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Dyslexia Guidance: Implementing MTSS for Literacy

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DYSLEXIA GUIDANCE: IMPLEMENTING MTSS FOR LITERACY

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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 school districts with 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 with low level literacy skills can be socially and economically disadvantaged 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. See [About OSPI](#).

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 school districts 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. 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](#)).

School District Requirements

In accordance with RCW [28A.320.260](#), each school district must use a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) to:

- **Screen:** Screen students in grades K–2 for indications of below-grade level literacy development, including indications of or areas of weakness associated with dyslexia. Districts 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 school districts 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 school district 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 areas of weakness associated with dyslexia, the school district 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 district 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, districts 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.

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

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

[Multi-Tiered System of Supports \(MTSS\)](#) is a prevention-based framework by which districts 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](#), school districts must use MTSS consistent with the DAC's recommendations to provide screening and interventions to students in kindergarten through second grade who display indications of below grade level literacy development or indications of or areas of weakness associated with dyslexia. Districts 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, school districts 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 elementary and secondary systems in building their MTSS literacy framework. The R-TFI can also support districts in assessing the extent to which the literacy components of MTSS are implemented; it provides guidance for continuous improvement (St. Martin et al., 2022). The following table outlines 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 district 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 provide comprehensive supports.

Implementation

- Use a [formal process](#) to determine universal reading programs, interventions, and practices aligned to [the science of reading](#), [state learning standards](#), [scientifically validated](#), and responsive to the cultural and linguistic diversity of the community.
- 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 district 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 is 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 [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 implementation data](#).
- For more information and resources related to MTSS, please visit OSPI's [MTSS webpage](#). [Michigan's MTSS Technical Assistance Center](#) provides resources for RTFI [facilitator training](#) and using RTFI results to inform [next steps in implementation](#).

Family and Caregiver Engagement

Families and caregivers are essential partners in supporting students' overall well-being, socio-emotional needs, and supporting their 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](#). The requirements for ESSB 6162 should be embedded in the school's family and caregiver engagement plan within MTSS to ensure responsive, inclusive, and empowering family and caregiver involvement.

When a student's screening results indicate areas of weakness associated with dyslexia, schools must notify the families and caregivers of the following: (RCW [28A.320.260](#)):

- **Screening Results:** The specific indicators and/or areas of weakness identified by the screening tools (phonemic awareness, phonological awareness, letter-sound knowledge, rapid automatized naming).
- **Interventions:** The plan for using MTSS to provide interventions, which may include, but is not limited to, information on the specific intervention programs and practices, frequency, and duration of interventions, when/how the educators will assess progress and share updates with families and caregivers.
- **Resources:** developed by the DAC that provide information on dyslexia, which may include 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. 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.

The notification conversation can be used as an opportunity to learn more about family history if the family is comfortable sharing. The [sample conversation guide](#) below is included in the Resources and Tools section and may be printed to provide to families and caregivers during or following initial conversations.

Sample Conversation & Notification

Indicators Associated with Dyslexia

At [school name], we regularly screen for risks associated with future reading difficulties, including weaknesses associated with dyslexia. The results guide us in providing timely support and interventions to students who may need them. The screening results for [student name] indicate weaknesses in the following areas:

- Phonological awareness
- Phonemic awareness
- Letter-sound knowledge
- Rapid naming skills

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] family history if you are able and willing to share.

- Do you know about the reading, writing, and speaking experiences of [student name] biological family?
- If yes, did any of [student name] 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.

Plan for Support

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

- Intervention Plan:
- Focus:
- Frequency:
- Duration:
- Monitoring Tool:
- Next Update:

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, things to look for](#)
- [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 failure.

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.

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](#) & [National Center for Improving Literacy](#).
- *Phonemic Awareness*: ability to hear, identify, delete, and change sounds of spoken words. See [Reading Rockets](#) & [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](#) & [National Center for Improving Literacy](#).

