

When sharing screening results with families and caregivers of students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), it is important to explain that literacy screening tools identify indicators of risk, not their cause. The student's IEP team will use screening results to contribute to the overall understanding of the student's present level of performance, development of appropriately ambitious measurable annual goals, and determination of special education services.

The [sample conversation talking points](#) below are included in the Resources and Tools section and may be printed to provide to families and caregivers during or following initial conversations.

Sample Communication Talking Points

Family History

One indicator that has been found to be highly predictive of future reading difficulty is a family history of difficulty with reading and language development. We would appreciate learning more about [student name]'s family history if you are able and willing to share.

- ☐ Do you know about the reading, writing, and speaking experiences of [student name]'s biological family?
- ☐ If yes, did any of [student name]'s biological relatives experience difficulties learning to read, write, or speak? (Yes/No; names and relationships not necessary).

Please keep in mind no one factor guarantees or even predicts a student's literacy development. The information gathered contributes to a deeper understanding of each student's literacy strengths and needs. Strengths and interests will be leveraged in the process of providing interventions and supports.

Screening Results

At [school name], we regularly screen all students for risk associated with future reading difficulties, including dyslexia. The results guide us in providing timely support and interventions to students as needed. The screening is not a diagnosis for dyslexia. Below are the screening results for [student name] in each of the following areas:

- ☐ Phonological awareness
- ☐ Phonemic awareness
- ☐ Letter-sound knowledge
- ☐ Rapid naming skills
- ☐ Family history

Plan for Support

Here is how we plan to provide interventions to strengthen [student name]'s skills. We will adjust the plan as necessary and notify you of changes.

Intervention	Focus	Frequency	Duration	Monitoring Tool	Communication

Please remember we want to partner with you in this process. We will share specific strategies with you. Here are some general resources and [tips](#) for [supporting reading at home](#).

Resources for Families

- [Dyslexia Fact Sheet](#)
- [Decoding Dyslexia Washington](#)
- [National Center on Improving Literacy: Dyslexia Resources for Families](#)
- [International Dyslexia Association \(IDA\) Handbook: What Every Family Should Know](#)
- [Oregon Branch of IDA's Dyslexia Guides & Videos \(in English & Spanish\)](#)
- [Myths of Dyslexia](#)
- [Reading Rockets: Target the Problem!](#)
- [NCIL: Learning About Your Child's Reading Development](#)

Detailed intervention plan templates are available from the National Center for Intensive Intervention. Schools may also already have their own intervention plan templates, such as parent-school compacts, and should use the format that aligns best with their system. For more information and resources, see the Family, Student, and Community Engagement accordion on [OSPI's MTSS tools and resources webpage](#).

Screening

Patterns of reading development are established early. Screening is essential to identify students who may be at risk for reading difficulties, including dyslexia. Reading problems can be prevented and remediated through early identification and intervention. Without interventions, struggling readers do not eventually "catch up" and may be at risk for further academic challenges.

Characteristics of Screeners

Academic screeners are brief, reliable, and valid assessments used to assist educators in identifying students who may be at risk for specific academic difficulties. These data are used in addition to other measures to inform universal instruction and determine if supplemental intervention is needed.

OSPI's approved academic screening tools are:

- Quick and targeted assessments of discrete skills;
- Standardized for administration and scoring;
- Culturally and linguistically responsive for Washington students; and
- Developmentally appropriate and normed for the population of students who will be assessed.

An academic screener is **NOT** a tool to diagnose a learning disability, including dyslexia.

The Screening Process

What is screened?

To identify students who are at risk for reading difficulties, including dyslexia, literacy screening tools in grades K–2 must assess, at minimum, the following, as required by law:

- **Phonological Awareness:** Ability to recognize broader speech sounds such as rhyme, alliteration, the number of words in a sentence, and the syllables within words. (See [Reading Rockets](#) and [National Center for Improving Literacy](#).)
- **Phonemic Awareness:** Ability to hear, identify, delete, and change sounds of spoken words. (See [Reading Rockets](#) and [University of Oregon CTL](#).)
- **Letter-Sound Knowledge:** Knowledge of how sounds are represented by the letters of the alphabet. This also includes combinations of letters that represent speech sounds. (See [Reading Rockets](#) and [National Center for Improving Literacy](#).)
- **Rapid Automatized Naming (RAN):** Ability to quickly name aloud a series of familiar items, including letters, numbers, colors, and objects. LEAs do not need to assess every student on all possible items. LEAs should use the items that provide the most valid and accurate score for each student. A student's RAN skills can improve; however, these skills cannot be pre-taught or remediated. (See [Understood.org](#) and [What Educators Need to Know about Rapid Automatized Naming](#).)
- **Family History of Difficulty with Reading and Language Acquisition:** There is a strong heritability of difficulties with learning to read and write. (See [Reading Rockets](#).)

Universal screening for students in grades 3 and above should identify students who are at risk for reading difficulties and assess, at minimum, individual word reading (real and nonsense), reading fluency, reading comprehension, and spelling.

More information on how to select or deselect screeners that meet the Washington state criteria for best practices can be found in this **updated crosswalk**.

Indications of Dyslexia

Students who experience reading difficulties, including dyslexia, have specific learning needs. Dyslexia is a complex, neurological difference in the brain that makes processing speech sounds difficult, specifically the ability to hear, substitute, and change individual sounds in words. It is characterized by challenges with reading and spelling, particularly with the connections between letters and sounds. Dyslexia may lead to problems learning and remembering vocabulary, understanding what is read, and expressing thoughts on paper. It is not caused by a lack of intelligence, visual acuity, motivation, interest, exposure to rich literature, or classroom instruction.

Dyslexia looks different for each individual and across ages and stages. Educators providing instruction to students experiencing reading difficulties may notice variations in students' skills and competencies. One common characteristic an individual with dyslexia struggles with is pronouncing words with two or more syllables. They may also exhibit the following difficulties:

Concerns in Preschool through Kindergarten

- Delayed speech (ages 2–3)
- Difficulty following directions
- Difficulty learning and remembering letter names
- Difficulty producing and recognizing rhymes

Concerns in the Early School Years

- Difficulty connecting letters to sounds
- Difficulty expressing thoughts on paper
- Difficulty following multi-step directions
- Difficulty 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/or sounds when reading
- Poor and inconsistent spelling
- Mixing up terms for concepts and objects (i.e., bagel/doughnut)
- Avoidance of reading and writing tasks

Concerns in Later School Years

- Difficulty reading aloud, especially words with two or more syllables
- Difficulty keeping up with large amounts of reading and writing
- Difficulty with writing tasks (assignments, essays, emails, taking notes, etc.)
- Difficulty with learning a foreign language

[The Yale Center for Dyslexia & Creativity](#) and [IDA's Article on Adolescents and Adults with Dyslexia](#) outline common indications of dyslexia at various grades.

Who is screened?

