



Testimony of NYC Public Schools Before the NYC Committees on Education and State and Federal Legislation

December 14, 2023

Good afternoon, Chair Joseph and Chair Abreu, and Members of the NYC Council Education Committee and State and Federal Legislation Committee. I am NYC Public Schools Chancellor David C. Banks, and I thank you for the opportunity to testify today about the science of reading and the tremendous work our school system is doing to align our literacy instruction to this proven approach to teaching reading. I am joined by Deputy Chancellor for Teaching and Learning Carolyne Quintana, Deputy Chancellor for Early Childhood Education Dr. Kara Ahmed, and Deputy Chancellor for School Leadership Dr. Danika Rux.

Before I begin, I would like to thank Speaker Adams, Chair Joseph, Chair Abreu, and the entire City Council for your interest in our work around the science of reading and creating a culture of reading across our city.

The NYCPS team assembled here today is leading incredibly transformative work to reimagine the way we teach reading. We are calling this body of work NYC Reads, and as I'll explain, it includes a comprehensive approach to literacy instruction, including curriculum shifts, intensive professional learning and coaching, academic screening and intervention, and supports for students at risk for dyslexia. **There is no more important work that we are doing than this.**

We are implementing NYC Reads in two phases. Phase 1 launched this school year across 94% of our Early Childhood portfolio and in grades K-5 across nearly half of our community school districts. Phase 2 will launch next school year, by which point NYC Reads will be active in all early childhood and K-5 classrooms across our city.

The need for dramatic action on literacy is glaring. A quick look at the data makes the case: at the start of this administration, 51% of our students in grades 3-8—including 63% of our Latino students and 64% of our Black students—were *not* proficient readers.

While proficiency rates were slightly higher on the 2023 state exams, signaling we are headed in the right direction, our work is far from done. Our mission is “to ensure that each student graduates on a pathway to a rewarding career and long-term economic security, equipped to be a positive force for change.” We cannot fulfill that mission if our students cannot read.

The good news is that we know what needs to change. Our current reading results are not the fault of our teachers, our families, or our students. They are the result of a flawed approach. For too many years, there was no cohesive, comprehensive, citywide strategy for literacy, and schools were left to figure it out on their own. Many schools used Balanced Literacy, which involved techniques like asking children to use pictures to guess the words in a story. This was not grounded in research, and for some students, it simply did not work. Like many other



academic skills, reading and comprehension must be explicitly taught. We can't expect students to just "pick it up."

That's why we are grounding our instruction in the science of reading, an evidence-based approach that focuses on five strands of instruction—phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension—that together enable a student to read confidently and understand what they are reading. We know our children can only *love* to read if they know *how* to read.

As the largest school system in the nation, we are proud to lead by example with this shift to the science of reading. Today I will outline the various components of our comprehensive approach to transforming literacy instruction in NYCPS.

Curriculum and Professional Learning

Both the early childhood and K-5 implementation of NYC Reads include changes to curriculum. Yet we can't expect a curriculum to produce results if the teachers using it are not properly trained and supported. So, in both early childhood and grades K-5, we are pairing these new curricular materials with intensive, unprecedented levels of professional learning and coaching for teachers and leaders.

Early Childhood

Early childhood classrooms in NYC Reads use a singular developmental screener, a developmentally appropriate curriculum, and an authentic child assessment system. These tools were selected because of their inclusion of our birth to five continuum, their integration of a strong family partnership component, and the sound alignment of all three tools, grounded in the science of reading.

All early childhood teaching teams and coaches in Phase 1 received 17 hours of professional learning in the spring, with a multitude of professional learning options offered over the summer to support their individual needs. In addition to these 17 hours of professional learning, all school and program leaders received six hours of professional learning laser-focused on their role as an instructional leader.

Over the course of this school year, early childhood teachers are receiving in-person coaching every other week, tailored to their individual professional needs. At the same time, all leaders are also receiving coaching every other week to support them in implementing high-quality early childhood education for their program or school community.

Grades K-5

When Mayor Adams officially appointed me, one of the first things we did as an administration was mandate that all K-2 schools implement a phonics-based curriculum (including Heggerty and Foundations) and that our teachers receive training and resources accordingly. We ensured each foundational literacy curriculum chosen by a school was vetted by our central literacy team.



NYC Reads can be seen as a continuation and expansion of this work. Community school districts participating in Phase 1 of NYC Reads have selected one of three curricula—HMH Into Reading, which includes Arriba La Lectura for Spanish bilingual programs, Expeditionary Learning (EL) Education Curriculum, or Wit and Wisdom—after engagement with their community. Districts in Phase 2 of our rollout will be choosing among these 3 options as well.

For K-5, professional learning sessions for Phase 1 educators began last spring and summer as an initial introduction to their district’s chosen curriculum. As of this fall, teachers are also receiving job-embedded coaching, meaning they have experts working alongside them in the classroom to provide real-time support, including demo lessons, side-by-side modeling, and more.

So far, Phase 1 K-5 schools received between 13 and 16 hours of training throughout the spring and summer, and on average have received five coaching sessions this fall. By the end of this school year, they’ll receive about 26 sessions.

Combined, our NYC Reads professional learning and coaching ensures consistent implementation across schools and programs, builds internal capacity to sustain this work, and ultimately results in more supported educators and stronger instruction for children. At the central level, we will be monitoring the implementation of NYC Reads to adjust coaching plans and inform ongoing professional learning.

Cultural Responsiveness

In addition to being evidence-based, we know that our reading instruction must reflect the lived experiences of our students and school communities. To that end, to ensure our instruction is culturally responsive, we are supplementing our NYC Reads curricular options with materials designed in New York City and representative of the diversity of our school system. Specifically, our Hidden Voices initiative spotlights histories and perspectives often overlooked, including series focused on the AAPI community, LGBTQ+ community, and the Global African Diaspora, which we are announcing officially next month.

In addition to culturally and linguistically responsive materials, the professional learning and supports provided through our Division of Multilingual Learners and our Division of Educator Development are also helping ensure each child feels seen and heard.

Academic Screening and Dyslexia Supports

As I mentioned earlier, NYC Reads is a comprehensive approach, one that also includes academic screening and supports for students showing signs of print-based learning disabilities.

For grades K-9, we conduct universal academic screening three times each year to help us monitor student progress and also identify students who may be at risk for dyslexia. Students

who score in the bottom 16% in ELA on these screeners are given a secondary screener, after which they may be identified for intervention services, which are provided by centrally funded interventionists in 322 schools and trained staff members in all other schools.

As part of the 322 schools, Intensive Reading Interventionists are providing intervention services to 1,900 students in 111 of our K-5 Phase 1 schools. Students are receiving intervention services four times per week with weekly progress monitoring to ensure students are making progress towards grade level standards. Interventionists have received in-depth training in evidence-based practices for reading instruction through International Dyslexia Association (IDA) accredited graduate level coursework, research-based interventions, data analysis and progress monitoring.

For students who are diagnosed with dyslexia, we are creating options for families that provide comprehensive supports, including the newly opened South Bronx Literacy Academy and our I READ programs. Last year, we also piloted dyslexia programs at PS 125 in Manhattan, PS 161 in the Bronx, PS 295 and PS 107 in Brooklyn that included training educators in the Orton-Gillingham and Wilson methods. We are currently studying the impact of these models and pilots and thinking about how to most effectively scale this work.

Additionally, NYC Public Schools increased the assessment tools and training for all school psychologists citywide, including assessments needed to identify students with print-based disabilities such as dyslexia. Through the enhancement of our assessment tools and training, we provided our clinicians with the ability to investigate and understand the needs of each student assessed, decreasing reliance on private evaluators.

Special Populations

As part of NYC Reads, we are also providing tailored supports for students with disabilities and multilingual learners.

Centrally funded Special Education Intervention Teachers in 960 schools are trained in explicit, systematic reading intervention programs and effective assessment and instructional practices to accelerate students' progress in skills such as fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. 208 of these teachers in Phase I elementary schools and teachers in select secondary level cohorts also take the International Dyslexia Association (IDA)-accredited, graduate-level coursework mentioned previously.

We know all students, including our multilingual learners, must receive comprehensive instruction that includes all the components of literacy including language development, development of content knowledge, vocabulary, foundational skills for decoding, comprehension, and writing. With this in mind, we have developed resources for teachers to support their multilingual learners to access and engage with the new curriculum and provided professional learning to teachers.



Change Management and Community Engagement

We know that change isn't easy, and for many teachers, leaders, and families, the shift to the science of reading will require new mindsets and practices. We will only be successful if our internal and external stakeholders believe in and support NYC Reads—and for that to happen, we must treat them as true partners in the design and rollout of this work.

To that end, superintendent teams have been deeply engaging their families, schools, and communities in choosing their NYC Reads curriculum. Centrally, we have hosted webinars and focus groups to share information and gather input and feedback.

We are also planning local literacy events and sharing activities and resources with families across the city to bolster reading skills at home. This past summer, moreover, over 1,200 families joined us for an overview of the early childhood developmental screener, curriculum, and assessment system, and these sessions are continuing throughout the school year. These sessions were offered to all early childhood families citywide and included what they should expect their child to experience while at school and the resources and support available to extend their child's learning at home.

During the 2022-2023 school year, we convened a diverse group of stakeholders to join the Literacy Advisory Council (LAC) to help shape the direction of literacy in NYC. The council meets monthly and includes local community members, experts in literacy, NYCPS staff, students, and parents. We also created internal planning teams to support each of the Literacy Advisory Council topics and sub-councils focused on the rollout of NYC Reads and other literacy initiatives across the city.

Lastly, we are working with our organizational partners in the education space, including CBOs, higher education institutions, and others, to ensure they are also adopting the science of reading in their work with our children, or the adults who teach our children.

What's Next?

We are now preparing to roll out Phase 2 of NYC Reads, which will launch next school year and will include all remaining early childhood education programs and elementary schools.

Beyond our birth to grade 5 students, we are also looking at our upper grades—because the data tells us that many of our older students are also struggling to read. We are in the midst of a core curriculum review process for grades 6-12, including a rigorous review of all major vendors.

As you can see, we are taking a thoughtful and comprehensive approach to NYC Reads, because we believe that teaching students to read is the greatest and most fundamental responsibility of any school system. Thank you for taking the time to dive into this subject today. When our students are strong readers, we all win: students, families, teachers, and our entire city.



