



Reading is an important skill that all students need to be successful. The goal of the Strong Readers Act is to strengthen literacy, ensure appropriate instructional support, and provide clear communication with families. This letter is to provide information and resources about reading difficulties, including dyslexia, to families.

It is important to understand that your child has **not** been diagnosed with dyslexia at this time. A variety of factors, inside and outside of school, can influence a child's educational path and progress. It is important for families to share in the educational journey, through constant communication and involvement. We encourage you to continue to highlight and celebrate your child's strengths and share difficulties if they occur. Please reach out if you have any questions. We look forward to a successful school year.

### What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia refers to a learning disability that affects reading. Dyslexia is not due to a problem with vision but rather a problem within language.

The [Oklahoma Dyslexia Handbook](#) states that “Dyslexia affects reading at the single word level, reading fluency and rate, and spelling. In turn, these weaknesses cause difficulties with reading comprehension and written expression. Other abilities that do not require reading, such as general intelligence, reasoning, oral language, mathematics, and knowledge, are often unimpaired. In other words, the reading and spelling difficulties are often unexpected in relation to the person's other abilities.” (Mather & Wendling, 2014).

Students who ultimately may be identified with dyslexia may have difficulties with speech sounds, acquiring vocabulary, and/or learning the rules of language. Other risk factors include:

- History of language delay
- Family history of reading difficulty or learning disorders
- Difficulty with verbal memory
- Difficulty with processing (measured with a rapid naming assessment)

### What is the screening process?

Every student in kindergarten through third grade is screened for reading difficulties in the fall, winter, and spring each year. In addition, students who are at-risk for reading difficulties are also screened for characteristics of dyslexia.

This universal screening process is a brief assessment that informs teachers of students who are on track and students who may need more targeted instruction. This screening does **not diagnose reading disabilities, including dyslexia**. Identifying risk for reading difficulties as early as possible is critical to developing an appropriate instructional plan to best help your child be successful.

This additional screening considers a student's ability in the following areas:

- Processing through rapid automatized naming, or quickly naming aloud known items,
- Advanced phonemic awareness, or manipulating spoken sounds of language,
- Connecting sounds to letter patterns through spelling.

### What does it mean if my child is at-risk for characteristics of dyslexia?

Students who are at-risk for characteristics of dyslexia are demonstrating difficulty with skills such as working with the sounds in a word (phonemes), reading words on a page (phonics), or spelling. **Not all students who have difficulty with these skills have dyslexia.** However, it is important that all students who are struggling with these essential reading skills receive targeted, explicit instruction in these areas as early as possible to give them the best chance at later academic success.

# Early Screening for Reading Difficulties, including Characteristics of Dyslexia Information and Resources for Families



## What will the school do to help my child?

Students in grades K-3 who demonstrate risk for reading difficulties, including characteristics of dyslexia, have an intervention plan called the Student Literacy Intervention Plan (SLIP). The SLIP identifies the reading area(s) in which your student is struggling, the instructional supports and intervention program that will be used, as well as suggestions for support at home.

Additional support is provided through a framework called Response to Intervention (RtI). As additional instruction is provided, the school will also monitor your child's progress. This allows instruction to be adjusted based on your child's current needs.

In addition, the school may provide accommodations to support your child. Accommodations can be used for instruction and assessment and change the way students access information and demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and abilities, but they do not change academic standards or expectations. The following are examples of accommodations that may support the needs of a student with dyslexia:

- Use of audiobooks and/or text-to-speech technology for appropriate activities
- Use of graphic organizers
- Oral testing or prompting
- Avoid having child read or spell aloud
- Extended time on assignments or tests involving reading and writing
- Provide options for writing (e.g., print, cursive, or word processing)
- Grading assignments for content without penalizing for spelling errors
- Use spelling words that assess specific features (i.e., syllable types)
- Provide copies of teacher's or peer's notes
- Pre-teach new, essential vocabulary words when introducing content

Additional information about accommodations can be found on the International Dyslexia Association's website at <https://dyslexiaida.org/accommodations-for-students-with-dyslexia/>

## How can our family partner with the school to support our child?

The Student Literacy Intervention Plan (SLIP) includes specific suggestions for how families can support their child. Ongoing conversations with the school about your child's progress should include the following information:

- A description of how your child is performing in reading as compared to grade-level expectations.
- A clear outline of the intervention plan, including the program(s) being used, the teacher providing the intervention, how often your child receives the intervention, how long the intervention occurs and how many other students are in the intervention group.
- Data that shows the progress your child is making as compared to the expected rate of progress.
- Any changes that have been made to the intervention plan and how they have affected your child's progress.

## What are the next steps?

When students receive instructional supports, the school will also monitor their progress on a regular basis. This allows the school to see how your student is responding to instruction and to make any needed adjustments to their instructional plan. If a student is not responding to instruction by making expected progress after a reasonable amount of time, the school might recommend gathering additional data to determine if more support is needed. This could include an evaluation for special education services. However, it is important to remember that there are many reasons why a student may be struggling with beginning reading skills. **Not all students who are struggling with reading require special education services.**

## What resources can be used to learn more about dyslexia?

There are several resources available to learn more about reading difficulties, including dyslexia. The Oklahoma State Department of Education has provided the following resources.

- Oklahoma Dyslexia Handbook [https://sde.ok.gov/sites/default/files/OK%20Dyslexia%20and%20Dysgraphia%20Handbook\\_7-23\\_0.pdf](https://sde.ok.gov/sites/default/files/OK%20Dyslexia%20and%20Dysgraphia%20Handbook_7-23_0.pdf)
- Reading Sufficiency Act: A Guide for Families <https://sde.ok.gov/sites/default/files/documents/files/2022-RSAFamilyGuide-successfulreader.pdf>
- Oklahoma State Department of Education <https://sde.ok.gov/special-education-services-dyslexia>

Additional resources can be found from different state and national groups.

- National Center on Improving Literacy: Defining Dyslexia <https://improvingliteracy.org/brief/defining-dyslexia>
- Reading Rockets: Dyslexia <https://www.readingrockets.org/reading-topics/dyslexia>
- International Dyslexia Association <https://dyslexiaida.org>
- Decoding Dyslexia Oklahoma <http://decodingdyslexiaok.org/>
- Oklahoma AbleTech <https://www.okabletech.org/>