All students in grades K–2 should be screened. It is best practice for screening to occur two to three times per year (Gruner Gandhi, 2019). All students include:

- Students who receive supplemental support, including those who have an IEP.
- Multilingual/English learners, except during their first four months of U.S. schooling.

Students in Transition to Kindergarten (TK) are not required to participate in the K–2 screening described above. In TK, LEAs are required to conduct the WaKIDS whole-child assessment, which includes indicators of typical development in literacy, within the first 12 weeks of school. LEAs use WaKIDS assessment information to inform collaboration with families for each student’s literacy development and potential interventions.

Students with IEPs participate in the LEA’s standard screening process. An IEP team may determine that a student requires an alternate screening process after carefully considering the student’s unique needs related to their disability. This decision is made on an individual basis, and rationale for alternate participation must be documented in the IEP. Alternate screening processes for dyslexia should mirror the 1% maximum of students who participate in alternate assessments.

Students in grades 3 and above should be screened at least annually as part of the school’s MTSS implementation to inform instruction and intervention. Please see [What is Screened](#) for recommendations on the skills that should be assessed.

When are students screened?

The specific process for each LEA will vary based on the publisher’s recommendations of the screening tools the LEA chooses. To assist LEAs in understanding how the K–2 literacy screening fits in the overall assessment landscape, OSPI and the DAC created a recommended K–2 timeline for screening of literacy skills.

Recommended Screening Timeline			
	Fall (Beginning of Year)	Winter (Middle of Year)	Spring (End of Year)
Kindergarten	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WaKIDS • family history 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • phonological awareness • phonemic awareness • letter-sound knowledge • rapid automatized naming (RAN) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • phonological awareness • phonemic awareness • letter-sound knowledge

	Fall (Beginning of Year)	Winter (Middle of Year)	Spring (End of Year)
Grade 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • phonological awareness • phonemic awareness • letter-sound knowledge • family history if unknown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • phonological awareness • phonemic awareness • letter-sound knowledge • rapid automatized naming (RAN) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • phonological awareness • phonemic awareness • letter-sound knowledge
Grade 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • phonological awareness • phonemic awareness • letter-sound knowledge • family history if unknown • oral reading fluency for Second Grade Reading Assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • phonological awareness • phonemic awareness • letter-sound knowledge • rapid automatized naming (RAN) for students with no record of previous screening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • phonological awareness • phonemic awareness • letter-sound knowledge
Additional considerations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who enroll mid-year should be screened within four weeks or with their peers during the next screening window, whichever is soonest. • Newly arriving multilingual/English learners should be screened after four months of U.S. schooling. • Students in 3rd grade and above should be screened as part of the school's MTSS implementation to inform instruction and intervention. 			

Who administers the screeners?

Screening tools should be administered by an educator—certificated or classified—who works closely with the student and is trained to administer the screening tools according to the recommendations of the publisher. The training should include careful consideration of language variation and differences to reduce administrator racial, cultural, and ethnic bias. LEA and building administrators should develop a regular schedule of professional learning for educators that includes onboarding of new educators and staff.

How are the screening data used?

Screening data inform instruction and intervention. Screening data alone should not be used to diagnose dyslexia. Within MTSS, school and LEA staff collect and organize screening data into reports that inform the work of school teams. School and LEA teams then analyze the reports to

make strategic decisions and use their agreed-upon problem-solving process and decision rules to inform instruction and intervention groupings. If a student's screening data indicate below-grade-level literacy development or areas of weakness associated with dyslexia, the school must provide evidence-based multisensory structured literacy interventions as described in the [Instruction and Intervention](#) section of this document ([RCW 28A.320.260](#)). Additional diagnostic assessments are used as necessary to determine specific student needs, and families and caregivers are notified of student risk indicators and the plan for intervention. Students who do not speak the standard English dialect of schools face an additional challenge in their literacy development; educators should choose diagnostic assessments that provide an understanding of students' oral language skills.

If evidence-based structured literacy interventions through MTSS and/or the student's screening results continue to indicate risk associated with dyslexia, and the student is not making progress toward grade-level standards, the LEA must recommend to the student's family and caregivers that the student be evaluated for a specific learning disability, such as dyslexia. [Evaluations for special education eligibility](#) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) are coordinated through a special education referral with the school administrator, student support team, or LEA special education program. In accordance with child-find under IDEA (34 CFR §300.301(b)), [the use of MTSS may not be used to delay or deny a full and individual evaluation of a student suspected of having a disability](#).

LEAs may not require that families and caregivers provide a medical diagnosis or other medical information as a precondition for accepting an evaluation referral, completing an evaluation, and/or determining a student's eligibility for special-education services. If medical information is determined necessary for a comprehensive evaluation, the LEA would need to complete or obtain that assessment at no cost to the parent. Eligibility for special education may be determined without a diagnosis of dyslexia. In addition, a diagnosis of dyslexia does not, in and of itself, determine eligibility for special education; eligibility also requires evidence of an adverse educational impact and the need for specially designed instruction. LEAs can contact OSPI and the Washington State Association of School Psychologists (WSASP) for guidance and resources to support evaluation teams in establishing that a student has dyslexia and qualifies for an individualized education program (IEP).

For more information and resources, see the Data-Based Decision Making accordion on OSPI's [MTSS tools and resources webpage](#). The [National Center on Improving Literacy](#) outlines specific considerations on [Screening for Dyslexia](#), and [International Dyslexia Association](#) (IDA) provides helpful tools for each step in the [screening process](#).

Screening Considerations for Multilingual Learners

Students with reading difficulties should be identified as early as possible, but it is important to not confuse language development with a reading disability. Multilingual/English learners who do not have learning disabilities may exhibit reading behaviors and characteristics that look like native English speakers with reading disabilities. Some multilingual learners struggle with both language and reading, and students who speak any language can have dyslexia regardless of their linguistic background.

For this reason, all eligible multilingual/English learners must be included in literacy screening except during their first four months of U.S. schooling. Multilingual/English learners' screening results should not be directly compared to grade-level norms. School teams should consider student progress and development of both language and literacy skills over time. Students may be screened in a language other than English if they have literacy skills in their home language or are enrolled in dual language programs.

Consider the following when using screeners in other languages:

- Screeners in other languages must be designed and normed for that language. Dialect variations must be considered. Use of an interpreter to provide sight translation of an English screener into another language is not appropriate and will not yield useful results.
- Screeners in other languages may not provide the whole picture for a multilingual/English learner. Most assessments have been normed for native speakers of that language, not children who are simultaneously developing two or more languages.
- If a student has skills in two or more languages, it is best to assess first in the student's dominant language by a multilingual educator and then assess in the second language to confirm and/or add new information about the student's skills.
- Consider the student's opportunity to learn in each language as well as previous and current exposure to literacy skills in each. Families and caregivers may provide useful information on students' language and literacy skills and use of their home language.

The following chart provides considerations for screening multilingual learners at various language levels based on their WIDA scores.