Eric Adams Mayor | David C. Banks Chancellor

Beginning in the 2023–24 school year, we launched NYC Reads. The goal is to ensure that all New York City children become strong readers, which is the single most important skill required for educational, career, and lifetime success. Based on extensive research, NYC Reads will ensure that all children birth to fifth grade receive the most effective literacy instruction.

Phasing in over two years, NYC Reads will require all early childhood education classrooms to adopt a single developmental screener, assessment system, and curriculum, while K–5 classrooms will choose one of three pre-approved, phonics-based reading curricula that have proven to be effective. For the 2023–24 school year, this new approach has been implemented in over 90 percent of our early childhood programs and elementary schools and across half of the school districts for our kindergarten through fifth grade classrooms, with all schools and programs adopting these tools by the following school year.

Why is this important?

Too many of our elementary school students are not meeting grade level proficiency in reading and math. Two-thirds of Black and Latino students are not reading at grade level, and students in temporary housing and other students who have formal gaps in their education can fall behind when moving to a new school using a different curriculum.

The “science of reading” is clear that the most effective approach to building literacy includes consistent, developmentally, and age-appropriate instruction with a focus on phonics and decoding.

By standardizing curriculum options across NYC Public Schools, we can ensure that all children have access to the tools they need to build strong reading and writing skills and that instruction is consistent from grade to grade and school to school, offering our city’s children a more level playing field. Focusing on select curricula aligned to these proven practices not only ensures children will be receiving consistent, research-backed instruction, but allows for better coordination of professional support for teachers and leaders in successfully implementing strong literacy instruction.

What are the goal of NYC Reads?

Our goal is to ensure that every child in every classroom has access to quality, research-based curricula that is supported by deep, intensive professional learning and support for teachers and leaders. Teaching our children to be skilled readers is an essential step in ensuring each NYC Public Schools’ student graduates on a pathway to a rewarding career and long-term economic security, equipped to be a positive force for change.

About the Curricula

A curriculum is how standards, or learning goals, for every child, grade, and/or subject are translated into day-to-day learning experiences. As part of the NYC Reads, all elementary schools and early childhood programs will use a developmentally appropriate birth to five curriculum that is grounded in the “science of reading.” For kindergarten to grade five, each school district will choose an evidence-based curricula for reading instruction that is also grounded in the Science of Reading and has been reviewed and recommended by EdReports, a nationally recognized nonprofit organization.

Science Family Learning

Dear Families,

At the heart of our mission is the belief that family engagement and partnership is a vital, two-way exchange between families and schools. It is only together that we will ensure the success of every student. I am thrilled to share an important shift in our approach to reading instruction.

This year we set out on an ambitious plan: ensure each and every one of our students is a great reader. To do so, we launched NYC Reads, which uses 50 years of evidence-based practices called the science of reading to teach our children to read. Why the science of reading? This approach gives us a clear picture of how children learn to read words, build their vocabulary, and understand what's happening in stories.

As part of NYC Reads, we want you to know that your child's school is using a reading curriculum based in the science of reading. Reading instruction will focus on building five foundational reading skills:

- 1 Phonological Awareness (sounding out words)
- 2 Phonics (sounds letters make)
- 3 Vocabulary (knowing words)
- 4 Fluency (reading smoothly)
- 5 Reading Comprehension (understanding stories)

NYC Reads is committed to equipping our families and educators with tools and resources to effectively teach reading and ensure that each child has a bright start for a bold future. Find out more about NYC Reads by visiting our website, schools.nyc.gov/NYCReads.

A Promise and an Invitation

As we embark on this exciting transition, I want you to know that our attentiveness remains steadfast: ensuring that every child not only learns to read but also develops a profound love for reading. As you attend Family Conferences throughout this year, I invite you to ask your child's teacher questions like:

- What are the specific reading skills that my child is working on?
- Are there any specific strengths or weaknesses in my child's reading skills?
- How can I support my child's reading development at home?

I invite you to join us on this journey. Let's work together—families, educators, and community—to support our children. There will be opportunities to learn more about the Science of Reading, ways you can support at home, and spaces for dialogue and feedback.

In partnership,

Kenita Lloyd

Deputy Chancellor

Family and Community Engagement and External Affairs
NYC Public Schools

FACE

Office of Family and
Community Engagement

**NYC Public
Schools**

Eric Adams
Mayor

David C. Banks
Chancellor

Speaking/ Listening Activities

STORYTELLING NIGHTS

Organize storytelling nights where each family member takes turns sharing their favorite stories or even creating their own.

SONG LYRICS

Listen to music and discuss the lyrics. You can even print them out and read along as the song plays.

ARTICULATION EXERCISES

Practice tongue twisters, articulation exercises, and vocal warm-ups as a family to improve clarity and pronunciation while speaking.

DEBATE NIGHTS

Organize friendly debates on interesting subjects, allowing family members to express their viewpoints and actively listen to counterarguments.

THEATER AND IMPROV

Attend theater performances or participate in family-friendly improv classes, encouraging creativity in both speaking and listening.

TED TALK DISCUSSIONS

Watch TED Talks as a family and engage in discussions afterward, sharing insights and reflections on the ideas presented.

LANGUAGE GAMES

Play language-related games like word associations, storytelling with prompt cards, or vocabulary-building games to make language learning enjoyable (e.g. Taboo, Telephone, Heads Up).

INTERVIEW PRACTICE

Pair up and take turns interviewing each other on specific topics, helping family members practice both asking questions and providing thoughtful answers.

POETRY RECITALS

Hold poetry recital sessions where each family member selects a poem to recite, fostering expressive speaking and attentive listening.

DISCUSSION CIRCLES

Choose a current event or thought-provoking topic and engage in family discussion circles, allowing each member to express their opinions and actively listen to others.

PUBLIC SPEAKING CHALLENGES

Create fun public speaking challenges, such as giving short speeches on favorite topics or practicing presentations, to boost speaking confidence.

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Testimony before the New York City Council Committee on Education and Committee on State & Federal Legislation regarding newly mandated phonics-based curriculum and dyslexia screening in NYC Public Schools.

December 14, 2023

Thank you, Education Committee Chair Rita Joseph and State and Federal Legislation Chair Abreu, for the opportunity to testify before you today and for the Committees' interest in the science of reading (also known as "structured literacy) based curricula and dyslexia screening occurring in New York City's schools, and for your personal interest in this issue.

My first reaction to the news about the City's move towards a curricular approach grounded in brain science was *hallelujah!* The approach the City has taken is critical (and will become more so). I commend Mayor Adams for his leadership on this issue and Chancellor David Banks and his staff who have taken up the challenge of moving the nation's largest school system in the right direction. This is New York City where nothing happens quickly, but getting it right is vastly more important than rolling it out too quickly. We are moving in the right direction and at a speed that can sustain progress.

These changes are necessary because our city's and our state's colleges of education have just not been teaching enough of our students to read accurately and fluently. Too many of our educators have been taught about reading, but not enough about how to teach it, nor how to teach it consistent with the way the brain processes written language. My remarks are not meant to criticize teachers or college of education faculty, most of whom were taught the same seriously ineffective methods of reading which lack research validation.

By way of background, I am a former teacher of the deaf. The biggest challenge for pre-lingually deaf children is language development and reading. I have earned a significant number of credits towards a doctorate in clinical neuropsychology. Language is brain-based, so I come to this issue with a strong background in language and cognition. I am a former board member and President of the NY Branch of the International Dyslexia Association, now called Everyone Reading, which holds an annual conference attended by professionals throughout the region and regularly provides professional development to teachers in the NYC Public schools and other school districts. As a disability civil rights attorney for three decades, I successfully tried the seminal case on dyslexia and access to standardized testing under

the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, a case which eventually went to the U.S. Supreme Court and played an important role in the 2008 amendments to the ADA.

In 2018, Governor Cuomo signed my bill to allow school districts to use the words dyslexia, dysgraphia and dyscalculia in IEP and eligibility documents. Part of the lead up to implementation included a state-wide stakeholder group to determine what schools needed to do to comply. Two takeaways: **early identification and teacher training**. By screening for dyslexia, NYC Schools will be better positioned to provide services to those youngsters who are at risk and to further assess whether they have dyslexia and will be able to provide more targeted interventions.

In addition, we need to prime the pump in higher education to stem the tide of teachers graduating from colleges of education having learned about reading but not how to teach it. Whole language/balanced literacy has no research efficacy. Its adherents believe that children will naturally learn to read – but they don't. See, *Proust and the Squid: the story and science of the reading brain*, Wolf, Marianne, New York: Harper Collins (2008). They believe that instilling a joy of reading is sufficient for children's progress and will impart knowledge. But it's hard to find joy in something you can't do very well and too many of our kids struggle to read unnecessarily because they just haven't been taught.

In 1955 "Why Johnny Can't Read," by Rudolph Flesch argued that the prevailing whole word approaches did not teach children to read because they lacked basic building blocks, including phonics instruction. In addition, Flesch was critical of the *Dick and Jane* style readers that taught reading through word memorization. Memorization doesn't help you attack a new word, and for millions of youngsters, whole language and its updated cousin "balanced literacy," just hasn't been enough to get them reading proficiently. It also doesn't properly prepare students to read more complex materials in the upper grade levels, because they can't break down the words and haven't internalized adequate structures of the language.¹

Not long after Flesch's book was published, Harvard psychologist and researcher Jean Chall began extensive research on how children really learn to read.

Her seminal work, *Learning to Read: the Great Debate*, was published in 1967 and became a classic. In 1983, her book "*Stages of Reading Development*," informed by years of additional research and practice in the classroom, she laid out how children learn to read. It remains one of the most important texts in the field. Unlike many researchers, Chall was deeply connected to the classroom, to teachers and children and never lost sight of the need to apply research to practice in our classrooms. The application to practice remains a significant challenge in the field.

Chall's last work, published posthumously in 2000 was *The Academic Challenge: What Really Works in the Classroom*. In it, she divided American instruction into the discovery approach, which at the time of publication, had dominated the 20th century despite the research that supported explicit teaching, which her research demonstrated had significant efficacy.

¹ I recall teaching developmental reading to non-matriculated college students in Brooklyn and being struck by how little language proficiency they possessed, which of course, impacted their reading. Insufficient language development is a huge barrier to college success.