- *Rapid Automatized Naming (RAN)*: ability to quickly name aloud a series of familiar items. This must include letters, numbers, colors, and objects. 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. Also see [WA State Dyslexia Resource Guide](#).

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 variation 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:

Pre-School through Kindergarten Concerns

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

Concerns in Early School Years

- Connecting letters to sounds
- Expressing 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)
- Avoidance of reading and writing tasks

Concerns in Later School Years

- Reading aloud, especially 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

[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 at least annually. 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 4 months of U.S. schooling.

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.

When are students screened?

The specific process for each school district will vary based on the publisher's recommendations of the screening tools the district chooses. To assist districts 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:

- Kindergarten:
 - Fall: [WaKIDS](#)
 - Winter: Literacy screener (for phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, and letter-sound knowledge) and Rapid automatized naming (RAN)
 - Spring: Literacy screener (for phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, and letter-sound knowledge)
- Grade 1:
 - Fall: Literacy screener (for phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, and letter-sound knowledge)
 - Winter: Literacy screener (for phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, and letter-sound knowledge); Rapid automatized naming (RAN)
 - Spring: Literacy screener (for phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, and letter-sound knowledge)
- Grade 2:
 - Fall: Literacy screener (for phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, letter-sound knowledge, and oral reading fluency for [Second Grade Reading Assessment](#))
 - Winter: Literacy screener (for phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, and letter-sound knowledge)
 - Spring: Literacy screener (for phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, and letter-sound knowledge)
- Additional considerations:
 - 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.

Who administers the screeners?

Screening tools should be administered by an educator—certified 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. District 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?

Within MTSS, school and district staff collect and organize screening data into reports that inform the work of the school teams. School and district 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 after receiving evidence-based structured literacy interventions through MTSS the student's screening results continue to indicate weaknesses associated with dyslexia and the student is not making progress toward grade-level standards, the school district 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 district special education program. In accordance with child-find under IDEA (34 CFR §300.301(b)), a warranted full evaluation [cannot be delayed](#). School districts can look to collaborative efforts by OSPI and the Washington State Association of School Psychologists (WSASP) for guidance and resources to support evaluation teams with 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 learners without learning disabilities may exhibit reading behaviors and characteristics that look like 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 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 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 list provides considerations for screening multilingual learners at various language levels based on their overall WIDA score ranges (Screener or ACCESS Assessment).

Score range 0–2.0:

- Newcomers are exempt from screening for the first 4 months.
- Students may screen in their home language (if possible).
- Grade-level norms will not be applicable in English. Look at progress over time.

Score range 2.1–3.9:

- Students should be screened (unless in their first 4 months).
- Students may screen in their home language (if needed).
- Grade-level norms may not be applicable in English. Look at progress over time.

Score range 4.0–6.0:

- Students should be screened.
- Students may screen in their home language (if useful).
- Grade-level norms may be applicable, but team should consider progress as well.

Scores above a 4 in speaking and listening but lower in reading and writing may indicate warning signs and/or a 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 learners. Data review teams may include classroom teachers, bilingual educators, EL 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.

Phonological Awareness:

- 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:

- 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:

- 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:

- 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 weaknesses associated with dyslexia, multilingual learners are often overidentified for special education services in Washington state for specific learning disabilities and communication disorders. Consequently, referring multilingual

learners for evaluation must be done with caution. Many districts use a critical data process to consider multiple factors including the student's first language development and background before considering a referral for testing. [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 visit 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 the school wide MTSS system to ensure necessary interventions and supports are provided in a timely manner and all tiers of instruction are aligned. Schools 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. Practices and programs must be aligned with structured literacy as required by law (RCW [28A.320.260](#)).

Structured Literacy

All students, 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 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.

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.

Content of Structured Literacy

Knowledge of and Proficiency with Oral Language

The ability to understand others and express oneself verbally. This 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.

