



IDENTIFYING AND SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH CHARACTERISTICS OF DYSLLEXIA

Model Policy
ExcelinEd Policy Toolkit - 2024

{Title} The (*insert name of Act or policy*)

{Intent} It is the intent of the Legislature that each school district screen all students in grades kindergarten through second (and in higher grades under certain circumstances) for risk factors of dyslexia using a valid and reliable dyslexia screener from a list approved by the State Board; that dyslexia screeners must meet certain criteria for approval; and that the use of a multi-tiered system of support framework is required if screening indicates that a student has some risk factors for dyslexia or has the characteristics of dyslexia. Effective [].

(A) Definitions

- (1) "Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. Dyslexia is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge."
- (2) "Dyslexia screening" assesses critical skills that are predictors of future reading success and helps to identify students who may have characteristics of dyslexia.
- (3) "Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS)" is a framework for supporting and increasing academic, behavioral, and social emotional outcomes for ALL students.
- (4) "Universal screener" means an assessment that is administered three times per year (beginning, middle, and end) to identify or predict students who may be at risk for poor reading outcomes and is typically brief and conducted with all students at a particular grade level.
- (5) "Structured literacy" is an evidence-based approach to teaching oral and written language aligned to the science of reading. It is based on the science of how kids learn to read and is characterized by explicit, systematic, cumulative, and diagnostic instruction in phonology, sound-symbol association, syllable instruction, morphology, syntax, and semantics.
- (6) "Science of reading" refers to the large body of evidence that informs how proficient reading and writing develop; why some have difficulty; and how we can most effectively assess and teach and, therefore, improve student outcomes through prevention of and intervention for reading difficulties.
- (7) Three-cueing includes any model of teaching students to read based on meaning, structure and syntax, and visual cues, which may also be known as MSV.

(B) Dyslexia Screening

- (1) Beginning with the [] school year, each school district must adopt a policy to screen all students in grades kindergarten through Grade 2 (K-2) for the risk factors of dyslexia using a dyslexia screener approved by the State Board of Education. The dyslexia screener should be administered annually during the spring of kindergarten and at the beginning of first and second grades. The screening of students using an approved dyslexia screener must include, as developmentally appropriate, all of the following:
 - (a) Phonological and phonemic awareness;
 - (b) Sound symbol recognition;
 - (c) Alphabet knowledge;
 - (d) Decoding skills;



- (e) Rapid naming skills including letter naming and letter sound fluency;
 - (f) Encoding skills; and
 - (g) Oral reading accuracy and fluency.
- (2) If the dyslexia screening indicates that a student has risk factors for dyslexia or the characteristics of dyslexia the school must use a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) framework to address the needs of the student.
- (3) If a student's performance on a dyslexia screening indicates a need for dyslexia intervention services, the school district must do both of the following:
- (a) Notify the student's parent or guardian of the results of all screenings; and
 - (b) Provide the student's parent or guardian with information and resource material that include all of the following:
 - (i) The characteristics of dyslexia;
 - (ii) The appropriate classroom interventions and accommodations for students with dyslexia; and
 - (iii) A statement that the parent or guardian may elect to have the student receive an educational evaluation by the school.
- (4) If a student's parent or guardian presents documentation of an existing diagnosis of dyslexia, then the student may be exempt from screening; however, the school must use a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) framework to address the needs of the student.
- (5) The division shall adopt rules to ensure that students will be screened using an approved dyslexia screener:
- (a) In kindergarten through grade two (K-2);
 - (b) When a student in kindergarten through grade two (K-2) transfers to a new school and has not been screened;
 - (c) When a student in grade three (3) or higher has difficulty, as noted by a classroom teacher or upon parent request for dyslexia screening, in:
 - (i) Phonological and phonemic awareness;
 - (ii) Sound-symbol recognition;
 - (iii) Alphabet knowledge;
 - (iv) Decoding skills;
 - (v) Rapid naming skills including letter naming and letter-sound fluency; and
 - (vi) Encoding skills; and
 - (vii) Oral reading fluency
 - (d) When a student from another state or from an educational setting that does not require dyslexia screening enrolls for the first time in kindergarten through grade five (K-5) and demonstrates reading skills below grade level through classroom performance, on a universal screener or ELA state assessment, and/or as observed by a classroom teacher unless the parent/guardian presents documentation that the student:
 - (i) Had the screening or a similar screening; or
 - (ii) Is exempt from screening or has received a diagnosis of dyslexia.