At the state level, in 2016 I launched an annual Dyslexia Awareness Day at the State Capitol to raise awareness, educate more legislators about dyslexia and its impacts, empower young people with dyslexia and reduce stigma. I am pleased it is growing and amassing more supporters every year.

In the legislature, I carry A.4198, a bill requiring school district conduct early screening of students for dyslexia; A.1645, a bill to screen those entering our state prison facilities because we know that too many of those incarcerated have poor reading skills and a disproportionate number show signs of dyslexia and related learning disabilities (Mayor Adams recently signed a bill just like mine for people incarcerated in NYC jails); and A.4659, a bill mandating 3 credit hours of science of reading also known as “structured literacy” as part of the 6 literacy credits already required for graduation from New York’s colleges of education. I will be introducing another bill shortly to assess more thoroughly what our colleges and universities are teaching in connection with reading. Why?

Because the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) results for reading proficiency of fourth graders have hovered around 35 – 38 % for decades. Obviously, this is not a problem of a simple failure to teach dyslexic students. 62 - 65% of fourth graders are not dyslexic. They just haven’t had direct systematic instruction in reading. You need to be able to read words. Students need a way to decipher words (not guess at them based on a picture) before deciphering sentences and paragraphs and deriving meaning (comprehension). I note for the record that no one with expertise in the science of reading believes it is simply phonics and doesn’t also encompass comprehension or vocabulary or spelling.² The 35% will learn to read no matter what you do to them. The 65% will not. They need to be taught in a way that aligns with how the brain processes written language. The foundations of how children learn to read can be found in the National Reading Panel’s five (5) pillars of reading.

That is why the NYS Education Department and the Literacy Academy Collective have launched an initiative in NYS to change the way our teachers are taught to teach reading so that it aligns with the science of reading. I am privileged to be the legislature’s designee to the steering committee of this initiative called the Path Forward in conjunction with the Hunt Institute.

The value of this truly groundbreaking approach for New York is that all parties in education are moving forward in partnership towards the same literacy goal: teaching our kids to read. Governor Hochul’s office along with the State Education department, Board of Regents, SUNY, CUNY, and our independent colleges of education are working together in partnership to achieve real and lasting success for our students. NYC schools are at the table as are teacher educators. We know there will need to be professional development at all levels. By June 2024, there will be a State Action Plan which we will work together with stakeholders to implement. I am proud that New York State has said loud and clear that our children are worth it.

In sum, this curriculum mandate (while not directly tied to the dyslexia screening effort) will make it easier to allow truly dyslexic students to get what they need. Simply put, if you are following ineffective curricula that cause 70% of your students to appear to need related services, you have a problem. With the proper foundation, we will truly be able to provide more in a more targeted way to those in need (e.g.: students with disabilities, English Language learners). Doing so requires both intentionality and resources. All levels of government – federal, state and city – will need to commit resources, and properly fund ongoing training, ongoing dyslexia pilots, screening and the South Bronx Literacy

² Students with dyslexia experience significant difficulties with the processing of written language, and for them evidence-based reading instruction is absolutely critical. Dyslexic students do not read words backwards as is commonly thought. There is a language-based disability that impairs, among other things, their ability to decode words accurately and fluently.

Academy school and those slated for upcoming years in Brooklyn and other boroughs and continue this important work.



ROBERT CARROLL
Assemblymember 44th District

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**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMITTEE ON
STATE AND FEDERAL LEGISLATION**

Oversight: New Phonics Based Curriculum and Dyslexia Screening in NYC Public Schools
December 14, 2023

Thank you Chair Joseph and Chair Abreu for holding this important hearing and for giving me the opportunity to testify before you and the members of the Education and State and Federal Legislation Committees. My name is Robert Carroll, and I represent the 44th Assembly District in the New York State Assembly.

As a person with dyslexia who had the extraordinary benefit of being diagnosed when I was six years old and given the instruction and supports needed to be academically successful, I know first-hand how much of a difference evidence-based reading interventions can make. Dyslexia is sometimes used as a catch-all phrase to describe those who have trouble reading, but it is important to be more specific. Dyslexia is a 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. Studies have shown that as many as one in five children have dyslexia or another phonemic awareness issue and educational research has unequivocally demonstrated that early identification coupled with intervention and multisensory sequential phonics instruction drastically improves educational outcomes. Unfortunately, there has been no coherent statewide approach to identifying and addressing the needs of such students.

This is an issue I have been working on since taking office in 2017. I have come to conclude that students with dyslexia are what could be called “the canary in the coal mine.” New York State is in fact facing a broader literacy crisis with seventy percent of fourth graders not reading at grade level according to the results of the federal National Assessment of Educational Progress for 2022, due in part

to the failure to adopt curriculum based on the science of reading for both students with characteristics of dyslexia and the general population. We must do a much better job of teaching all our students to be fluent readers while at the same time address the special needs of students with dyslexia and related challenges. These students require early and intensive interventions provided over several years to remediate their phonological awareness issues.

I believe Mayor Adams and Chancellor Banks are to be commended for the work undertaken with regards to dyslexia screening and the overhauling of the City's approach to teaching literacy in the elementary grades. I have been proud to partner with the DOE on dyslexia screening and structured literacy programming for schools in my district. My strongly held view is that in addition to the City's efforts, state legislation is necessary. In that regard I have introduced the following four bills:

The "Dyslexia Task Force Act" (A.133/S.2599) will require the New York State Education Department Commissioner to establish a task force to hold public hearings and examine appropriate and effective evidence-based screening methods, reading interventions and other educational supports for dyslexia and related disorders. This legislation passed both houses this session and I am hopeful it will be signed by the Governor soon.

The Dyslexia Diagnosis Access Act (A.2898/S5481) would mandate that private health insurance policies pay for neuropsychological exams for the purpose of diagnosing dyslexia. Such exams may cost in excess of six thousand dollars and are typically not paid for by health insurance, making them unaffordable to most families. This bill passed the Assembly and we will be working with our Senate colleagues to see it pass both houses.

The NY IDEA ACT "New York Individuals with Dyslexia Education Act" (A.7101) would establish statewide standards for the screening of students in grades kindergarten through five for dyslexia, for the interventions required for students with dyslexia, for parental notification regarding the outcomes of screenings and interventions, and for the training of educators and other school personnel regarding dyslexia screening and interventions.

The Right to Read Act (A.2897/S5480) would require the State Education Department to provide guidance to school districts to establish literacy curricula based on the science of reading as the standard throughout the state, set standards for teacher training and professional development aligned with evidence-based curricula, and require the state to take a more active role in supporting and monitoring the progress districts are making in teaching reading.

It is my hope that working together we can truly transform education in this state. Reading is the foundation for success in school and we cannot continue to deny so many of our children the right to read. Thank you once again for your time.



Testimony of the United Federation of Teachers before the New York City Council Education Committee jointly with the Committee on State and Federal Legislation Oversight Hearing on the New Phonics Based Curriculum and Dyslexia Screening in NYC Public Schools

December 14, 2023

My name is Mary Vaccaro, and I'm the Vice President for Education of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT). On behalf of the union's more than 190,000 members, I would like to thank the members of the New York City Council's Education and Committee on State and Federal Legislation for holding today's public hearing on the new phonics-based curriculum and dyslexia screening in NYC Public Schools, especially Education Committee Chair Rita Joseph and Committee on State and Federal Legislation Chair Shaun Abreu.

Learning to read is one of the fundamental purposes of education, but for many years the Department of Education did not give New York City teachers and students the resources and curricula they needed to ensure that every student would become a successful reader. Our union agrees that urgent change is necessary, and have been supportive of the shift to literacy programs grounded in the science of reading.

Within the next two years, all districts must begin to use one of three evidence-based literacy programs grounded in phonics and the science of reading in all elementary and middle schools: HMH Into Reading, Expeditionary Learning Education or Wit & Wisdom. The approved curricula emphasize sounding out words and foundational literacy skills, which were neglected for the past two decades in many schools in favor of a whole language approach, which encourages word memorization and independent reading. As part of the new initiative, schools must phase out materials from Units of Study, the balanced literacy curriculum developed by Lucy Calkins, a professor at Teachers College at Columbia University. The whole-language approach proved disastrous for many students, including those with learning differences, with the result that half of city students in grades 3–8 are not reading at grade level.

Elementary and middle schools in 15 community school districts and District 75 began using these curricula this fall, with the remaining districts making the transition in September 2024. This quick rollout has been a challenge, but we have heard from

many of our members that this shift to phonics and the science of reading in our schools is long overdue.

To make sure this important effort succeeds, it's essential that the DOE provide educators with appropriate, ongoing professional development opportunities to support them. As President Mulgrew stated when this initiative was launched, "We said no more drive-by training. It has to be embedded, and it has to be throughout the entire year." At the union's urging, the UFT Teacher Center is playing an integral role in the training to make sure teachers get the support they need, adapted to the students they teach.

To kick things off, the UFT Teacher Center designed and offered a free course this summer on the science of reading. Over two weeks in July, I was excited to welcome hundreds of New York City public school educators to Shanker Hall at UFT headquarters for "Reading for All: The Science of Reading Across Curriculums." The course, which was a mix of in-person and virtual sessions, introduced participants to these new curricula. The teachers learned techniques each curriculum offers to support the development of foundational literacy skills such as connecting sounds with symbols and understanding how prefixes and suffixes are used in vocabulary. Participants also found out about additional digital resources, learned strategies to address their students' social-emotional needs, and received guidance on how to use these curricula with diverse groups of learners.

We found that teachers were energetic and open to changing their classroom practices in response to high-quality professional learning around the science of reading. Teachers of English language learners were especially excited to learn about how to use translation technology to ensure that their students had full access to the new curricula. Michelle Grant, an English as a new language teacher at PS 280 in Jackson Heights, said the training gave her a toolkit and resources she can use to help her English language learners. As she told us after the session, "at first I felt overwhelmed, but now I'm starting to feel more confident and at ease about how I can support my students in the 2023–24 school year."

As the rollout of each of these programs moves forward, the DOE must ensure that all educators using the new curricula have the help they need to make a successful transition. The UFT Teacher Center is committed to doing everything it can to support them. We have 15 new Teacher Center district coaches who will provide regular assistance around this literacy work to educators in the 15 community school districts and District 75 who do not have a Teacher Center based in their building. The Teacher Center will also offer literacy workshops and office hours throughout the year, and

teachers in schools with a Teacher Center site coach will receive ongoing professional learning tailored to their school's specific needs.

