

# Massachusetts Dyslexia Guidelines

**Joint Special Education  
and Teaching and  
Learning Subcommittee**



# ● **An Act Relative to Students with Dyslexia**

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● Enacted in October 2018 and took effect on January 17, 2019 amending Chapter 71 of the Massachusetts General Laws to add the following provision:

● Section 57A. The department of elementary and secondary education, in consultation with the department of early education and care, shall, subject to appropriation, issue guidelines to assist districts in developing screening procedures or protocols for students that demonstrate 1 or more potential indicators of a neurological learning disability including, but not limited to dyslexia. M.G.L Chapter 71, § 57A

# Dyslexia Guidelines serve three purposes

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01

**To provide a set of screening guideline for all students.**

02

**To provide a framework of intervention for students at risk of dyslexia and other learning disabilities.**

03

**To provide a comprehensive resource of evidence-based practices aimed at all educators to support students at risk of dyslexia and those identified as having dyslexia.**



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# What is Dyslexia?

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# Dyslexia Definition

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Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It 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. *U.S. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHHD) 2002, International Dyslexia Association (IDA).*

# Subtypes of Dyslexia



\*Subtype determination is based on individualized analysis of patterns of weaknesses. Qualifying students may not score below average on all subtest in a particular category (Wolf & Bowers, 1999)

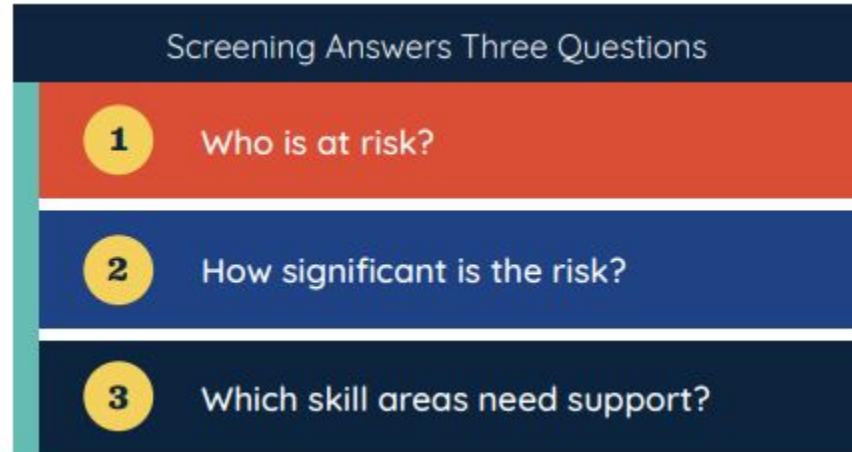


# **Dyslexia can be used in Schools.**

Both Federal and State guidance endorse the use of the term dyslexia during evaluation, eligibility determinations, and IEP documents, when students meet the criteria as outlined in the definition of dyslexia.

# Screening for Risk of Dyslexia

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- Risk factors for dyslexia can be detected prior to formal reading instruction
- Screening for risk is critical for efficient intervention
- Screening is not an eligibility determination



# Kindergarten Screening

Kindergarten screening recommendations:

- Administered at least twice over the course of the year (fall and spring)
- Assesses Phonemic Awareness skill, in particular Phoneme Segmentation
- Assesses Alphabetic Knowledge skills, Letter Naming tasks and Letter Sound Recognition
- Assesses Rapid Automated Naming skills, object or Letter Naming

SKILL	BEGINNING OF THE YEAR and/or MIDDLE OF THE YEAR	END OF THE YEAR
Phonemic Awareness	Phoneme Segmentation	Phoneme Segmentation
Alphabetic Knowledge	Letter Identification and/or Letter Sound Knowledge	Letter Sound Knowledge and Decoding (Nonsense Words)
Rapid Automated Naming	Object or Letter Naming Subtest	Letter Naming Subtest