WIDA Overall Score Range (Screener or ACCESS Assessment)	Considerations for Screening
0-2.0	<p>Newcomers are exempt from screening for the first four months.</p> <p>Students may screen in their home language (if possible).</p> <p>Grade-level norms will not be applicable in English. Look at progress over time.</p>
2.1-3.9	<p>Students should be screened (unless in their first four months).</p> <p>Students may screen in their home language (if needed).</p> <p>Grade-level norms may not be applicable in English. Look at progress over time.</p>
4.0-6.0	<p>Students should be screened.</p> <p>Students may screen in their home language (if useful).</p> <p>Grade-level norms may be applicable, but the team should consider progress as well.</p>
Scores above a 4 in speaking and listening but lower in reading and writing may indicate a risk for future reading difficulties and/or the need for intervention.	

When reviewing and interpreting multilingual learners' literacy screening results, educators should consider the following:

1. **What strengths does the student bring?** Look at other content areas for strength-based skills; use observations and other data points in addition to literacy screening data.
2. **What does the student know in each language?** Multilingual learners may still be simultaneously developing language and literacy skills in their home and additive languages.
3. **What can the student do, when viewed across languages?** Assessment in a single language (either English or another language) may not fully capture all the student's skills. Reviewing skills across multiple languages may help show what the student can do.

How are screening data used to support multilingual learners?

The following questions may be useful when reviewing and interpreting the literacy screening results of multilingual/English learners. Data review teams may include classroom teachers, bilingual educators, English language specialists, reading specialists, and/or special education teachers. The use of home languages may be more applicable to dual language programs and is not always possible in programs with multiple languages.

Skill	Questions to Consider
Phonological Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the student's home language break down words or sounds in this way? (syllables vs. individual phonemes) • Is the skill typical in the student's home language? (rhyming, alliteration, etc.) • If assessing in another language, is the task typical for that language?
Phonemic Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the student acquired the assessed phonemes in their spoken English? • If assessing in another language, is isolating sounds/phonemes a typical linguistic practice? • What sounds does the student know in each language (if testing in multiple languages)? Is there overlap? • Are there sounds in English that are "tricky" for speakers of the student's home language (if known)?
Letter-Sound Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What letters does the student know in each language (if testing in multiple languages)? Is there overlap? • Are there letters in English that are "tricky" for speakers of the student's home language (if known)?
Rapid Automatized Naming Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the student name objects in either language? (How many can they name altogether across languages?) • Is the student using a "non-standard" term that means something similar? • How does the student's speed correspond to their language development?

To build upon students' existing skills in one language as they develop another, school teams should use the [WIDA Can-Do Philosophy](#).

While students of any language background may have risk associated with dyslexia, multilingual/English learners are often overidentified for special education services in Washington state for specific learning disabilities and communication disorders. Consequently, referring multilingual/English learners for evaluation must be done with caution. Many LEAs use a critical data process to consider multiple factors including the student's first language development and background before considering a referral for an evaluation for special education services. [Separating Difference from Disability](#) and [The ELL Critical Data Process](#) may be helpful in developing appropriate pre-referral processes for multilingual learners.

For more information and resources, please see the Data-Based Decision Making accordion on OSPI's [MTSS tools and resources webpage](#). The [National Center on Improving Literacy](#) has outlined specific considerations on [Screening for Dyslexia](#), and Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports at the American Institutes for Research [International Dyslexia Association](#) (IDA) provides helpful tools for each step in the [screening process](#).

Instruction and Intervention

To maximize the efficacy and impact of instruction and intervention for all learners, literacy practices and programs must be based on [the science of reading](#), validated through research for the specific population of learners they are designed to support, and reflective of the cultural and linguistic diversity of the school community. Literacy practices must be embedded within [MTSS](#) to ensure necessary interventions and supports are provided in a timely manner and all tiers of instruction are aligned. Intervention practices and programs must be aligned with structured literacy as required by law ([RCW 28A.320.260](#)).

LEA teams use a formal selection process, such as the [National Implementation Research Network's \(NIRN\) Hexagon Tool](#), to ensure that practices and programs across the continuum of supports are evidence-based and are intentionally implemented with the support of targeted training and coaching. Teams may utilize the Reading League's [Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines](#) to ensure programs and materials are aligned with structured literacy. OSPI provides additional [resources](#) for choosing curricula and [evaluating them for bias and equity](#).

Structured Literacy

All students, across all grades, including multilingual learners, benefit from instruction that is essential for students with language-based learning disorders, including:

- Integrating content, language, and literacy instruction.
- Strengthening oral language development.
- Teaching writing in connection with reading as an essential skill.
- Building on student's home languages and cultures.
- Focusing on comprehension to support academic literacy and student success.

What is structured literacy?

Structured literacy is a teaching approach informed by the [science of reading](#) and [writing](#) that includes knowledge of **oral** and **written language** and how it is learned. It is **explicit** (direct and clear), **systematic**, **sequential**, **cumulative**, **multisensory**, **diagnostic**, and **responsive**. It focuses on both reading and writing, which are reciprocal skills. The goal of systematic teaching is **automatic** and **fluent** application of **language knowledge** and **decoding** and **encoding skills** to

enable reading for meaning and writing for communication.

Content of Structured Literacy		
	Description	Resources
Knowledge of and Proficiency with Oral Language	Oral language is the foundation for reading and writing. The ability to understand others and express oneself verbally is culturally influenced and includes knowing what the words mean (semantics) at the word level (vocabulary) based on the parts of words—prefixes, bases, and suffixes—(morphology), the phrase and clause level —groups of words working together—(syntax), and the discourse level (pragmatics). It also includes the understanding that sentences are composed of words that are made up of unique patterns of individual sounds (phonology). Oral language knowledge and proficiency includes social language, academic language, and inferential language, which are culturally guided.	Literacy How Effective Oral Language Instruction Teaching Reading to African American Children: When Home and School Language Differ
Phonological and Phonemic Awareness & Proficiency	Readers and writers recognize that oral language is made up of individual sounds that when changed can produce new words. At the phonological level, this includes the understanding that verbal utterances are made up of individual words, which are made up of syllables, which can be further broken into their first sounds (onsets) and the rest of the syllable (rimes). At the phonemic level, this includes the understanding that all words are made up of individual sounds (phonemes). Proficiency is the ability to blend, segment, and change units of sounds.	Literacy How National Center for Improving Literacy Equipped for Reading Success PA Educator’s Guide Literacy San Antonio
Orthographic Knowledge & Proficiency (Phonics)	Readers and writers recognize that written letters represent sounds and that combining multiple letters creates syllables and words that can be decoded or read by blending the sounds together. This includes spelling conventions for representing speech and irregular word patterns and word parts (morphemes: prefixes, bases, and suffixes) and how meaning influences reading and spelling. Proficiency with orthography (orthographic mapping) leads to fluency.	National Center for Improving Literacy Literacy San Antonio Consistent Generalizations
Reading & Writing Fluency	Reading fluency is the ability to translate print into meaning and is the outcome of reading accurately and automatically (often referred to as rate).	National Center for Improving Literacy