During the rollout of these curricula, our Teacher Center coaches have helped educators to navigate and understand the multiple curriculum websites and to begin using a variety of tools to support whole group and small group instruction. For example, we have supported teachers in using the Tabletop program, which is designed to support reading instruction for English Language Learners. This is an example of a program that did not come with the original curricula but which principals and educators have identified as necessary to support our diverse population of students. To support use of this tool, our coaches have modeled its use during both the professional learning sessions that they offer in person and online, as well as during classroom visits. Our fifteen district coaches are also leading weekly professional learning sessions open to all educators in the pilot districts.

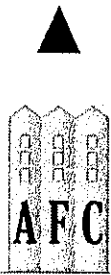
The city has also launched an ambitious \$7.4 million literacy initiative targeting children with dyslexia. Dyslexia is the most common learning disability, affecting 3% to 7% of the population, according to the Lancet medical journal. The number of students in New York City public schools with dyslexia could exceed 70,000. Under the model described by the city, all students in K-12 will be given literacy screenings three times a year, and students who repeatedly score well below their peers will be screened for risk of dyslexia. All teachers will also receive training on how to identify and support students with dyslexia.

While this initiative is an admirable idea, we are concerned that there are still many more questions than answers about this effort. The city's experience with the Universal Literacy Initiative demonstrates the kind of challenges this new literacy initiative may face. That program launched in 2016 with the goal of getting all students reading at their grade level by the end of Grade 2, but experienced pushback as principals rebelled against outsiders telling them how to handle a core piece of the curriculum. To avoid similar challenges, we urge the DOE to address issues such as the recognition of dyslexia on IEPs, superintendents' role in ensuring principals' implementation of the initiative, development and delivery of the necessary professional learning and support to staff, and clear expectations around progress monitoring. Each of these questions and more will need answers if students identified as dyslexic are to get the support they need and deserve.

In addition to the literacy curriculum work, a new algebra curriculum will also be implemented in 178 high schools, spanning seven districts, starting in September. The new curriculum, Illustrative Mathematics, is for Algebra 1, typically offered in grade 9

and sometimes in grade 8. Algebra is the focus because it is considered foundational to all higher-level math, and in the inquiry-based model used in Illustrative Math, content begins with a problem being posed and students engage in questioning and discussion to find the answer. The UFTTC has collaborated with the DOE to provide six experienced teachers trained in professional learning to serve as math coaches for schools in the seven pilot districts for this program. Our math coaches are currently providing tailored supports such as modeling Illustrative Math lessons, providing individualized coaching support for teachers, and leading weekly professional learning sessions open to all educators in the pilot districts as the rollout moves forward.

Changing how we teach reading in every classroom is no small feat. But the research tells us that we must forge ahead down this path to ensure that every New York City public school student has the opportunity to become a confident and fluent reader. The UFT and our UFT Teacher Center are here to support our educators and our learners every step of the way, and look forward to working with the Council to ensure the success of this urgently needed initiative.



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

Testimony to be delivered to the New York City Council Committee on Education & Committee on State and Federal Legislation

Re: New Phonics Based Curriculum and Dyslexia Screening in NYC Public Schools

December 14, 2023

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Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Sarah Part, and I am the Senior Policy Analyst at Advocates for Children of New York (AFC). For more than 50 years, Advocates for Children has worked to ensure a high-quality education for New York students who face barriers to academic success, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds.

Every year, we help thousands of families navigate the school system, including many families whose children are struggling with reading. We routinely work with middle and high school students who are still non-readers—not because they lack the motivation or cognitive capacity to learn to read, but because the public schools failed to provide evidence-based instruction and intervention.

Literacy is the gateway to all future learning, and AFC has long advocated for New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) to institute guardrails around English language arts (ELA) curricula. There is an enormous body of research on how children learn to read and a firm consensus as to the defining features of effective instruction. Leaving the choice of curriculum up to individual schools, however, resulted in tremendous inconsistency and widespread use of programs grounded in discredited theories of reading development rather than in the scientific evidence. And while some children will become proficient readers no matter how they are taught, they are the exception rather than the rule. Without explicit and systematic instruction in foundational skills and access to a knowledge-building curriculum, many will struggle unnecessarily and never learn to read as well as they could.

At AFC, we see the consequences: students who are unable to read menus and job applications, let alone their academic textbooks; whose self-esteem and mental health suffers; and whose understandable frustrations with reading manifest in disruptive behavior and disengagement from school. That's why we're supportive of the effort NYCPS is making to shift away from balanced literacy and towards curricula that align with the science of reading.



Advocates for Children
of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

By improving core instruction, we can prevent many reading difficulties before they occur. However, there will always be some students who need extra support, and New York City also needs a robust literacy safety net that identifies such students and matches them with intensive intervention. While universal screening is *one component* of such a safety net, it should be a means to an end, not an end in itself. The point of identifying students who are struggling with reading or who have language-based learning disabilities like dyslexia is to ensure those students receive the targeted help they need to become strong readers. NYCPS must ensure that schools have the training, personnel, and infrastructure necessary to use screening data to inform instruction and provide timely, evidence-based small-group or one-on-one intervention to all students who need it.

Finally, we would like to emphasize that shifting what happens in thousands of individual classrooms on a day-to-day basis is going to take time. There are no silver bullets in public education, and when it comes to the science of reading, New York City is just getting started. We want to ensure that current budgetary pressures and the understandable desire to see results quickly do not lead to policymakers abandoning the current effort before it even has a chance to succeed.

We urge the Council to remain steadfast in the commitment to ensuring that all schools are using reading curricula with proven effectiveness and to push the school system to provide all students—including those who have disabilities like dyslexia—with the intervention and support they need.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

BAX/Brooklyn Arts Exchange

December 14, 2023

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council Committee on Finance,
Hon. Just Brannan, Chair

Hearing: Oversight-Mayor's November Financial Plan
December 11, 2023

Thank you to Chair Brannan and the City Council for your support of arts, culture, and arts education across New York City. I'm writing to support the It Starts with the Arts coalition — calling on our city to prioritize funding for arts in NYC schools and communities. My name is Lucia Scheckner, and I work at **BAX/Brooklyn Arts Exchange** in **Park Slope, Brooklyn, New York** .

The mission of **BAX/Brooklyn Arts Exchange** is a multigenerational arts organization nurturing creative expression and artistic process through education, residencies, and performance at the intersection of arts and social justice. BAX is dedicated to serving artists in progress, from children to professionals, at all ages and stages of development. The multifaceted nature of BAX programs annually invites over 10,000 students, families, artists, audiences, and community members to embark on, and share creative journeys. For three decades, BAX has honored the power of performing arts to connect and transform individuals and communities. The education programs, artist residencies, affordable rehearsal space, community engagement opportunities, mentorship, and performances, all center artists from historically underrepresented backgrounds and prioritize lived and embodied experiences, and access, regardless of ability to pay.

The proposed budget cuts would significantly impact our organization and our ability to provide affordable and high quality arts education, including financial assistance services and subsidized programming, to our many school partners and families, children, educators, and emerging artists throughout NYC's boroughs – especially those based in South Brooklyn.

Throughout our 30-plus year tenure, BAX has evidenced and witnessed countless examples of the power and healthy impact the arts have on communities, building capacities for radical imagination, confidence, and inclusion, especially among those impacted by poverty, racism, disability, and gender biases. Affordable access to arts education and the greater cultural sector is essential to building and maintaining thriving communities.

BAX BROOKLYN ARTS EXCHANGE

Budget cuts of \$17.3 million to the Department of Cultural Affairs and more than \$1B to NYC Public Schools threaten our city's creative spirit, economic prosperity, and our students. Cuts to these agencies spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. The damaging cuts laid out in the November Financial Plan are further compounded by the expiration of temporary federal COVID-19 relief funds, which has funded considerable arts education programming to support student's academic recovery and social-emotional wellbeing over the past three school years.

Let us not take it out on our students or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Programs that foster student engagement, mental health, tourism, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Our city's young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Please prioritize investment in arts education and in NYC's future because success starts with the arts.

Thank you for your attention and consideration,

Lucia Scheckner

BAX Senior Director of Programs & Production

lucia@bax.org

Bax.org

KEY TALKING POINTS

Specifically, we believe it would be helpful for the Council to hear:

- Talk about the impact of city funding on your ability to reach students and engage with new/returning partner schools (and that this level of funding should be continued).
- Specific results and examples of successfully providing arts and cultural education this year will be the most impactful for continuing to let the City Council know that Arts Education is Essential (i.e. trends they saw in learning, outcomes that tell the story of how arts ed can reach students in important ways);
- Specific examples of how you are currently experiencing or anticipate seeing the negative impact of budget cuts on your organization and students (to help create urgency to prioritize funding these areas).
- Stress the well-documented research showing that kids engaged in vibrant arts programs have markedly better academic and social-emotional outcomes.
- Thank the City Council for their investment and commitment to arts, culture, and arts education (this is the floor not the ceiling, when it comes to funding the arts in schools!)
- Universal access to arts education is an issue of equity in education; we still have a long way to go and these cuts stand to set us back considerably to reaching a point where all students have access to arts education.
- We encourage you to uplift messages of other coalitions as it relates to you and your work! Here is some additional written testimony language from other advocates:

Nonprofit New York: The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. That's why BAX/Brooklyn Arts Exchange joins over 225 organizations in the [#WHY15 campaign](#) to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

BAX BROOKLYN ARTS EXCHANGE

Advocates for Children: In addition to the \$600 million in cuts to education explicitly listed in the November Financial Plan, there is a slew of additional education programs on the chopping block. Over the last few years, New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) has been using around \$1B per year in temporary federal COVID-19 relief funds for important long-term programs that were necessary long before the pandemic and will continue to be critical long after, such as 3-K, preschool special education, Summer Rising, 450 school social workers, community schools, school nurses, restorative justice, 60 school psychologists, 75 coordinators working in homeless shelters, bilingual staff, translation and interpretation, dyslexia and literacy initiatives, and more. While the federal funding will run out in June, the need for these supports will continue. Unless elected officials act, we are at risk of seeing cuts to each of these programs—cuts that are *on top of* the cuts laid out in the November Plan. Please do not let these programs end on your watch.

