

**Dyslexia Guidelines  
and Early Literacy  
in WPS**



WPS October 2021

# Goals for Tonight are to Share:

1. Information about the MA Early Literacy Initiative
2. An overview of MA Dyslexia Law/DESE guidelines document and how WPS is responding
3. How MA Literacy, Dyslexia Law and Star Screening Tool Connect
4. What training and steps the District has already taken and the plan for the remainder of the year

# Two Big Changes for the Better in MA

In 2018 (and then disrupted by the pandemic until now) MADESE initiated two changes related to literacy that connect general education and special education:

[MA Early Literacy Initiative](#)

[MA Dyslexia Screening Guidelines](#)

# Overview of Mass Literacy

Starting in 2018, staff in the Department's Office of Literacy and Humanities engaged educators and other stakeholders statewide to develop the Department's Literacy Strategic Plan, which is entitled *An Excellent Education in ELA and Literacy for All*.

- Being able to read, write, and speak are *essential for full participation* in our society.
- Mass Literacy is a statewide **effort to empower educators with the evidence-based practices for literacy** that all students need.

# Components of the Core Literacy Block - Evidence Based Early Literacy

## Components of the Core Literacy Block

The core literacy block includes three main components: Foundational Skills, Engaging with Complex Text, and Writing. Oral Language is the bedrock, and differentiated instruction happens throughout.

### Foundational Skills

The core literacy block includes systematic instruction with active practice in foundational skills every day in grades preK-3.

Pre-K

Kindergarten

Grade 1

Grade 2

Grade 3

### Engaging with Complex Text

The core literacy block includes reading or listening to authentic and meaningful texts every day in grades preK-3.

Choosing and Using Complex Text

Reading for Understanding

Responding to Text

### Writing

The core literacy block includes systematic writing instruction with active practice every day in grades preK-3.

Sentence Structure & Conventions

Craft of Writing

Writing Process

A core literacy block in grades preK-3 should allocate time for the three main components: Foundational Skills, Engaging with Complex Text, and Writing.

Oral language, a bedrock of literacy, develops throughout all three components.

### Oral Language

Oral language develops through speaking and listening interactions, engaging with text, and explicit language instruction across all components of the literacy block.

Vocabulary, Syntax, and Grammar



All three core components can include differentiated instruction, such as small group instruction, independent, or center-based activities, depending on student needs.

# **The Law: An Act Relative to Students with Dyslexia, Chapter 272 of the Acts of 2018**

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, added by St. 2018, c.272, § 1, **effective January 17, 2019.**

# Ch. 1 MA Dyslexia Stakeholders Guidelines

The critical goals, needs, and concerns identified are as follows:

- **Equitable and immediate access** to evidence based reading support **across all 3 tiers of instruction.**
- **Early screening and prompt intervention** for all students.
  - A series of studies that examined the **effectiveness of reading intervention** at different grade levels found that, although **targeted intervention brings 50-94% of at-risk first graders into the average range**, the same impact is not **observed in third grade students** --particularly in regards to their reading fluency.

# Guidelines, cont.

- Addressing risk of dyslexia begins **early and in general education.**
  - Importance of a **robust core curriculum**
  - **Research-based curricula** that featured clear and systematic instruction in **foundational reading skills, including phonemic awareness and phonics.**
- **Evidence-based practices** for students with dyslexia.
- **Integrate the Dyslexia Guidelines with other DESE guidance.**
  - [MA Dyslexia Guidelines](#)
  - [Mass Literacy Guide \(DESE\)](#)
  - [MA DESE Blueprint for English Learner Success](#)



# Dyslexia Definition

From: U.S. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)

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. **VOLUME OF READING**

# Dyslexia Definition Cont.

**Dyslexia** is considered the **most common** of all specific learning disabilities affecting **5-17%** of children in the general population.

Dyslexia can be **largely characterized by difficulty learning to read *despite* adequate instruction and intelligence.**

Dyslexia is **highly hereditary** and individuals with a first degree relative with diagnosed or suspected dyslexia (i.e. biological parent or sibling) have a **50% chance** of being diagnosed themselves.