	<p>Reading automaticity (recognition) is based on the ability to accurately identify words (decode) by connecting the letters in words to sounds and blending them together. Oral reading fluency includes appropriate expression (prosody), which relies on language knowledge and an understanding of punctuation.</p> <p>Writing fluency is the ability to translate thoughts into print and is based on the opposite skills of writing words (encoding) by segmenting the sounds of words and connecting them to letters to write.</p> <p>A key component to developing both reading and writing fluency is an understanding of what words mean (vocabulary), how they are grouped together into meaningful phrases and clauses (syntax), and how language is used (pragmatics and mechanics).</p>	<p>Literacy How</p> <p>Oral Reading Fluency Norms</p> <p>Iowa Reading Research</p> <p><i>The Writing Revolution</i>, by Judith C. Hochman & Natalie Wexler</p> <p><i>The Writing Rope</i>, by Joan Sedita</p>
Knowledge of Semantics: Comprehension of Written Language	<p>Reading comprehension is the outcome of understanding the meanings of words (vocabulary), phrases, sentences, and longer units of written text and the ability to read the words independently. Meanings of words, phrases, clauses, and larger units of text are best learned in relation to networks and connections, supported through the teaching of phonology, orthography, semantics, syntax, and morphology both in reading and writing.</p>	<p>Key Literacy Component: Morphology</p> <p><i>The Reading Comprehension Blueprint</i> - Nancy Hennessy</p>

When readers and writers understand what they read and when they express their thoughts in writing: they effectively use their language knowledge to comprehend others and to express themselves; they use their decoding skills to convert the symbols on a page to the thoughts of those who wrote them; and they use their encoding skills to convert their own words into print. When educators teach students to read and write, they strengthen their students' knowledge of oral language and teach them how that language is represented in print.

How is structured literacy implemented through MTSS?

Within [MTSS](#), all students receive universal instruction through an evidence-based, multisensory structured literacy approach. Interventions are informed by data, matched to student needs, and aligned with and layered onto universal instruction. Educators are trained and supported throughout implementation to ensure instruction and interventions are delivered as designed. In an effective continuum of supports, all students have access to intervention when they need it. The steps below outline the data-based decision-making process that teams use to identify and respond to student literacy needs.

1. Use data-based decision-making process to review multiple sources of data, including screening results.
2. If more than 20% of students display indications of low literacy development or areas of weakness associated with dyslexia, review and adjust universal instruction.
3. Review individual student data to determine intervention groupings for students who have indications of low literacy development or areas of weakness associated with dyslexia.
4. Communicate with families and caregivers to share screening results, intervention plan, provide resources, and answer questions.
5. Deliver universal instruction and interventions as designed.
6. Monitor student progress and fidelity data regularly to determine whether to continue or intensify instruction and interventions.
7. Share progress updates and intervention changes regularly with families and caregivers.

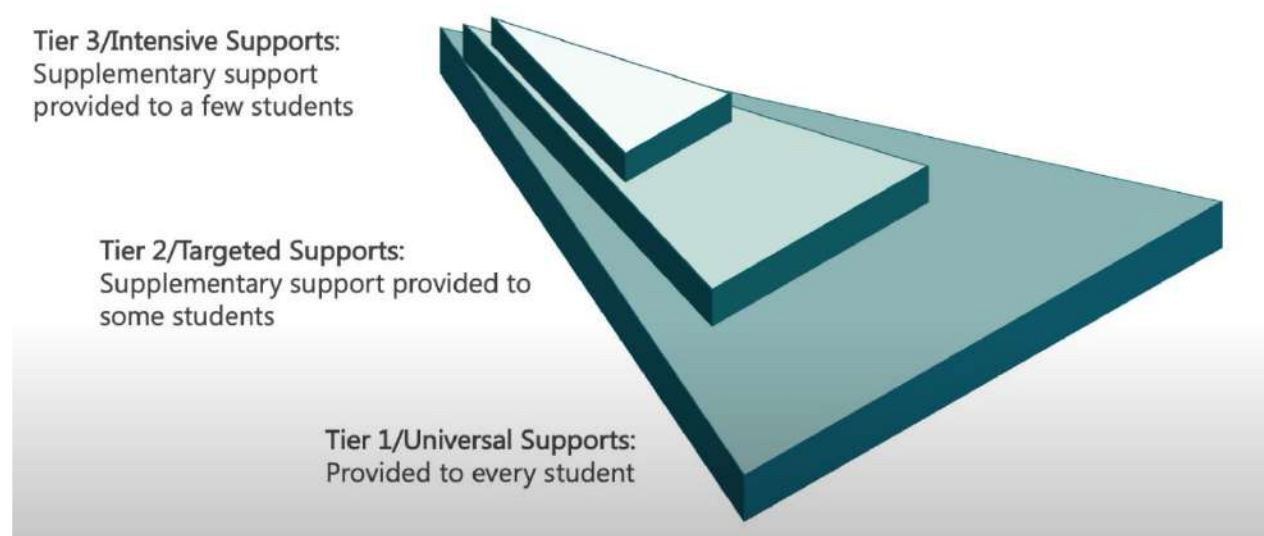
The process of how structured literacy is implemented through MTSS is included in a graphic format in the appendices. Decisions about literacy instruction and interventions should be regularly informed by multiple sources of data, including screening data, through the school's agreed upon data-based decision-making process. The table below summarizes common sources of data that teams use to inform system and support planning.

Type	Purpose	Use
Screening	Predict level of risk for low academic, social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes	Identify students who may benefit from additional assessment and support; inform resource allocation and modifications to instruction and supports
Progress Monitoring	Assess the rate of growth in response to academic, social, emotional, and behavioral supports	Determine the impact of supports; inform modifications to instruction and supports
Diagnostic	Assess specific skill weaknesses and strengths	Identify why students are not responding as expected to determine how to adapt the intervention
Fidelity	Assess the extent to which evidence-based practices are being implemented as intended	Identify strengths and areas of improvement in implementation; inform modifications to implementation at the system, classroom, and intervention levels

Perception	Assess educator, student, and family perceptions of school environment	Identify strengths and areas of improvement in school climate; inform modifications to system and classroom environment
-------------------	--	---

The school should develop an intervention plan for screening and interventions that anticipates and is flexible enough to respond swiftly to various academic and nonacademic needs. The intervention plan outlines specific skills, intervention practices and programs, entrance and exit criteria, progress monitoring measures, and family communication methods. As a component of the intervention plan, if more than 20% of students show indications of below-grade-level literacy development or areas of weakness associated with dyslexia, the school should review and adjust universal instruction and determine which students need supplemental, tiered intervention. Tiers describe the type of instruction and supports students receive, not students themselves or the settings in which they receive instruction and supports.

Tiers of supports are informed by data, matched to student need, and aligned with and layered onto universal instruction, as illustrated in the image below.