New Yorkers for Culture & Art: Check out [NY4CA's one-pager](#) for information about their talking points and how to testify.



Broadway Bound Kids, Inc
630 West 135th Street, #3
New York, NY 10031
www.broadwayboundkids.org

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council Committee on Finance,
Hon. Just Brannan, Chair
Hearing: Oversight-Mayor's November Financial Plan
December 11, 2023

December 13, 2023

Thank you to Chair Brannan and the City Council for your support of arts, culture, and arts education across New York City. I'm writing to support the **It Starts with the Arts** coalition — calling on our city to prioritize funding for arts in NYC schools and communities. My name is Elizabeth, and I work Broadway Bound Kids, serving over 1600 students in all five boroughs of NYC.

Broadway Bound Kids is a nonprofit providing a transformative and inclusive environment that inspires youth through performing arts education. We provide comprehensive interactive programs for Pre-K through 12th Grade in the performing arts that focus on enhancing technical skills, social emotional learning, confidence, connection, mindfulness, and creativity. Inclusion and access are central to our programming and organizational culture as we work to break down societal and financial barriers for youth, their families, and their communities.

Budget cuts will impact our organization and the students we serve in a very harmful way. Our schools depend on arts funding to offer critical programs that help students not only grow as creative individuals, but supplement their academic learning, and, most importantly, their journey of self-discovery as they learn to embrace and celebrate their true identity through the arts. Not only will cuts prohibit us from serving our students, but it will decrease the employment our 50 Teaching Artists depend on, and could even jeopardize our sustainability as a nonprofit organization.

We know that involvement in the performing arts not only builds cognitive skills and talent, but also builds relationships, encourages respect, releases creativity and so much more. In the past few years we've seen students thrive in our classes, watched communities come together in a new way, rooted in joy, to celebrate the artistic work of our young performers. In fact, we can share with certainty, based on our social-emotional learning surveys that we distribute each start and finish of each residency, that the arts have helped students grow, and heal.

Budget cuts of \$17.3 million to the Department of Cultural Affairs and more than \$1B to NYC Public Schools threaten our city's creative spirit, economic prosperity, and our students. Cuts to these agencies spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. The damaging cuts laid out in the November Financial Plan are further compounded by the expiration of temporary federal COVID-19 relief funds, which has funded considerable arts education programming to support student's academic recovery and social-emotional wellbeing over the past three school years.

Let us not take it out on our students or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Programs that foster student engagement, mental health, tourism, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Our city's young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Please prioritize investment in arts education and in NYC's future because success **starts with the arts**.

Thank you for your attention and consideration,

Elizabeth McGuire
Executive Director
Broadway Bound Kids

**Testimony by the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG) on Students with
Dyslexia in New York City Public Schools Before the New York City Council**

Committees on Education and State and Federal Legislation

December 14, 2023

Chairs Abreu and Joseph, Council Members, and staff, good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding Students with Dyslexia in New York City Public Schools (“NYCPS”). My name is Calleigh Higgins, and I am an Equal Justice Works Fellow sponsored by Mayer Brown and Spotify in the Special Education Unit at the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG). NYLAG uses the power of the law to help New Yorkers in need combat social, racial, and economic injustice. We address emerging and urgent legal needs with comprehensive, free civil legal services, impact litigation, policy advocacy, and community education. NYLAG serves immigrants, seniors, the homebound, families facing foreclosure, renters facing eviction, low-income consumers, those in need of government assistance, children in need of special education, domestic violence survivors, persons with disabilities, patients with chronic illness or disease, low-wage workers, low-income members of the LGBTQ community, Holocaust survivors, veterans, as well as others in need of free legal services.

For more than twenty years, NYLAG’s Special Education Unit (“SEU”) has advocated on behalf of low-income children with disabilities. Our lawyers collaborate with families to ensure that students receive the educational services to which they are entitled. Our advocacy includes representing students at IEP meetings, impartial hearings, and appeals to the State Review Office and Federal Court; securing appropriate school placements and related services; and obtaining independent educational evaluations. The Special Education

Unit also provides education advocacy through partnerships with other NYLAG units and community-based organizations. Through this work, we ensure that families are well-informed and have advocates to help them navigate the complexities of the special education system. Further, we partner with NYLAG's Special Litigation Unit in bringing impact litigation seeking systemic change to NYC's education system.

My fellowship focuses on ensuring that students with Dyslexia have access to evidence-based reading interventions. I serve students and their families by providing community education, free legal representation, and by advocating for policies that increase access to literacy. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before both the Committee on Education and State and Federal Legislation regarding students with Dyslexia in NYC.

Dyslexia is defined as an unexpected difficulty in reading in an individual who has the intelligence to be a much better reader.¹ Dyslexia impacts approximately 20% of all children, and while it develops equally across all races and genders, access to meaningful reading interventions in New York City is not equal across demographics.² For example, last school year, half of all New York City students were proficient readers, but for Black and Hispanic students, only 33% were achieving proficiency in reading.³ When Black and Hispanic students enter the special education system, they have less access to meaningful literacy interventions compared to their white peers.⁴ Providing evidence-based reading

¹ Sally Shaywitz, *What is Dyslexia?*, THE YALE CENTER FOR DYSLEXIA AND CREATIVITY, <https://dyslexia.yale.edu/dyslexia/what-is-dyslexia/>.

² Sally Shaywitz, *Multicultural Dyslexia Awareness Initiative*, THE YALE CENTER FOR DYSLEXIA AND CREATIVITY, <https://www.dyslexia.yale.edu/advocacy/ycdc-initiatives/multicultural-outreach/>

³ Julian Shen-Berro, NYC test scores: Roughly 50% proficient on reading, math exams, data shows, CHALKBEAT, <https://www.chalkbeat.org/newyork/2023/10/4/23904023/nyc-test-scores-state-exam-math-reading-disparities/>

⁴ Black and Hispanic students in special education are more likely to be classified with emotional disturbance than a learning disability, like Dyslexia. These discrepancies reflect implicit biases about the abilities of children

interventions in public schools is therefore not just a disability rights issue; it is also a racial justice issue.

Dyslexia cannot be cured, but scientists have been able to use brain imaging to unlock the science behind reading, and the science is clear. Reading is not an innate ability in children, but rather a skill that must be explicitly taught. All children, but especially children with Dyslexia, benefit from reading instruction rooted in phonics. A call for evidence-based reading instruction is one that respects the role that phonics must play in a school's reading curriculum.

Yet, for several decades, New York City students were not exposed to phonics.⁵ Instead, the assumption was that all children would become strong readers if they were merely in proximity to books. The thinking throughout the past two decades was that by finding topics of high interest and looking at visual clues, like pictures, students would absorb the skill of reading. This process is not reflective of the science behind reading, and its practice harmed many students. Chancellor Banks called the prior curriculum “fundamentally flawed” and accepted that “it was [the NYCPS’s] fault.”⁶

At the behest of Mayor Adams and Chancellor Banks, NYCPS has taken the important initial step towards acknowledging the science of reading by transitioning the elementary

from different races rather than statistical differences in the rate of occurrence of these two disabilities across races. See SALLY SHAYWITZ & JONATHAN SHAYWITZ, *OVERCOMING DYSLEXIA* 23 (2nd ed. 2020); Cheri Fancsali, *Special Education in New York City: Understanding the Landscape* (Aug. 2019), <https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/research-alliance/research/publications/special-education-new-york-city>; U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, *OSEP Releases Fast Facts on the Race and Ethnicity of Children with Disabilities Served under IDEA Part B* (Aug, 2020), <https://sites.ed.gov/osers/2021/08/osep-releases-fast-facts-on-the-race-and-ethnicity-of-children-with-disabilities-served-under-idea-part-b/>; Laura Schifter, *The ADA Has Fallen Short for Black Students. It's Past Time to Fix That*, *EDUCATIONWEEK* (2020), <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/opinion-the-ada-has-fallen-short-for-black-students-its-past-time-to-fix-that/2020/07>.

⁵ Troy Closson, *New York Is Forcing Schools to Change How They Teach Children to Read*, *N.Y. TIMES*, May 9, 2023; <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/09/nyregion/reading-nyc-schools.html>.

⁶ *Id.*

school reading curriculum to include a phonics component. This is a critical positive change for the next generation of NYC students. But it fails to benefit the prior generation of NYC students now sitting in public middle and high school classrooms, who never received phonics instruction. This oversight is especially dangerous considering that the majority of children with Dyslexia do not receive a diagnosis until 3rd grade or later.⁷ NYLAG’s clients with Dyslexia reflect this reality. They are middle and high school students who have average to high intelligence, who are not performing up to their potential because they never learned to read. They know something has gone wrong but their middle and high schools do not have teachers or curriculums in place to address their needs. Many of these cognitively bright middle and high schoolers have reading skills on an early elementary school level. Requiring phonics-based curriculum in elementary schools will hopefully prevent this harm from befalling the next generation, but it does nothing to repair the harm already done to the roughly 200,000 current students diagnosed with Dyslexia in NYC.⁸

For NYLAG’s middle and high school aged clients, it is not uncommon for members of the IEP team, including NYCPS educators and parents, to agree that a student with Dyslexia is struggling to read and requires additional supports to learn how to read. However, where discrepancies arise between NYCPS educators and parents is in the stage of suggesting services. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (the “IDEA”) and NY state and federal implementing regulations, IEP teams are not allowed to make recommendations based on the availability of a service at their school or in the public school system at large.

⁷ SALLY SHAYWITZ & JONATHAN SHAYWITZ, *OVERCOMING DYSLEXIA* 11 (2nd ed. 2020).

⁸⁸ *Mayor Adams, Chancellor Banks Announce Comprehensive Approach to Supporting Students with Dyslexia*, NYC OFFICE OF THE MAYOR, <https://www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/293-22/mayor-adams-chancellor-banks-comprehensive-approach-supporting-students-dyslexia#/0>.

The law mandates that the IEP team recommend appropriate educational supports, services, and programs for the student to achieve meaningful educational progress, irrespective of availability or cost. The logistics of delivering that service should align with that recommendation, not dictate it. But, in reality, this is not what happens for NYLAG clients. Schools know that their students with Dyslexia need an evidence-based reading program, but they also know there is no one in their middle or high school who can provide this type of service. And so, contrary to the law, the team will often leave off the only service that is scientifically proven to benefit a student with Dyslexia —an evidence-based reading intervention.