Resources:

- [Literacy How](#)
- [Effective Oral Language Instruction](#)

Phonological and Phonemic Awareness & Proficiency

The recognition 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.

Resources:

- [Literacy How](#)
- [National Center for Improving Literacy](#)
- [Equipped for Reading Success](#)
- [PA Educator's Guide](#)
- [Literacy San Antonio](#)

Knowledge of Orthographic Conventions (Phonics)

The recognition 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.

Resources:

- [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). 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.

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.

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**).

Resources:

- [National Center for Improving Literacy](#)
- [Literacy How](#)
- [Oral Reading Fluency Norms](#)
- [Iowa Reading Research](#)
- *The Writing Revolution* -- Judith C. Hochman & Natalie Wexler

Knowledge of Semantics: Comprehension of Written Language

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**.

Resources:

- [Key Literacy Component: Morphology](#)
- *The Reading Comprehension Blueprint* -- Nancy Hennessy

Instructional Practices of Structured Literacy

Explicit Instruction

Is teacher-driven, intentional, and clearly explained. There are high-levels of teacher-student interactions and content is practiced reaching mastery.

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 gradual release of supports and prompts, and providing timely feedback and purposeful practice opportunities.

- National Center for Improving Literacy
- *Explicit Instruction: Effective and Efficient Teaching* -- Anita Archer & Charles Hughes

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](#)

For more information, see [Structured Literacy from Understood.org](#), The Reading League's [Do This Not That](#) and [What is the Science of Reading](#), and MTSS for ELs' [Multitiered Instructional Systems for ELs](#). The IDA has created an [Introductory Guide to Structured Literacy](#).

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 need, and aligned with and layered onto universal instruction. In an effective continuum of supports, all students have access to intervention when they need it. Educators are trained and supported throughout implementation to ensure instruction and interventions are delivered as designed.

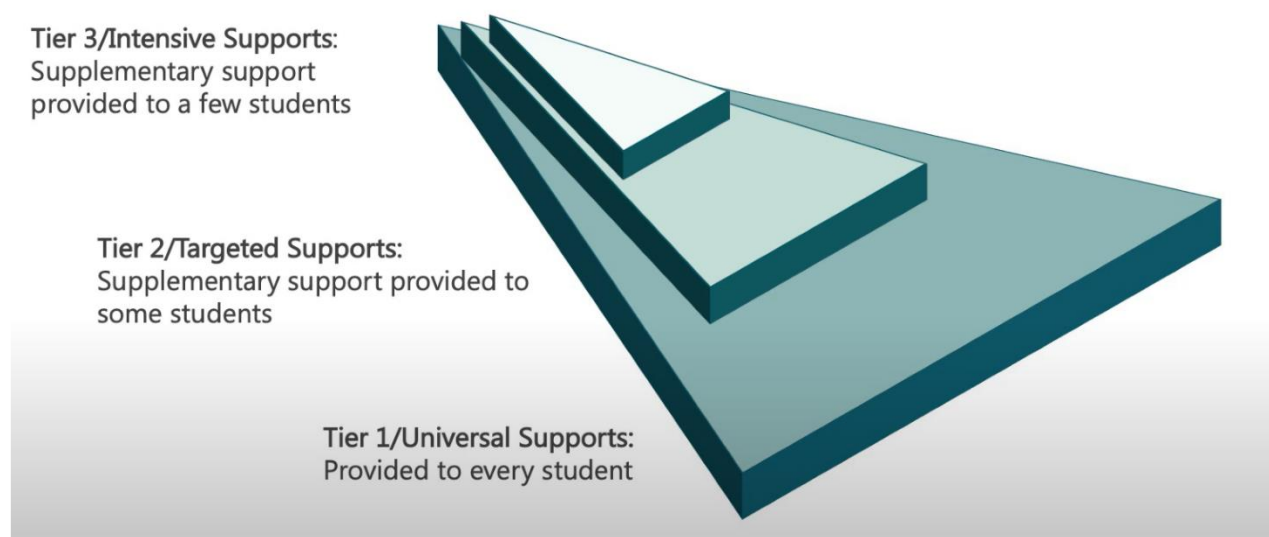
The list below illustrates the data-based decision-making process:

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 implementation data regularly to determine whether to continue or modify instruction and interventions.
7. Share progress updates and intervention changes regularly with families and caregivers.