MTSS neither excludes nor is exclusive to students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), 504 Plans, or other programmatic supports. The tiered framework addresses all student needs across all areas (academic, social, emotional, and behavioral). The modifications, supports and services on a student's IEP or 504 Plan should supplement, and not replace, the tiered support available to every student within an MTSS framework. A hallmark of strong implementation is that each student can access supports as soon as they are needed. Tier 1 supports should be provided to all students, including students with disabilities, just as Tier 3 supports should be available to students who need them, regardless of the student's eligibility under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or Section 504.

The following table outlines how structured literacy should be implemented across all tiers of MTSS.

Structured Literacy Across Tiers in PK–12		
	What is it?	Where can I learn more?
Tier 1 (Universal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tier 1 instruction benefits all students, is culturally and linguistically responsive, universally designed, and aligned with the science of reading and advanced tiers, including designated English Language Development (ELD) for eligible multilingual/English learners. Tier 1 assessment is ongoing and includes regular, universal screening, formative and summative assessments, measures of instructional and systems fidelity, and student and family perception data. Tier 1 teams, including but not limited to school leadership and grade-level teams, use a data-based decision-making process to regularly review the effectiveness of instruction. Tier 1 family and caregiver engagement includes ongoing communication and collaboration with families and caregivers to inform and support successful implementation of the Tier 1 literacy plan. 	<p>National Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports Intensifying Tier 1 Instruction</p> <p>IES Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade</p>
Tier 2 (Targeted)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tier 2 intervention is supplemental to Tier 1 instruction and is culturally and linguistically responsive and aligned with the science of reading and Tiers 1 and 3. It includes clear entrance and exit criteria, evidence-based practices and programs that target specific skills matched to student needs. Tier 2 interventions are accessible to all students. Tier 2 assessments increase in frequency and include progress monitoring, intervention fidelity, attendance monitoring, and student and family/caregiver perception data. Tier 2 teams use decision rules to determine intervention groups. Teams regularly review intervention fidelity data and student progress to make intentional adjustments. Tier 2 family and caregiver engagement includes timely communication of intervention supports, which should include: (1) screening results, (2) intervention plan, including focus, program, frequency, duration, time, (3) assessment plan to monitor progress, and (4) two-way communication plan with families and caregivers. 	<p>National Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports Essential Features of Tier 2</p> <p>IES Providing Reading Interventions to Grades K–3</p> <p>IES Providing Reading Interventions to Grades 4–9</p>

How do we support specific learning needs?

Effective implementation of structured literacy within universally designed instruction requires differentiation, which is how educators respond to variation in cognitive, linguistic, sociocultural, and behavioral domains of learning. Students who are at-risk for reading difficulties, including dyslexia, benefit from differentiation. When teachers differentiate instruction, they leverage strengths and utilize tools and approaches that allow students to demonstrate their current levels of knowledge and access increasingly difficult levels of content.

Identify and Leverage Strengths

Like all students, those with difficulties reading, writing, and speaking have talents and interests that should be leveraged during instruction and intervention. They may have strong verbal and thinking skills, such as:

- Creative, innovative problem-solving skills.
- Listening skills.
- Imagination and curiosity.
- Pattern recognition.
- Building, assembling, and working with objects.
- Athletic, artistic, or musical skills.

Helpful Accommodations

In addition to appropriate instruction, accommodations help students with reading difficulties increase their independence. All accommodations, especially assistive technology, need to be explicitly taught and easily accessible. Some accommodations students find helpful include:

- Providing extended time (time and a half to two times) for assignments, quizzes, tests, and assessments, particularly those that require reading and writing.
- Breaking up long assignments.
- Modifying the amount of homework (solving every other problem, reading part of text).
- Using graphic organizers for note taking (main idea, characters, details, etc.) while reading and for organizing thoughts for writing.
- Using times tables charts, calculators, or formula sheets for math computations.
- Using graph paper or lined paper turned vertically to support place value alignment.
- Seating away from distractions or near the teacher for subtle supportive interactions.
- Using audiobooks (e.g., [Bookshare](#) or [Learning Ally](#)) or computer support for reading.
- Using speech to print, dictation software, or use of a scribe, to support writing.
- Providing copies of teacher's notes before class, allowing students to take pictures of notes on the board, or recording smart-board lessons.
- Creating additional spacing on handouts or electronic versions to reduce visual crowding.
- Using closed captions for videos to reinforce word knowledge.

See [ORBIDA](#) for more on assistive technology and tools.

Social-Emotional Support

Students with reading difficulties may struggle with self-esteem, anxiety, and depression, and may act out. It is important that educators focus on the academic struggles underlying the behavioral indicators. Students with reading difficulties may be very skilled at hiding their difficulties.

Strategies for fostering positive attitudes and resiliency include:

- Teaching self-advocacy and self-awareness, including knowledge of strengths and needs.
- Protecting the students' dignity and self-esteem by avoiding situations that highlight their weaknesses (e.g., peer review of written work and posting work publicly).
- Engaging school counselors and seeking professional help when necessary.
- Establishing accessible procedures with simple, clear instructions, as well as modeling and providing examples when possible.

More information can be found in IDA's publication [Dyslexia in the Classroom: What Every Teacher Needs to Know](#).

INSTRUCTION & INTERVENTION

CONSIDERATIONS FOR MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS

Within the [MTSS framework](#), multilingual/English learners should be uniquely considered when determining intervention groupings for each tier of instruction and intervention. These considerations include:

- Tier 1 instruction that integrates content, language, and literacy and builds on students' home languages and cultures.
- Regular designated English language development (ELD) provided by or in collaboration with a specially trained educator.
- Explicit focus on oral language development and comprehension in addition to phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary.
- Intervention materials that are specially designed or adapted to ensure words/text are connected to meaning using visuals, context, or other means.
- Interventions provided in the student's home language in dual language programs or if available. Stronger home language literacy is associated with stronger literacy in English.

See mtss4els.org for ideas on addressing the literacy needs of multilingual learners through MTSS.

Supporting Educators

To implement structured literacy as designed, all certified and classified educators need targeted and ongoing professional development, which includes training, coaching, and administrative support. [IDA's Knowledge and Practice Standards](#) provide direction, inform the selection of effective professional development, and elevate educator knowledge, skills, and proficiency. It is essential that administrators understand what to look for, how to provide feedback, and what resources are needed to support educator development.

Professional development on structured literacy within an MTSS framework for educators and administrators is available through [PD Enroller](#) and resources on the [OSPI website](#).