Not only have we witnessed IEP teams deny access to evidence-based reading interventions based on availability, but NYLAG clients continue to provide us with copies of IEPs that reference disproven reading programs, such as Fountas and Pinnell or Lucy Caulkin’s “Units of Study”.⁹ NYLAG clients will frequently have reading scores from these programs included in their IEP, and these scores will then dictate the types of services a client is qualified to receive. These reading scores are not reliable, and in some cases, they mask the student’s true needs. Reading scores from these programs better reflect a student’s ability to be an educated guesser than a reader. Yet, schools will deny a student with Dyslexia’s need for targeted reading intervention because their IEP reflects that they can “read” under prior flawed programs.

⁹ Emily Hanford & Christopher Peak, Influential authors Fountas and Pinnell stand behind disproven reading theory, APM (Nov. 19, 2021), <https://www.apmreports.org/story/2021/11/19/fountas-pinnell-disproven-childrens-reading-theory>; Dana Goldstein, In the Fight Over How to Teach Reading, This Guru Makes a Major Retreat, N.Y. TIMES (May 22, 2022), <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/22/us/reading-teaching-curriculum-phonics.html>.

In one of NYLAG's cases, a school took the extraordinary step of declassifying a middle school student with Dyslexia. As part of this determination, the school relied on data from one of these outdated and inaccurate reading programs and concluded that the student was reading on grade level. The student's parent knew their child was not reading at grade level and requested that an Independent Education Evaluation be funded by NYCPS. The evaluation confirmed what the parent saw each night at homework time. This middle school student was a bright child but lacked the basic reading skills expected of an early elementary student due to his Dyslexia. The school's continued reliance on a disproven reading program obscured the student's disability and resulted in a declassification that deprived the student of services for months. Ultimately, the student's special education services were reinstated based on the results of the independent reevaluation, but since the student's middle school does not have an educator equipped to teach a phonics-based reading program, this bright student continues to read many grade levels behind their ability.

Based on our experience representing students with Dyslexia, we urge you to consider policies that repair the harm done to older New York City students with Dyslexia. The adoption of a phonics-centered reading curriculum within elementary schools marks a significant change in the approach to teaching reading for NYC students; however, it fails to support students who have already experienced significant educational setbacks due to NYCPS's failure to teach them to read. Additionally, as Dyslexia screenings capture more students in need, there must be services in place to meet the needs of students in every grade level. **No student is too old to become a reader. And every NYC student should have the right to be given the tools to become one.**

We ask the Council to support policies that require middle and high schools to have access to a reading specialist. A reading specialist is a teacher who has been trained in a evidence-based reading programs, such as Orton-Gillingham or the Wilson Reading System. The programs are highly structured reading systems designed to help struggling readers. Professionals trained in these approaches can provide students with Dyslexia the opportunity to become readers and to participate to their full potential. And it is critical that these professionals are made accessible to middle and high school students.

We also urge the Council to support the continued investment in schools focused exclusively on serving students with Dyslexia. The South Bronx Literacy Academy is a testament to the city's commitment to ensuring that students with Dyslexia are not limited by their disability status. NYLAG's clients with Dyslexia are low-income and overwhelming students of color, and we ask that as the city continues to invest in schools for students with Dyslexia, this population should be centered. Students of color in special education are the least likely population to receive appropriate reading interventions and are most in need of being in proximity to a school that serves students with Dyslexia. Specifically, there is a noted lack of public, state-approved, or even private schools that have the resources to serve students with Dyslexia in Eastern Brooklyn. In East NY and Brownsville, only 10% of students in special education are reading proficiently. Additionally, Black and Hispanic students are overrepresented in special education in these two neighborhoods.¹⁰ We urge

¹⁰ On average, 20% of NYC students are enrolled in special education, but in East NY and Brownsville, the average is 24% and 28%, respectively. DOE Data at a Glance, NYC DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/about-us/reports/doe-data-at-a-glance>; NYC Geog Dist #23 - Brooklyn Enrollment (2021 - 22), NYSED, <https://data.nysed.gov/enrollment.php?year=2022&instid=800000043733>; NYC Geog Dist #19 - Brooklyn Enrollment (2021 - 22), NYSED, <https://data.nysed.gov/enrollment.php?year=2022&instid=800000044521>.

the council to support the development of more schools like The South Bronx Literacy Academy, and we ask you to prioritize these vulnerable communities when doing so.

Finally, NYCPS has shown itself to have the capacity to be flexible in the face of crisis. After the pandemic, IEPs were modified to include a section that addresses compensatory services for students who lost access to special education programming and services during the pandemic. The lack of an evidence-based reading curriculum for decades in NYCPS has led to a different kind of crisis — a literacy crisis. The vast majority of current NYC students were never exposed to phonics, and for the roughly 20% of those students who are Dyslexic, the task these students were given was impossible: learn to read without access to any of the proven tools that would enable them to do so. To address this crisis, we ask the Council to consider urging NYCPS to add a section to IEPs that allows students who never received an evidence-based reading curriculum to have their harm directly addressed through automatic access to compensatory reading services. Schools can either directly provide compensatory services through a school-based reading specialist or can provide families with Related Services Authorization (“RSA”) vouchers that allow families to access independent reading specialists at enhanced rate.

We thank the committees on Education and State and Federal Legislation for the work they have done to support evidence-based phonics instruction to NYC students and for holding this hearing. We hope NYLAG can be a resource for you going forward.

Respectfully submitted,

Calleigh Higgins

New York Legal Assistance Group



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**Testimony of Sarah Alvi
Acting Vice President, Family Justice Programs**

**To the New York City Council Committee on General Welfare and Youth Services Oversight Hearing on
Preventative Services for At-Risk and Justice Involved Youth on December 14, 2023**

First and foremost, I'd like to thank Chairwoman Ayala, Chairwoman Stevens, and the committee members for their unwavering commitment to ensuring that everyone who needs it can access preventative services. Our juvenile justice system is like a maze – too many entrances in, too few exits out, and very complex to navigate. As other providers have noted, understanding, and addressing, the challenges that young people face that lead to their involvement in this maze requires us to engage their families, schools, and communities to offer viable alternatives to incarceration, and help to prevent entry in the first place.

The New York Foundling has been a pioneer of evidence-based services for young people involved or at-risk of involvement in the juvenile justice system. The Foundling's range of juvenile justice initiative programs support improved behavior, foster positive relationships and family functioning, and work toward positive educational and career goals. They are offered in various NYC boroughs and include the following:

- The Foundling's Families Rising program serves young adults ages 13-27 who are facing adult convictions and incarceration. In addition to its historically high rates of treatment completion, the program has demonstrated a significant impact on reducing recidivism and is estimated to save taxpayers millions of dollars each year in incarceration costs.
- The Foundling's Kids Experiencing Young Successes (KEYS) program works with families to prevent long-term placement of their adolescent children in foster care or in a criminal justice residential placement by providing them with one of three evidence-based models for in-home interventions.
- The Foundling's Recognizing Emerging Adults & Creating Hope (REACH) program uses an evidence-based model to promote positive outcomes for young people ages 17-21. This model not only addresses a participant's current situation and needs, but simultaneously provides the tools and resources to build a promising future.
- The Foundling's Adolescent Mentoring Program serves young people ages 12-21 who are involved with or at risk of involvement with the juvenile or criminal justice or foster care systems. The program helps young people develop an individual success plan to guide them and take positive steps towards success in school, careers, and other life goals.

All of these programs have demonstrated success in supporting young people, and their families. However, the programs are currently facing staffing recruitment and retention challenges, which result in fewer families being served within these highly acclaimed programs. If we want these programs to continue to serve and stabilize young people at home and with their families, we must invest in the professionals who provide these critical services.



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There is not enough funding available to address this timely and critical need for children and families. Increased investment in community-based mental health care is vital to responding to the emergency and achieving the goals that Mayor Adams outlined in his mental health plan. With increased funding for children's mental health, The Foundling and others like us can address the urgent needs of children and families impacted by the mental health crisis and strengthen our community in the long term—increasing access to services that have been proven to prevent homelessness, joblessness, substance use, and crime well into adulthood.

We look forward to working with City leaders to address the mental health crisis and ensure that everyone who needs can access preventative care in New York City. Thank you for your time.



Rita Joseph, Council Chair
NYC Council Committee on Education
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10007

RE: Oversight Hearing: New Phonics Based Curriculum and Dyslexia Screening in NYC Public Schools

December 15, 2023

Dear Hon. Rita Joseph, Chair of the Committee on Education, & Hon. Shaun Abreu, Chair of the Committee on State and Federal Legislation:

NCS Pearson, Inc. (Pearson) is pleased to submit this proposal to New York Council in response to the Oversight Hearing for Dyslexia Screening in NYC Public Schools for Universal Reading Screener Providers. We understand that the Council is seeking information regarding universal reading screeners for students in a comprehensive solution from Dyslexia Screening, all the way up to individualized support.

To meet the needs of NYC Public Schools, we present Pearson's Dyslexia Toolkit, as authored by Dr. Kristina Breaux, Principal Research Director and Tina Eichstadt, Senior Product Manager in the Fall 2022 Dyslexia Toolkit Whitepaper.

In closing, Pearson thanks you for the time and energy you and your evaluation team will devote to reviewing our solutions. We look forward to being of greater service to NYC Public schools, educators, students, and parents/guardians.

For Classroom Screening
Inquires:
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Sincerely,

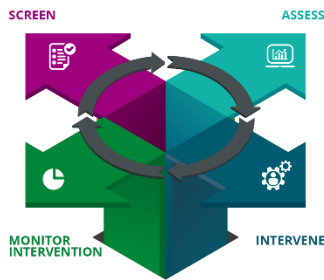
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Traci Meineke'. The signature is written in a cursive style and is set against a light green rectangular background.

Traci Meineke, MBA PMP MLIS
Vice President, Pearson School Assessment

Pearson Clinical Assessment Solutions: A Dyslexia Toolkit

Kristina Breaux, PhD, Principal Research Director, Clinical Assessment Tina Eichstadt, MS, CCC-SLP, Senior Product Manager, Clinical Assessment

Pearson Clinical Assessment offers a dyslexia toolkit with resources for screening, identification, intervention, and progress monitoring. This report will be updated periodically as new tools become available.