# Core Weaknesses

The core weakness in dyslexia is related to students' **accurate and efficient pairing between the sounds** in words (phonological processing) **and their corresponding letter** or letter patterns.

Result in impairments in:

- **sight word** recognition,
- **decoding**,
- overall reading **fluency**,
- can also impact **spelling**.

# Common Misconceptions

- **Dyslexia is a visual issue.**
  - *One of the most common misconceptions* about dyslexia is that it is a visual processing problem characterized by weaknesses in tracking or letters “moving around” the page.
  - The root cause of dyslexia is a deficit in the accurate and/or efficient correlation between the sounds in language (phonology) and their spelling patterns (orthography).
- **Letter reversals are indicative of dyslexia**
  - Letter reversals are common among children with or without difficulties learning to read, and represent an early phase of reading development.

# Common Misconceptions, cont.

**Some readers are simply immature.**

- Educators are often reluctant to refer students for reading services in the hope that they will outgrow difficulties in time. Yet, intervention studies confirm, that the **critical window during which remediation is most effective is between 6-8 years old.**
- **Dyslexia is associated with lack of intelligence.**
  - There is **no support** that links dyslexia to limited intellectual potential.
  - **Secondary consequence: Matthew Effect-** reduced volume of text, which can **constrain the development of their vocabulary and background knowledge.**

# Common Misconceptions, cont.

- **Reading will improve if students are motivated.**
  - Not due to a lack of motivation, but rather is related to lack of accuracy or efficiency in pairing sounds in words with corresponding letters or letter patterns.
  - Often see task avoidance because so difficult.

# Who will be Screened?

WPS will be screening all students K - 5 in the Fall of each year

Ongoing mid year progress monitoring

End of year summative assessment

This will require an “All Hands on Deck” approach across general and special education

Funnel of evaluation....

# What Screening Tool Did WPS Choose?

In consultation with general and special education and the Literacy and Dyslexia guidelines, WPS has chosen the [STAR screening tool](#).

Purchased over the summer - is a DESE “approved” screener

General Education and Special Education staff were trained in the first PD days of September to administer and interpret the STAR screener

Is already in use 6 - 8 at TMS for literacy and math

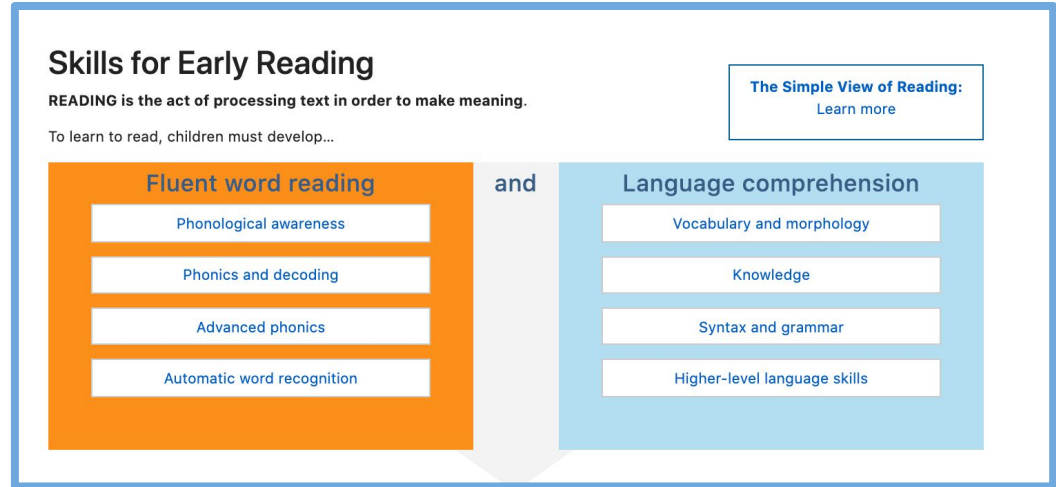


# The STAR Assessment screens proficiency levels of K-2 Foundational Skills

## Focus (Foundational)Skills:

The building blocks of student learning--skills and concepts that students **must master to access new skills and concepts.**

[Renaissance Focus Skills](#)



Click image to go to DESE link.