What to know?	Where can I learn more? (Free unless noted)
MTSS framework	OSPI MTSS Framework
	Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports
Family and caregiver engagement	IRIS Center Family Engagement Module
	Spectrum of Family & Community Engagement for Educational Equity
Data-based decision making	NIRN Improvement Cycles
	NCII Data-Based Individualization

The science of reading and structured literacy	The Reading League: What is the Science of Reading
	Reading Rockets 101
	IDA Teacher Training Programs (\$)
	Glean/WA Structured literacy through MTSS modules
	OSPI/AESD Courses on Dyslexia and Structured Literacy
Accessible learning	Universal Design for Learning
	Literacy Instruction for English Language Learners
Intervention and intensification	NCII Data-Based Individualized Training Modules
	Institute of Education Sciences Videos
	Structured Literacy Instruction for English Learners

For more information and resources, please visit the Continuum of Supports accordion on OSPI's [MTSS tools and resources webpage](#). Other helpful resources include [Lead for Literacy's Increasing Instructional Intensity Across Tiers of Support](#), [NCII's Intensifying Literacy Instruction: Essential Practices](#), and [NCII's Supporting English Learners with Intensive Needs](#).

APPENDICES

Technical Assistance

If you have policy questions related to the early screening and intervention of indicators for dyslexia, please contact dyslexia@k12.wa.us.

References

Collier, C. (2011). Seven steps to separating difference from disability. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Gaab, N. (2017, February). [*It's a myth that young children cannot be screened for dyslexia! IDA.*](#)

Gruner Gandhi, Allison. (2019). [*How will I know before it's too late? Screening in early grades.*](#) Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports at the American Institutes for Research.

Hall, T., Vue, G., Strangman, N., & Meyer, A. (2004). [*Differentiated Instruction and Implications for UDL Implementation.*](#) Wakefield, MA: National Center on Accessing the General Curriculum. (Links updated 2014).

IDEA Sec. 300.301 (b) Retrieved from [IDEA Sec. 300.301 \(b\)](#).

International Dyslexia Association (IDA). (2018). [*Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading.*](#)

Sandman-Hurley, K. (2020). [*Dyslexia and the English Learner - Language Magazine.*](#)

St. Martin, K., Harms, A., Walsh, M., & Nantais, M. (2022). [*Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory Elementary-Level Edition. \(Version 2.0\).*](#) Michigan Department of Education, Michigan's Multi-Tiered System of Supports Technical Assistance Center.

Washington, J. A. & Lee-James, R. (2020). Intersection of Race Poverty, and Diagnostic Accuracy: Identifying Reading Disabilities in African American Children. In Washington, J. A., Compton, D. L., & McCardle, P (Eds.), *Dyslexia: Revisiting etiology, diagnosis, treatment and policy* (pp. 102–112). Baltimore, MD: Brooks.

Wolf, M. (2010). *Proust and the squid: The story and science of the reading brain*. Icon Books.

Contributors

OSPI and the Dyslexia Advisory Council would like to acknowledge and thank the following former council members and partners who contributed to the best practices and evidence-based resources in this implementation guide.

Name	Organization	Role
Aira Jackson	OSPI	Council Co-Lead
Andrea Archer	WABIDA	Non-Profit Representative
Dr. Angie Withers	Richland School District	School Psychologist Representative
Ashley Jantzer	North Central ESD	School Psychologist Representative
Barb Casey	Prospect Point Elementary	Special Education Representative
Becca Horowitz	ESD 121	Literacy Coordinator Representative
Beth Bourque	North Kitsap School District	School Psychologist Representative
Cathleen Queeno-Wall	Oak Harbor Public Schools	Speech and Language Pathologist
Dr. Cindy Dupuy	WABIDA	Non-Profit and Individual with Dyslexia Representative
Cheryl Vance	ESD 113	Literacy Coordinator Representative
Cynthia Cantwell		School District Administrator Representative
Denise Davis	OSPI	Director of Elementary Education Content
Effie Triol	ESD 112	Literacy Coordinator Representative
Elizabeth Hamming	ESD 189	Literacy Coordinator Representative
Elizabeth Sorby	Private Practice	School Psychologist Representative
Erin Chaplin	Yakima School District	School District Administrator Representative
Glenna Gallo	OSPI	Assistant Superintendent of Special Education
Heather Awbery	East Valley School District	School District Administrator Representative
Heidi Aijala	OSPI	Former Associate Director of Secondary English Language Arts
Hilary Conville	Auburn School District	Special Education Representative
Jennifer Clark	Tumwater School District	Literacy Specialist Representative
Jennifer Ireland	ESD 101	Literacy Coordinator Representative
Dr. Jennifer McDonald	Steilacoom School District	School Board Representative
Jennifer Ross	Ridgefield School District	Speech and Language Pathologist
Jennifer Scott	Camas School District	Literacy Specialist 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 Filer	Wellpinit School District	Special Education Representative
Julie Savelesky	Camas School District	Elementary School Representative

Justyn Poulos	OSPI	MTSS Representative
Karma Hugo	OSPI	Early Learning Representative
Kathleen O'Grady Graham	Highline Schools	Occupational Therapist
Kathleen Rice	Independent Contractor	Literacy Coordinator Representative
Kay Smith	Selah School District	Middle School Literacy Specialist
Krista Chatters	Sequim School District	Elementary School Representative
Kristin Percy Calaff	OSPI	Director of Multilingual Education
Lauren Barkley	Ferndale School District	Elementary School Representative
Dr. LaWonda Smith	Muckleshoot Tribal School	Literacy Specialist Representative
Lindsey Fangman	ESD 123	Literacy Coordinator Representative
Liz Coon	Seattle Public Schools	Elementary School Representative
Liz Stewart	OSPI	Special Education Program Supervisor
Lucia Tovar	Mabton School District	Secondary School 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	Administrator Representative
Dr. Molly Branson Thayer	University of Washington	Higher Education Representative
Nova Williams	Mercer Island School District	School Administrator Representative
Olivia Handman		Individual with Dyslexia Representative
Patricia Beuke	Olympic ESD 114	Literacy Coordinator Representative
Patsy Guglielmino	Colville School District	District Administrator Representative
Dr. Patricia Venegas- Weber	University of Washington	Teacher Preparation (Higher Education) Rep (ELL)
Sara Buetow	Decoding Dyslexia	Non-Profit Representative
Sarah (Sally) Dueweke	Spokane School District	English Language Learner Representative
Shanna Brooks	ESD 171	Literacy Coordinator Representative
Shannon Criss	Boistfort School District	Rural School Superintendent Representative
Shauna L. Schmerer	Almira School District	Superintendent Representative
Shelley O'Dell	Washington Education Association	Literacy Specialist Representative
Suzanne Ender		Parent Representative
Theresa Hernandez	ESD 105	Literacy Coordinator Representative
Dr. Yoshiko Schulz	University Place School District	English Language Learner Representative

Resources and Tools

Dyslexia Fact Sheet

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.