Up to 1 in 5 people exhibit symptoms of dyslexia, a common language-based learning disability²³. Although developing and implementing an evidence-based assessment and intervention plan is crucial, very often the most important factor is early identification.

Pearson’s dyslexia toolkit includes clinical and classroom resources for screening, diagnostic evaluations, intervention, and progress monitoring. Included are tools that can be used across a wide range of professional groups and user qualification levels.

Pearson’s Dyslexia Toolkit

SCREEN	ASSESS	INTERVENE	MONITOR
aimsweb™Plus – includes the Shaywitz DyslexiaScreen™ and the Dyslexia Probability Calculator™ Shaywitz DyslexiaScreen Forms 0–3, Adolescent-Adult, and Corrections Dyslexia Probability Calculator Wide Range Achievement Test, (5th ed.; WRAT™5) Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement™ (3rd ed.; KTEA™-3) Brief Form Dyslexia index scores for the KTEA-3 and WIAT®-4	Wechsler Individual Achievement Test® (4th ed.; WIAT-4) Process Assessment of the Learner™ (2nd ed.; PAL™-II): Diagnostics for Reading and Writing Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement™ (3rd ed.; KTEA™-3) Comprehensive Form Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests™ (3rd ed.; WRMT™-III) <i>Tests of intellectual functioning and oral language are also included!</i>	Intervention Guide for LD (Learning Disability) Subtypes Process Assessment of the Learner (PAL) intervention products KTEA-3 teaching objectives and intervention statements & WIAT-4 intervention goal statements SPELL-Links™ to Reading & Writing™ SPELL-Links Class Links for Classrooms™ SPELL-Links Wordtivities™	Growth Scale Values (GSVs) Progress Monitoring Assistant™ Relative Performance Index (RPI) scores aimswebPlus Review360®



When reviewing this white paper, please consider the following:

- Identifying individuals with dyslexia is a multistep, collaborative process. Supporting individuals who are academically at risk or individuals with dyslexia may require layers of effort from simple accommodations to special education intervention.
- Local processes and procedures across the United States (and globally) vary greatly within the dyslexia context. Consider tool choices, and each tool's appropriate use, carefully against the available scientific evidence and best practices in educational and clinical contexts.

Each resource in this toolkit shows strong empirical evidence on its own. The power of a toolkit comes from understanding the need for multiple tools and how they fit together to guide clear decision-making, giving the collective effort additional power. Clear data, a sufficient knowledge base, and team-based decision-making allow the best path forward.

Understanding Dyslexia

The International Dyslexia Association (IDA) established the following definition of dyslexia in 2002 and it has since been adopted by many U.S. federal and state agencies:

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.²²

In 2017, the U.S. Senate voted unanimously as part of the S. Res. 284⁴⁰ to establish the following definition of dyslexia, which was also included in the First Step Act of 2018⁴¹:

(1) an unexpected difficulty in reading for an individual who has the intelligence to be a much better reader; and
 (2) most commonly caused by a difficulty in phonological processing (the appreciation of the individual sounds of spoken language), which affects the ability of an individual to speak, read, and spell, and often, the ability to learn a second language.^{40, 41}

Both definitions refer to the unexpected nature of dyslexia that is often revealed by an uneven cognitive profile in which basic skill deficits are surrounded by a “sea of strengths” in areas such as reasoning, problem-solving, vocabulary, and listening comprehension.⁴³

Dyslexia is a language-based reading and spelling disorder that typically results in lifelong impact to an individual. Dyslexia can be identified through medical or educational processes. Many professional and parent groups—including parents, school and clinical psychologists, speech-language pathologists, educational diagnosticians, reading specialists, general and special education teachers, school administrators, and government stakeholders—support individuals with dyslexia in a variety of ways. Collaboration among these groups is key to facilitating a productive, robust, evidence-based assessment and intervention plan.

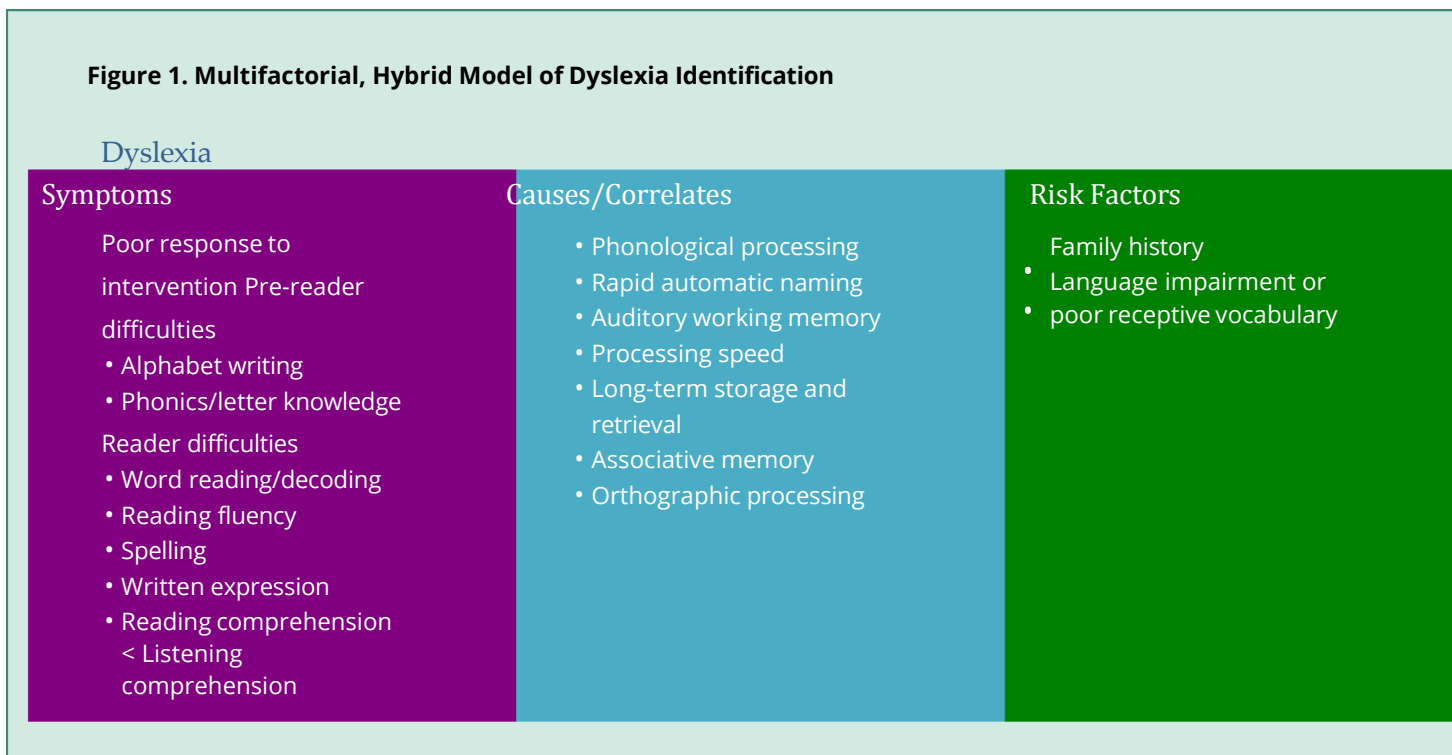
A Multifactorial, Hybrid Model for Dyslexia Identification

Implementing an evidence-based process for dyslexia screening, identification, intervention, and progress monitoring is paramount to improving student outcomes. The tests and products recommended in this toolkit are designed to be used most effectively within a comprehensive framework for dyslexia identification. A growing body of research supports a multifactorial, hybrid model for dyslexia identification.

Multifactorial: Not all individuals with dyslexia have the same underlying processing weaknesses; for this reason, approaches to identification that rely on a single criterion are prone to measurement error and show poor stability over time.^{12, 13, 25, 26} A multifactorial approach considers phonological processing weaknesses as well as weaknesses in other areas including oral language, processing speed, and executive functions, and these risk factors are considered probabilistic, not deterministic.^{12, 13}

Hybrid: A hybrid model incorporates multiple sources of information including the degree to which the individual has responded to intervention.⁴⁹ Individuals who do not respond to high-quality instruction may be more likely to have an underlying cognitive deficit that manifests as dyslexia.

Figure 1 summarizes the symptoms, causes and correlates, and risk factors that may be considered as part of a dyslexia evaluation.



Symptoms

Before the onset of formal schooling, parents or caregivers may observe early risk factors for dyslexia. For example, some children with dyslexia begin speaking later than most other children, have problems with pronunciation, or use vague terms because they have difficulty recalling the specific word for an object.⁴³

The symptoms of dyslexia are most commonly observed at school or during reading and writing tasks. Before learning to read, children with dyslexia may exhibit difficulties with alphabet writing, letter identification, and/or phonics (letter-sound correspondence).⁴ After exposure to reading instruction, individuals with dyslexia may have difficulties with decoding pseudowords, word reading, reading fluency (oral reading fluency, in particular), spelling, and written expression. In addition, reading comprehension is relatively poor compared to listening comprehension among individuals with dyslexia.⁴⁹ However, when dyslexia and a developmental language disorder co-occur, poor decoding is compounded by language difficulties including weaknesses in both reading comprehension and listening comprehension.⁴⁸

Poor response to high-quality instruction is considered an important symptom for identifying individuals with dyslexia because it indicates that the individual's difficulties cannot be attributed to lack of appropriate instruction.⁴⁹ However, poor intervention response is not sufficient on its own to reliably identify dyslexia because students may fail to respond to instruction for a number of other reasons such as intellectual disability and socioemotional problems. For this reason, collecting information about the examinee's educational history, including any accommodations, services, and specialized instruction received, is important for ruling out inadequate instruction as a primary cause of academic difficulty.