(C) Dyslexia Interventions

- (1) Beginning in the [] school year, and as provided in this section, each school district must use evidence-based 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 all students in kindergarten through second grade for indications of, or characteristics associated with dyslexia as provided in this section.
- (2) If a student's dyslexia screening indicates that the student has characteristics of dyslexia, the dyslexia intervention services provided to the student must utilize a multi-sensory/multi-modal structured literacy approach.
- (3) The program shall include implementation of evidence-based core curricula aligned to the uniform content and performance standards and evidence-based interventions to meet the needs of all students.
- (4) The dyslexia intervention services must be provided by an educator trained in a structured literacy approach, specifically target students' areas of weakness and:
 - (a) provide explicit, systematic, sequential, and cumulative instruction that adheres to a logical plan about the alphabetic principle and is designed to accommodate the needs of each individual student without presuming prior skills or knowledge;
 - (b) implement evidence-based practices that have been proven effective and do not include the three-cueing system model of word reading;
 - (c) engage the student in multi-sensory/multi-modal language learning techniques;
 - (d) include phonemic awareness activities to enable the student to detect, segment, blend, and manipulate sounds in the spoken language;
 - (e) provide graphophonemic knowledge for teaching the letter sound plan of the English language;
 - (f) teach the structure and patterns of the English language, including linguistic instruction in morphology, semantics, syntax, and pragmatics, that is directed toward proficiency and fluency with the patterns of language so that words and sentences are the carriers of meaning;
 - (g) develop strategies that advance the student's ability in decoding, encoding, word recognition, fluency, and comprehension; and
 - (h) provide meaning-based instruction directed at purposeful reading and writing, with an emphasis on comprehension and composition.
- (5) Whenever possible, a school district must begin by providing student supports in the general education classroom. If screening tools and resources indicate that, after receiving the initial tier of student support, a student requires interventions, the school district may provide the interventions in either the general education classroom or a learning assistance program setting. If after receiving interventions, further screening tools and resources indicate that a student continues to demonstrate characteristics of dyslexia, the school district must recommend to the student's parents and family that the student be evaluated for dyslexia or a specific learning disability.
- (6) Parents must be notified of all screening administrations and outcomes. For a student who demonstrates characteristics of dyslexia, each school district must notify the student's parents and family of the identified indicators and areas of weakness, as well as the plan for using MTSS to provide supports and interventions. The initial notice must also include information relating to dyslexia and



resources for parental support developed by the Department of Education. The school district must regularly update the student's parents and family of the student's progress.

(D) Professional Development

- (1) Provide structured literacy training to reading coaches, classroom teachers, and school administrators in the following:
 - (a) effective methods of identifying characteristics of dyslexia and other related reading disorders;
 - (b) incorporating evidence-based instructional techniques into the general education setting which are proven to improve reading performance for all students; and
 - (c) using predictive and other data to make instructional decisions based on individual student needs.
- (2) The training must help teachers integrate phonological and phonemic awareness; phonics including decoding and encoding, word study, and spelling; reading fluency; vocabulary, including academic vocabulary; and text comprehension strategies into an explicit, systematic, sequential, and cumulative approach to reading instruction, including multisensory/multi-modal intervention strategies.
- (3) Each district must provide all elementary grades instructional personnel (i.e., teachers, administrators, reading coaches, speech pathologists, interventionists) access to structured literacy training sufficient to meet the requirements of this section.

(DI) Dyslexia Handbook

- (1) The Department of Education shall develop and maintain a handbook to be made available on its Internet website that provides guidance for students, parents or guardians, and teachers about dyslexia. The handbook shall include, but is not limited to:
 - (a) guidelines for teachers and parents or caregivers on how to identify signs of dyslexia;
 - (b) a description of educational strategies that have been shown to improve the academic performance of students with dyslexia;
 - (c) a description of resources and services available to students with dyslexia, parents or guardians of students with dyslexia, and teachers; and
 - (d) guidelines on the administration of a universal screener and dyslexia screening, the interpretation of data from these screeners, and the resulting appropriate instruction within a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) framework.
- (2) The Department of Education shall review the handbook on or before () and at least once every three (3) years thereafter to update the guidelines, educational strategies, or resources and services made available in the handbook, as needed.

(F) Educator Preparation Programs

- (1) By the [] academic year, postsecondary institutions offering teacher preparation programs for elementary and secondary regular education and special education shall include instruction on:
 - (a) The definition and characteristics of dyslexia;
 - (b) Processes for identifying dyslexia;
 - (c) Evidence-based interventions and accommodations for dyslexia and related literacy and learning challenges; and



- (d) Core elements of a response-to-intervention framework addressing reading, writing, mathematics, and behavior, including;
 - (i) Universal screening;
 - (ii) High-quality instructional materials grounded in the science of reading;
 - (iii) Evidence-based interventions;
 - (iv) Progress monitoring of the effectiveness of interventions on student performance;
 - (v) Data-based decision-making procedures related to:
 - 1. Determining intervention effectiveness on student performance; and
 - 2. Determining the need to continue, alter, or discontinue interventions or conduct further evaluation of student needs; and
 - 3. Application and implementation of response-to-intervention and dyslexia instructional practices in the classroom setting.