## Sample Rapid Automatized Naming (RAN) Letters Task

o e t p q e o t q p  
t p e q p o e q t o  
e o t q t p p o p e  
p e q o p t e t o q  
o e p t q p o e q t

# First Grade Screening

First grade screening recommendations:

- Administered at least three times over the course of the year (fall, winter, and spring)
- Phonemic Awareness skills, in particular Phoneme Segmentation
- Alphabetic Knowledge skills, Letter Sound Knowledge and ability to decode nonsense words
- Word Reading, Single Word Recognition and Passage Reading Fluency measures accuracy and fluency (timed)
- Rapid Automatized Naming skills, Letter Naming

SKILL	BEGINNING OF THE YEAR	MIDDLE OF THE YEAR	END OF THE YEAR
Phonemic Awareness	Phoneme Segmentation (At least at the beginning of the year, preferably three times across the year).		
Alphabetic Knowledge	Letter Sound Knowledge and Decoding (Nonsense Words)	Decoding (Nonsense Words)	Decoding (Nonsense Words)
Word Reading	Word Identification	Passage Reading Fluency	Passage Reading Fluency
Rapid Automatized Naming (RAN)	RAN - Letter Naming Subtest	None	None

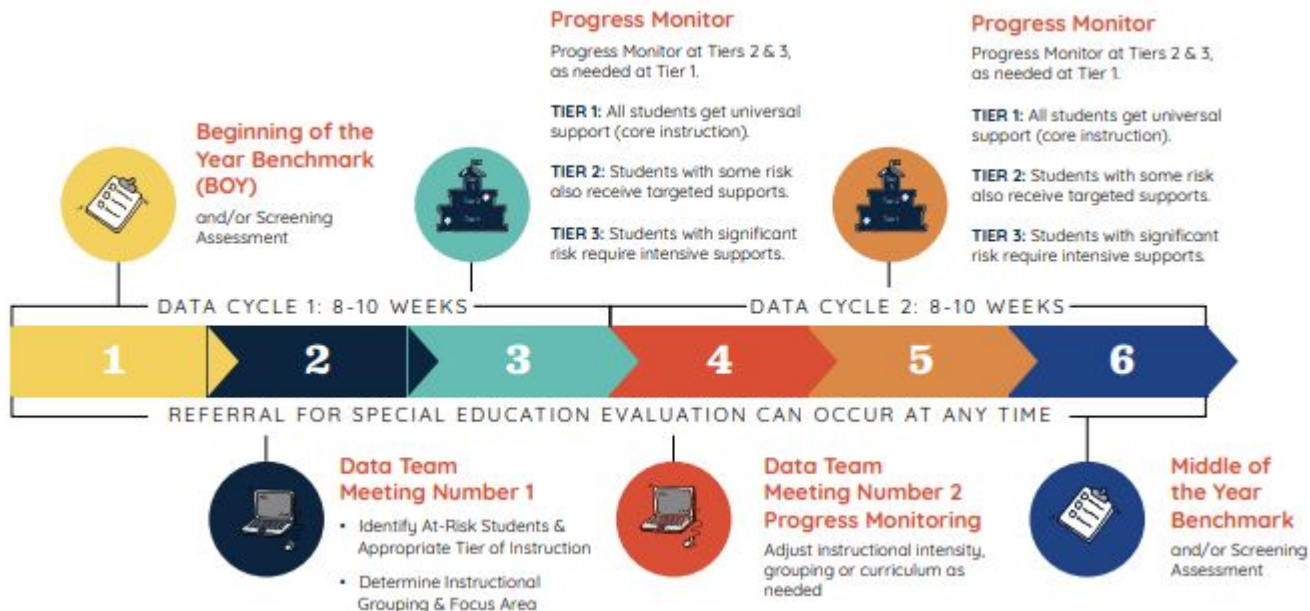
# Second Grade Screening

Second grade screening recommendations:

