



OSPI + Glean: Questions On Dyslexia from the Field
Session #1 Topic: Questions on Dyslexia From the Field for Teachers & Leaders
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
2024-2025

March 5, 2025

Dear Washington Educators,

Thank you for your interest in OSPI's partnership with Glean Education. This winter and spring, we will hold two webinars on Dyslexia: Questions from the Field.

Please take a look at the following Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document with questions raised in these webinars. We will be updating this constantly, so be sure to check back often.

Q: What are the core deficits/skills that contribute to dyslexia? The core deficits associated with dyslexia include:

1. **Processing Speed:** Difficulty with the speed at which individuals can process information.
2. **Phonological and Phonemic Processing:** Problems with recognizing and manipulating sounds in words, which can make learning to read and write challenging.
3. **Rapid Automatized Naming (RAN):** This refers to the ability to quickly name a series of familiar items, such as colors, letters, or numbers. Research suggests that RAN does not improve significantly with intervention, although it may improve slightly. It's not generally a primary focus for intervention when working with dyslexia.
4. **Orthographic Processing:** This involves difficulty in remembering the correct letter combinations or "chunks" of language when retrieving words from memory to spell them correctly.

Students with both dyslexia and dysgraphia may experience challenges in all three of these areas, which can make their difficulties even more persistent.

Additionally, because dyslexia is often comorbid with dysgraphia, the core deficits for dysgraphia overlap with those of dyslexia. These include:

- ❖ Phonological Processing
- ❖ Auditory Processing (the ability to process sounds in general)
- ❖ Visual Processing (not just vision but how visual input from the eyes is processed by the brain)

Similar to dyslexia, individuals may experience a single, double, or even triple deficit in these areas, which can affect their ability to read, write, and process information effectively.



Q: What does dyslexia look like in the classroom?

Dyslexia:

In the classroom, students with dyslexia often struggle with reading, decoding words, and reading comprehension. They may have difficulty with spelling, disorganized writing, and slow handwriting. Verbal issues like trouble expressing thoughts clearly and word-finding difficulties are also common. Additionally, they may struggle with organization, time management, and following multi-step instructions.

Dysgraphia:

Dysgraphia can affect both writing and visual processing. Students may have slow, messy handwriting, difficulty forming letters, and challenges with organizing their written work. They process visual input differently, making it hard to return to the correct spot on the page and continue reading or writing.

Assessment Indicators:

On assessments, students with dyslexia may show low rapid naming, low working memory, and low phonological awareness.

Social-Emotional Impact:

Dyslexia and dysgraphia can also affect a student's social-emotional well-being. It may lead to task avoidance, lack of participation, school refusal, frustration, anxiety, and depression.

Q: How can we support students who have been identified as 'at risk' through an early literacy screener?

The screening itself is important, but what's even more crucial is knowing what to do next. Washington state has an early risk screener with tools in place, but it's vital to assess the students' needs and provide the necessary support.

To support these students:

1. **Identify the Issues:** Use robust benchmarks and interim assessments (like DIBELS) to understand what's going on with the students.
2. **Provide Tiered Instruction and Intervention:** Ensure that high-quality instruction is provided at Tier 1. This instruction should be explicit, systematic, cumulative, differentiated, diagnostic, and responsive.
3. **Four Intensification Directions:**
 - ❖ **Group Size:** Adjust the size of the group based on student needs.
 - ❖ **Deficit Alignment:** Align interventions with the specific areas of difficulty.
 - ❖ **Program:** Choose the appropriate program that addresses the needs.
 - ❖ **Dosage:** Adjust the frequency and duration of the intervention. By addressing these areas, we can better support students who are at risk and help them make progress.



Q: Who can diagnose?

It's important to understand the difference between diagnosis and identification. **Diagnosis** is the process of determining the nature and cause of a disease, injury, or disorder. **Identification** is the act of recognizing and naming someone or something. In this context, "diagnosis" isn't the best term to use. We prefer to identify students who may be struggling and ensure they receive the necessary support. School psychologists often lead the identification process, sometimes working in collaboration with special education teachers or other educators involved in administering neuropsychological evaluations.

Q: Can we say dyslexia on the IEP?

Yes, you can include dyslexia on the IEP. The 2015 Dear Colleague letter established that terms like dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia can be used in IEPs. There is no restriction on using these terms when discussing specific learning disabilities.

Q: What accommodations are most effective for older students who were not diagnosed as elementary students?

Accommodations generally apply only if the student has an IEP. However, it's the teacher's responsibility to remove barriers and provide access to the information needed for the student to succeed.

One of the most effective accommodations—whether or not the student has been formally diagnosed—is using speech-to-text (speech to print) and text-to-speech (print to speech).

A useful tool for this is Speechify, which can read text aloud to students in different voices, helping them access written material more easily.

Additionally, providing extra time for processing can significantly help students who struggle with information retention or comprehension. Giving them a little more time allows them to process and engage with the content more effectively.

Q: What do teachers do with all the tools to determine if their students are at risk or not?

Teachers can trust the screeners, as they are largely normed, though there may be some slight variability. It's important to believe in the results from these screeners as reliable indicators.

Additionally, using multiple assessment points and data sources together can provide a more complete picture of a student's needs. This helps to ensure that teachers are making informed decisions and providing the right support for students at risk.