See also [What is Dyslexia/Dyslexia Explained](#) by 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, innovative problem-solving skills
- Listening skills
- Imagination and curiosity
- Pattern recognition
- Building, assembling, and working with objects
- Athletic, artistic, or musical skills

Common Needs

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; they may also exhibit the following difficulties:

Pre-School through Kindergarten

- Delayed speech (ages 2–3)
- Following oral directions
- Learning and remembering letter names
- Rhyming

Early School Years

- Delayed speech: speech that leaves out sounds or mixes syllables
- 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/or sounds when reading
- Poor and inconsistent spelling
- Mixing up terms for concepts and objects (i.e., bagel/doughnut)

- Participating in reading or writing activities

Later School Years

- Reading aloud, particularly 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 support, a child with dyslexia can learn to read and write. Beneficial instruction is clear and grounded in 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 concerns, questions, and needs.

Classroom Supports

Accommodations Create Access. See [ORBIDA](#) for more information.

In addition to appropriate instruction, accommodations help children with dyslexia in the classroom and increase their independence. Some supports students find helpful include:

- Extended time for reading and writing
- Breaking up long assignments
- A quiet place for studying and testing
- Audiobooks (including textbooks) or computer support for reading
- Computers with dictation software and closed captions for videos

Social/Emotional Support

Build on Strengths and Advocacy Skills

Children with dyslexia may 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 classroom topics
- Focusing on their child's progress and success
- Teaching their child that everyone has strengths, and needs, and 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.org on Dyslexia](#)
- [University of Michigan Dyslexia Help](#)
- [*See Dyslexia Differently* \(Video for kids\)](#)

Components of MTSS Recommendations

Recommendations	
Teams	Coordinate teams across the LEA and within schools to provide integrated academic, behavioral, and social emotional supports.
	Lead meetings with a clear purpose, structured agenda , and defined roles to efficiently problem-solve together.
	Engage families, caregivers, and community partners throughout the problem-solving process to ensure the provision of integrated supports.
Implementation	Use a formal process to select reading programs and practices that are scientifically validated and aligned to the science of reading and state learning standards .
	Provide a continuum of evidence-based and culturally responsive supports matched to student needs.
	Create a welcoming and structured learning environment that communicates high expectations for all students.
Resources	Provide written guidelines for delivering literacy instruction and intervention to all instructional staff.
	Coordinate scheduling , training, and data collection across the LEA and school to align resources and practices.
	Provide training to ensure all staff know how to deliver literacy instruction and intervention as designed.
Evaluation	Offer coaching to staff to ensure all literacy instruction and intervention is delivered as designed.
	Collect high-quality data from multiple sources to assess the quality of implementation and student responses to literacy instruction and intervention.
	Study student and fidelity (implementation) data to create a plan that meets student literacy needs on a continuum.
	Review the intervention plan regularly to determine which supports to stop, continue, or intensify based on student and fidelity data .

Sample Communication Talking Points

Family History

One indicator that has been found to be highly predictive of future reading difficulty is a family history of difficulty with reading and language development. We would appreciate learning more about [student name's] family history if you are able and willing to share.

- ☐ Do you know about the reading, writing, and speaking experiences of [student name]'s biological family?
- ☐ If yes, did any of [student name]'s biological relatives experience difficulties learning to read, write, or speak? (Yes/No; names and relationships not necessary)

Please keep in mind no one factor guarantees or even predicts a student's literacy development. The information gathered contributes to a deeper understanding of each student's literacy strengths and needs. Strengths and interests will be leveraged in the process of providing interventions and supports.

Screening Results

Indicators Associated with Dyslexia

At [school name], we regularly screen all students for risk associated with future reading difficulties, including dyslexia. The results guide us in providing timely support and interventions to students as needed. The screening is not a diagnosis for dyslexia. Below are the screening results for [student name] in each of the following areas:

- ☐ Phonological awareness
- ☐ Phonemic awareness
- ☐ Letter-sound knowledge
- ☐ Rapid naming skills
- ☐ Family history

Plan for Support

Here is how we plan to provide interventions to strengthen [student name]'s skills. We will adjust the plan as necessary and notify you of changes.

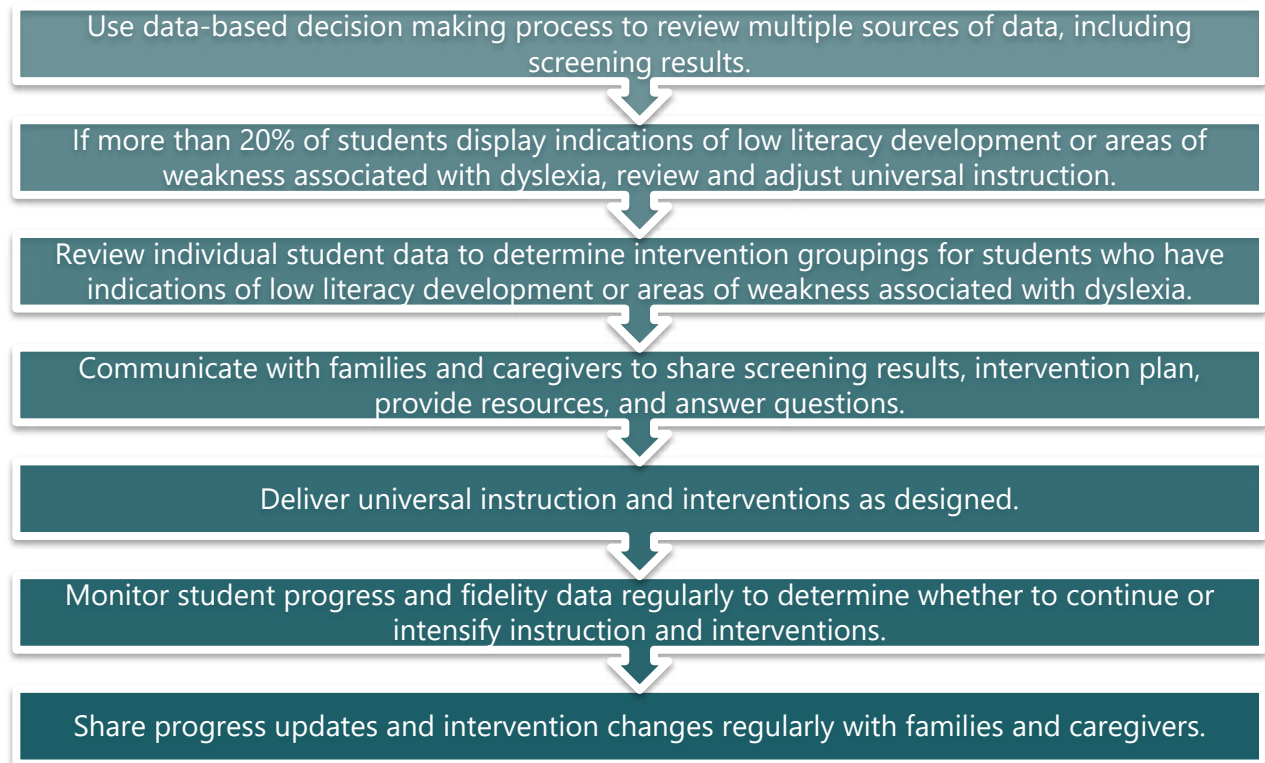
Intervention	Focus	Frequency	Duration	Monitoring Tool	Communication

Please remember we want to partner with you in this process. We will share specific strategies with you. Here are some general resources and [tips](#) for [supporting reading at home](#).