- Administered at least three times over the course of the year (fall, winter, and spring)
- Alphabetic Knowledge skills, ability to decode nonsense words and a review of first grade phonics patterns
- Word Reading, Passage Reading Fluency measures accuracy and fluency (timed)
- Reading Comprehension
- Rapid Automatized Naming skills, Letter Naming

SKILL	BEGINNING OF THE YEAR	MIDDLE OF THE YEAR	END OF THE YEAR
Alphabetic Knowledge	Decoding (Nonsense Words) to be administered at the three benchmark periods.		
Word Reading	Passage Reading Fluency to be administered at the three benchmark periods.		
Reading Comprehension	Reading Comprehension to be administered at the three benchmark periods.		
Rapid Automatized Naming	RAN - Letter Naming Subtest	None	None

# Assessment Cycle



## Three Outcomes of Data Meetings

- Assigned to the appropriate tier of instruction in addition to Tier 1 (core instruction)
- Instructional focus area for students who demonstrated some risk
- Arrangement of student groups for Tiers 2 and 3 intervention



*Progress monitoring every 2 weeks is recommended for students who demonstrate some risk.*

# Other considerations

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## Essential Content for Tier 1 Instruction in K-2

*Between Kindergarten and second grade, high quality reading instruction balances targeted instruction on word-level skills (phonemic awareness, decoding, etc.) with listening and reading comprehension (including the development of vocabulary and background knowledge).*

## Effective Tier 1 Instruction should include:

- Building sight word recognition skills through orthographic mapping
- Teaching of advanced phonemic awareness skills (deletion, manipulation, substitution, etc.)

# Other considerations

## Targeted Reading Intervention at Tiers 2 and 3

*The use of screening data to inform instructional planning for at-risk students improves the nature of Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions.*

### Effective Tier 2 and 3 Instruction should include:

- Phonemic awareness interventions
- Phonics instruction
- Fluency
- Sight word recognition (orthographic mapping)
- Passage reading fluency
- Structured literacy
- Reading comprehension



# Considerations for English Language Learners

- What level of English Proficiency has been achieved?
- Are difficulties present in both native language and English?
- Did the student experience delays in learning to talk or interruptions in their education?
- Have structured reading instruction and interventions been provided?
- Have cognitive functions such as rapid automatized naming, phonological memory, basic phonemic awareness and phonemic proficiency (advanced phonemic awareness) been assessed?

## Recommendations for using screening tools with English learners<sup>9</sup>


- ➔ Use tools with demonstrated reliability and validity to identify and monitor students' need for instructional support in reading.
- ➔ Assess students' language skills in reading in the native language (L1) and in English (second language or L2) to provide an appropriate context regarding evaluation of current levels of performance.
- ➔ Evaluate the potential effect of the process of L1 and L2 acquisition on current performance.
- ➔ Plan instruction based on what is known about the student's current level of performance and the student's literacy experiences in L1 and L2.

Brown and Stanford, [RTI for English Language Learners: Appropriately Using Screening and Progress Monitoring Tools to Improve Instructional Outcomes](#), pp. 10-11.

# Next Steps

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- Create a literacy leadership team comprised of elementary teachers, special education teachers, literacy interventionists, directors, coordinators and principals
- Evaluate existing curricula (Tier 1, 2, and 3)
- Research/select a universal screener
- Develop a strategic plan for three to five years of improvement work
- Develop/provide ongoing professional development for **all** teachers

The background of the entire image is a light blue surface scattered with several yellow pencils and their shavings. Some pencils are sharpened, while others are not. The shavings are light brown and have a characteristic spiral shape. The text is overlaid on a dark blue grid pattern that covers the left and center portions of the image.

“Efforts to help weaker readers have been geared toward teaching them how to jump more efficiently over their hurdles. It is not about helping children become better and more efficient hurdlers. It is about removing the hurdles from the track before the race even starts.”

**–David A. Kilpatrick**