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 school should develop an intervention platform, or 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.



Structured Literacy Across Tiers in PK–12

Tier 1 (Universal)

- 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.

Resources:

- [National Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports Intensifying Tier 1 Instruction](#)
- [IES Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade](#)

Tier 2(Targeted)

- 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 implementation, attendance monitoring, and student and family/caregiver perception data.
- Tier 2 **teams** use decision rules to determine intervention groups. Teams regularly review intervention implementation 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.

Resources:

- [National Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports Essential Features of Tier 2](#)
- [IES Providing Reading Interventions to Grades K–3](#)
- [IES Providing Reading Interventions to Grades 4–9](#)

Tier 3 (Intensive)

- Tier 3 **intervention** is supplemental to Tiers 1 and 2 and is culturally and linguistically responsive and aligned with the science of reading and previous Tiers. It includes clear entrance and exit criteria, evidence-based practices and programs that target specific skills and individualized to student needs. Tier 3 intervention is accessible to all students.
- Tier 3 **assessment** increases in frequency and includes diagnostic tools, progress monitoring, intervention implementation, attendance monitoring, and student and family/caregiver perception data.
- Tier 3 **teams** use diagnostic data to determine each student’s Individualized Intensive Intervention Plan (IIIP). Teams regularly review intervention implementation and student progress to make impactful adaptations, which require a data trend based on 4–7 data points. Adaptations are made in alignment with the dimensions in the [Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity](#).
- Tier 3 **family and caregiver engagement** includes ongoing, two-way communication and co-creation of the IIIP, which should include: (1) diagnostic data, (2) intervention plan, including focus, program, adaptations aligned with the dimensions in the Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity, frequency, duration, time, (3) assessment plan to monitor progress, and (4) two-way communication plan with families and caregivers.

Resources:

- [Data-Based Individualization Process](#)
- [Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity](#)
- [Intensive Data Team Meetings](#)
- [Intervention Plan Templates](#)
- [Intensive Intervention and Special Education](#)

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

Students 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 half to 2 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 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](#).

Where can I learn more?

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

- [What is the Science of Reading](#)
- [Reading Rockets 101](#)
- [IDA Teacher Training Programs \(\\$\)](#)
- [Statewide Modules \(Available in September 2022\)](#)

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.

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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)

Sample Conversation & Notification

Indicators Associated with Dyslexia

At [school name], we regularly screen for risks associated with future reading difficulties, including weaknesses associated with dyslexia. The results guide us in providing timely support and interventions to students who may need them. The screening results for [student name] indicate needs for support in the following areas:

- Phonological awareness
- Phonemic awareness
- Letter-sound knowledge
- Rapid naming skills

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] family history if you are able and willing to share.

- Do you know about the reading, writing, and speaking experiences of [student name] biological family?
- If yes, did any of [student name] 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 and will be kept with the data on the student's literacy skills. Strengths and interests will be leveraged in the process of providing interventions and supports.

Plan for Support

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

- Intervention Plan:
- Focus:
- Frequency:
- Duration:
- Monitoring Tool:
- Next Update:

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

- [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](#) article by understood.org
- [Reading Rockets: Target the Problem, things to look for](#)
- [NCIL: Learning About Your Child's Reading Development](#)

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Download this material in PDF on OSPI's dyslexia webpage (<https://www.k12.wa.us/about-ospi/workgroups-committees/currently-meeting-workgroups/washington-state-dyslexia-advisory-council/about-dyslexia>). 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: 22-0034.



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