Resources for Families

- [Dyslexia Fact Sheet](#)
- [Decoding Dyslexia Washington](#)
- [National Center on Improving Literacy: Dyslexia Resources for Families](#)
- [International Dyslexia Association \(IDA\) Handbook: What Every Family Should Know](#)
- [Oregon Branch of IDA's Dyslexia Guides & Videos \(in English & Spanish\)](#)
- [Myths of Dyslexia](#)
- [Reading Rockets: Target the Problem!](#)
- [NCIL: Learning About Your Child's Reading Development](#)

Structured Literacy Implemented through MTSS



Elements of Structured Literacy

Content of Structured Literacy

	Description	Resources
Knowledge of and Proficiency with Oral Language	Oral language is the foundation for reading and writing. The ability to understand others and express oneself verbally is culturally influenced and includes knowing what the words mean (semantics) at the word level (vocabulary) based on the parts of words—prefixes, bases, and suffixes—(morphology), the phrase and clause level — groups of words working together—(syntax), and the discourse level (pragmatics). It also includes the understanding that sentences are composed of words that are made up of unique patterns of individual sounds (phonology). Oral language knowledge and proficiency include social language, academic language, and inferential language, which are culturally guided.	Literacy How Effective Oral Language Instruction Teaching Reading to African American Children: When Home and School Language Differ
Phonological and Phonemic Awareness & Proficiency	Readers and writers recognize that oral language is made up of individual sounds that when changed can produce new words. At the phonological level, this includes the understanding that verbal utterances are made up of individual words, which are made up of syllables, which can be further broken into their first sounds (onsets) and the rest of the syllable (rimes). At the phonemic level, this includes the understanding that all words are made up of individual sounds (phonemes). Proficiency is the ability to blend, segment, and change units of sounds.	Literacy How National Center for Improving Literacy Equipped for Reading Success PA Educator's Guide Literacy San Antonio
Orthographic Knowledge & Proficiency (Phonics)	Readers and writers recognize that written letters represent sounds and that combining multiple letters creates syllables and words that can be decoded or read by blending the sounds together. This includes spelling conventions for representing speech and irregular word patterns and word parts (morphemes : prefixes, bases, and suffixes) and how meaning influences reading and spelling. Proficiency with orthography (orthographic mapping) leads to fluency.	National Center for Improving Literacy Literacy San Antonio Consistent Generalizations
Reading & Writing Fluency	Reading fluency is the ability to translate print into meaning and is the outcome of reading accurately	National Center for Improving Literacy

	<p>and automatically (often referred to as rate). Reading automaticity (recognition) is based on the ability to accurately identify words (decode) by connecting the letters in words to sounds and blending them together. Oral reading fluency includes appropriate expression (prosody), which relies on language knowledge and an understanding of punctuation.</p> <p>Writing fluency is the ability to translate thoughts into print and is based on the opposite skills of writing words (encoding) by segmenting the sounds of words and connecting them to letters to write.</p> <p>A key component to developing both reading and writing fluency is an understanding of what words mean (vocabulary), how they are grouped together into meaningful phrases and clauses (syntax), and how language is used (pragmatics and mechanics).</p>	<p>Literacy How</p> <p>Oral Reading Fluency Norms</p> <p>Iowa Reading Research</p> <p><i>The Writing Revolution</i>, by Judith C. Hochman & Natalie Wexler</p> <p><i>The Writing Rope</i>, by Joan Sedita</p>
<p>Knowledge of Semantics:</p> <p>Comprehension of Written Language</p>	<p>Reading comprehension is the outcome of understanding the meanings of words (vocabulary), phrases, sentences, and longer units of written text and the ability to read the words independently. Meanings of words, phrases, clauses, and larger units of text are best learned in relation to networks and connections, supported through the teaching of phonology, orthography, semantics, syntax, and morphology both in reading and writing.</p>	<p>Key Literacy Component: Morphology</p> <p><i>The Reading Comprehension Blueprint</i> - Nancy Hennessy</p>

Instructional Practices of Structured Literacy

	Description	Resources
Explicit Instruction	Is teacher-driven, intentional, and clearly explained. There are high-levels of teacher-student interactions and content is practiced reaching proficiency. Defining characteristics include segmenting complex skills into smaller manageable tasks, modeling or thinking-aloud to address the important features of the content, promoting successful engagement using supports and prompts that are faded or removed when no longer needed, and providing feedback and purposeful practice opportunities.	National Center for Improving Literacy <i>Explicit Instruction: Effective and Efficient Teaching</i> , by Anita Archer & Charles Hughes Explicit Instruction Infographics
Systematic, Sequential, Cumulative Instruction	Follows a progressive scope and sequence that builds in complexity (from part to whole or simple to complex) and includes frequent review of taught skills.	Big Dippers Reading Rockets
Multisensory / Multimodal Instruction	Is hands-on, engaging, and utilizes multiple modalities, in which students are reading, writing, speaking, and listening simultaneously. Play-based activities are essential (sidewalk chalk outside, sand trays, large body movement, varying manipulatives, games).	Reading Rockets Understood.org
Diagnostic and Responsive Instruction	Is based on data from careful and continuous assessment, both formal and informal. Teachers are responsive to student needs and adjust pacing, content presentation, and amount of practice within and beyond lessons.	Reading Rockets Lead for Literacy

LEGAL NOTICE



Except where otherwise noted, this work by the [Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution License](#). All logos and trademarks are property of their respective owners. Sections used under fair use doctrine (17 U.S.C. § 107) are marked.

Alternate material licenses with different levels of user permission are clearly indicated next to the specific content in the materials.

This resource may contain links to websites operated by third parties. These links are provided for your convenience only and do not constitute or imply any endorsement or monitoring by OSPI.

If this work is adapted, note the substantive changes and re-title, removing any Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction logos. Provide the following attribution:

This resource was adapted from original materials provided by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. Original materials may be accessed at [link to OSPI website location](#).

OSPI provides equal access to all programs and services without discrimination based on sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, honorably discharged veteran or military status, sexual orientation including gender expression or identity, the presence of any sensory, mental, or physical disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a person with a disability. Questions and complaints of alleged discrimination should be directed to the Equity and Civil Rights Director at 360-725-6162 or P.O. Box 47200 Olympia, WA 98504-7200.

Download this material in PDF at About Dyslexia K-12 (<http://www.ospi.k12.wa.us/>). This material is available in alternative format upon request. Contact the Resource Center at 888-595-3276, TTY 360-664-3631. Please refer to this document number for quicker service: 24-0013.



**ESTD
1889**

*All students prepared for post-secondary pathways,
careers, and civic engagement.*



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Chris Reykdal | State Superintendent
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Old Capitol Building | P.O. Box 47200
Olympia, WA 98504-7200