# When will we use STAR?

Screenings 3 x per year. Consistent windows so that normed data is “apples to apples.” Testing windows are set for this year as follows.

**Fall: October 4 - 22**

**Midyear: January 18 - 31**

**End-of-year: June 1 - 10**

*Note: end-of-year could shift depending on MCAS window.*

# What score of the screener indicates concern for special education referral?

The Dyslexia Guidelines state that **students who score in the bottom 5% of the STAR screener** should be considered for referral for a special education evaluation to determine if a diagnosis of the Specific Learning Disability - Dyslexia is present.

Westwood will follow this guideline and any students who score in the bottom 5% will be referred by the school district for an evaluation if they have not already been evaluated in that area. Parents still maintain the right to decline consent for the evaluation.

# What does “Research-Based” mean?

The Guidelines strongly recommend that Districts use “research based” curriculum for the instruction and remediation of skills in literacy.

The [What Works Clearinghouse](#) is an example of a tool that aggregates educational research on commercially available educational programs and products. Another resource is [EdReports](#).

Let’s take a look: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

Wilson Reading: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Intervention/738>

Wilson Intervention Report:

[https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/InterventionReports/WWC\\_Wilson\\_Reading\\_070207.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/InterventionReports/WWC_Wilson_Reading_070207.pdf)

# What happens for students who have a dx. of SLD - Dyslexia now?

**Students who meet the eligibility criteria for a specific learning disability - in the area of decoding/dyslexia can receive reading services in a variety of ways:**

- In general education from grade level instruction
- In general education from literacy specialists
- In pull out support from literacy specialists
- In pull out special education settings from special education teachers
- In pull out special education settings from Reading Specialists
- In a substantially separate setting at the Sheehan Elementary LBLD program

# What will be Different in Special Ed Now

- ❑ K - 5 Special Education staff were all trained on the new Dyslexia guidelines
- ❑ K- 5 Special Education staff were trained on the STAR screener
- ❑ K - 5 Special Education will participate in the school based screening and ongoing progress monitoring
- ❑ Special Education administrators have been trained on the guidelines and will adjust their referral and service delivery proposal practices in line with the 5% guideline if a student has not already been identified.

# Training for Staff and Hiring

- ❑ The District has chosen to invest in ongoing training for staff in Wilson Reading to ensure that multiple staff at each building are certified in Wilson Level One reading and will incorporate that into hiring preferences K - 5 going forward
- ❑ The data from the screening will inform how many people at each building need to be trained and where to position them
- ❑ The District will make ongoing PD in topics related to Dyslexia part of the formal PD calendar at elementary K - 5.

# What will be different in General Ed Now? FUNdations and Foundational Skills

Wilson Foundations *partially meets* the criteria for alignment to standards and research-based practices for foundational skills instruction.

**Two areas where Foundations needs reinforcement:**

- Phonemic Awareness
- Use of Decodable Text



# What will be different in General Ed Now?

- ❑ General Education teachers have all received professional development this fall on the Dyslexia Law and the Early Literacy Initiative
- ❑ District has evaluated programs and is making changes in general ed to increase time instructing students with decodable text
- ❑ The District will move to teaching to **mastery and automaticity**
- ❑ The ongoing unit assessment will include new components
- ❑ Literacy specialists will provide pull out and push in support

# What is Happening Next in WPS?

We are moving from educating staff about the new guidelines and screener to **conducting** the screenings:

Timeline for screening:

Already started - until October 25

Literacy Specialists are forming fluid groups (expect change post screening)

Intervention has begun and groups will continue to evolve based on data

Special Education Teams are aware of the new screening and participating

Teams will be making referrals for evaluation based on data

# Questions and Comments

Feel free to send along questions at any time:

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Or call Student Services 781 326-7500 x1345

Or speak with your in building administrators