An individual with dyslexia may not exhibit every symptom at a given point in time, and areas of weakness may change over time. To improve the stability of dyslexia identification and reduce the likelihood that a student will qualify one year and not the next, some researchers recommend a criterion of n or more (e.g., three or more or four or more) symptoms, including poor response to high-quality instruction as one of those symptoms.⁴⁹

Evaluators are advised to assess other skill areas as well to identify additional areas of strength and weakness in the individual's learning profile. For example, assessing skill levels in the areas of math (computation, problem-solving, and fluency) is recommended because a subset of individuals with dyslexia experience math difficulties as well.²⁴ In addition, assessing vocabulary and grammar (morphological-syntactic) skills is important for understanding whether a developmental language disorder may be contributing to literacy difficulties.^{4,48}

Causes/Correlates

The causes and correlates of dyslexia include areas of cognitive processing weaknesses that are less easily observed than symptoms. The symptoms of dyslexia are typically either attributed to or related to weaknesses in one or more of the

following areas: phonological processing (including phonological awareness and phonological coding), rapid automatic naming (the phonological loop of working memory), auditory verbal working memory, processing speed, long-term storage and retrieval, associative memory, and orthographic processing. Assessing the first three areas is considered paramount for a dyslexia evaluation according to the IDA guidelines.²⁴

Although weaknesses in one or more aspects of phonological processing are often associated with dyslexia,²⁴ a single cognitive deficit cannot adequately explain the symptoms of dyslexia in all cases.³⁸ Rather, the causes of dyslexia are likely multiple, interacting, and probabilistic.³⁷ For this reason, a hypothesis-testing approach to assessment that explores multiple causes and correlates is helpful for understanding an individual's overall learning profile.

Risk Factors

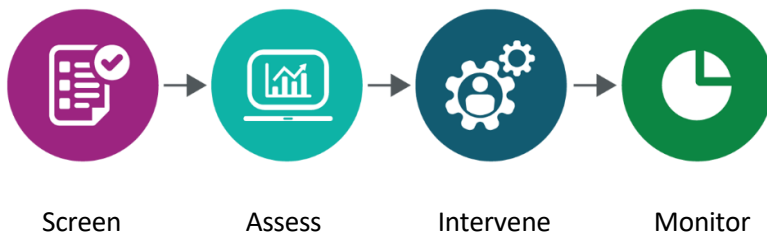
Considering hereditary and correlated risk factors for dyslexia alongside behavioral symptoms supports a more robust model of dyslexia identification.⁴⁹ In addition to low scores on a dyslexia screening test, the risk factors for dyslexia involve aspects of an individual's family history and developmental history that are typically assessed through self- or parent report. Individuals with the following characteristics are at increased risk for dyslexia: a family history of dyslexia,⁵⁰ a history of language impairment, and/or weaknesses in receptive vocabulary.⁴⁷ Most individuals with dyslexia have at least age-appropriate receptive vocabulary and general language skills; however, vocabulary weaknesses may be seen in conjunction with a developmental language disorder or as a correlate of dyslexia if individuals spend less time engaged in reading and language activities.^{16, 24, 47}

Strengths and Promotive Factors

Many individuals with dyslexia exhibit relative strengths in areas such as fluid reasoning and problem-solving, oral language (including listening, speaking, vocabulary, and grammar), and math.⁴³ Verbal comprehension and reasoning tends to be intact and discrepant from measures of word reading and spelling for individuals with dyslexia.⁴ Utilizing an individual's areas of strengths for remediating weaknesses can contribute to an effective intervention approach.³⁹

Promotive factors improve reading outcomes for all individuals and foster resilience for individuals with risk factors; strong performance on promotive factors are associated with stronger reading skills.⁴⁶ Promotive factors include verbal/oral language skills, rapid automatic naming, verbal working memory, and processing speed.⁴⁶

Pearson Dyslexia Toolkit



The Pearson dyslexia toolkit includes clinical assessments and resources for screening, diagnostic evaluations, intervention, and progress monitoring. To assist the varied groups of professionals who support individuals with dyslexia, this toolkit includes tools used across professional groups and user qualification levels.

Screening Tools

Screening tests do not diagnose a condition. Rather, individuals who show risk on a screening test typically require further evaluation and/or early intervention.

The Pearson toolkit for dyslexia screening includes the following measures:

- Shaywitz DyslexiaScreen – included in aimswebPlus, Review360, and Q-global®
- Dyslexia Probability Calculator – included in aimswebPlus
- Wide Range Achievement Test (5th ed.; WRAT5)
- Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement (3rd ed.; KTEA-3) Brief Form
- Dyslexia Index, composite scores developed for the KTEA-3 Comprehensive Form and the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (4th ed.; WIAT-4)

The Shaywitz DyslexiaScreen⁴⁴ is a brief screener for identifying individuals at risk for dyslexia. This assessment can be used for targeted or universal screenings. Forms 0–3 (for Grades K–3) are teacher surveys that can be completed by a teacher in less than 5 minutes using an online form. Digital administration and scoring using Q-global, Review360, or aimswebPlus provides evaluators with immediate results and reporting capabilities for individuals and groups of students. The Adolescent-Adult Form and the Corrections Form are self-report surveys for individuals ages 14–65 in the general population and ages 18–68 in corrections settings, respectively. The classification accuracy data indicate moderately high sensitivity and specificity for all forms. The Shaywitz DyslexiaScreen correctly classified 71% of kindergarten students, 85% of first-grade students, 80% of second-grade students, 85% of third-grade students, 94% of adolescents and adults, and 96% of incarcerated individuals.⁴⁵

The Dyslexia Probability Calculator⁶ currently delivered using aimswebPlus, considers the impact of family history for dyslexia and helps educators triage students according to risk levels. The Calculator provides a probability of dyslexia that estimates the likelihood that a student has dyslexia based on the following four factors: (1) the results of the Shaywitz DyslexiaScreen, (2) the psychometric properties of the Shaywitz DyslexiaScreen (how accurately it classifies students with and without dyslexia), (3) whether the student has a

family history of dyslexia (if this information is available), and (4) the prevalence rate of dyslexia in the population. The results are interpreted categorically as low, moderate, or high probability of dyslexia which can inform the intensity of the intervention.

The WRAT5⁵⁸ is a widely used screening test of reading, spelling, and math skills in individuals ages 5–85+ years (Grades K–12+). This test includes four subtests (Word Reading, Sentence Comprehension, Spelling, and Math Computation) and one Reading composite that all can be administered in about 20–30 minutes. Examiners have the flexibility to administer a single subtest or any combination of the four subtests.

Clinical validity data indicate that students with dyslexia/reading disorder performed significantly lower than the matched control group on all subtests except Math Computation with large effect sizes observed.

The KTEA–3 Brief Form²⁸ is used to screen for weaknesses in reading, writing, and mathematics and to obtain a general estimate of academic achievement for Grades PK–12+ (ages 4–25). The three-subtest Brief Achievement (BA-3) composite for Grades K–12+, which includes measures of word reading, spelling, and math computation, is especially useful for this purpose. Results may be used to identify examinees who would benefit from a comprehensive evaluation. To obtain more complete information across all three academic areas, three additional subtests are administered and the scores are combined with the three subtest scores from the BA-3 to yield the Academic Skills Battery (ASB) composite. The subtests used in the ASB also provide domain composites in Reading, Math, and Written Language. If the results from the ASB or domain composites suggest the need for further testing, administration of the KTEA–3 Comprehensive Form is recommended. The Comprehensive Form includes supplemental subtests that are useful for exploring specific aspects of academic functioning. All standard scores from subtests administered using the Brief Form can be applied to either Form A or Form B of the KTEA–3 Comprehensive.

The KTEA–3 and WIAT-4 Dyslexia Index^{7, 10} scores were designed to provide theoretically sound, reliable, and clinically sensitive composite scores for identifying risk for dyslexia among children, adolescents, and adults. In 15 minutes or less, practitioners can obtain a Dyslexia Index score to screen for dyslexia and identify individuals who may benefit from a comprehensive evaluation or a more intensive intervention approach. A single score, such as the Dyslexia Index, is not sufficient to diagnose dyslexia. Rather, a diagnosis of dyslexia is based on a convergence of evidence gathered from multiple sources. However, the Dyslexia Index results may contribute to a more in-depth evaluation.

As shown in Table 1, the subtests included in the KTEA–3 Dyslexia Index differ for Grades K–1 and 2–12+, and in the WIAT-4 Dyslexia Index the subtests differ for Grades PK–3 and 4–12+. The composite structures were based on clinical data with a strong empirical foundation. The results provide a standard score that corresponds to one of six categories of risk for dyslexia ranging from very low to very high.

The Dyslexia Index scores are available in Q-interactive® or by purchasing the KTEA–3 or WIAT-4 Dyslexia Index kit. For WIAT-4 users, the Dyslexia Index is included as part of the test.

Table 1 summarizes the reliability coefficients, clinical validity data, and administration time for the dyslexia screening measures. The Area Under the Curve (AUC) estimates for the dyslexia screening tools range from .81 to .95 indicating that the screeners have good-to-excellent accuracy in distinguishing individuals at risk for dyslexia from those not at risk.

Reliability refers to the accuracy, consistency, and stability of test scores across situations. Reliability coefficients $\geq .90$ are considered excellent; $.80$ – $.89$ are good.

Effect size refers to the magnitude of the difference in test performance between the reading disorder/dyslexia group and the control group. Large effect sizes are $\geq .80$.

AUC is a combined measure of sensitivity and specificity and the industry standard criterion for evaluating the quality of a screening instrument. Values $\geq .90$ are excellent; $\geq .80$ are good.

Table 1. Technical Characteristics of Dyslexia Screening Measures

Test or index score	Grade/age	Item/subtest	Mean reliability	Effect size	AUC	Admin. time (min.)
Shaywitz DyslexiaScreen: Form 0	Kindergarten	10 items	.87 	1.48 	.81 	< 5
Shaywitz DyslexiaScreen: Form 1	1	12 items	.90 	1.78 	.89 	< 5
Shaywitz DyslexiaScreen: Form 2	2	10 items	.94 	2.06 	.92 	< 5
Shaywitz DyslexiaScreen: Form 3	3	10 items	.95 	2.38 	.94 	< 5
Shaywitz DyslexiaScreen: Adolescent-Adult Form	Ages 14–65	10 items	.86 	2.55 	.95 	< 5
Shaywitz DyslexiaScreen: Corrections Form	Ages 18–68	10 items	.86 	2.47 	.95 	< 5
WRAT5 Reading composite	1–12+ Ages 6–89+	Word Reading + Sentence Comprehension	.96 	1.70 	.89 	10–20
KTEA–3 Brief: BA-3 composite	K–12+ Ages 5–25	Letter & Word Recognition+ Spelling + Math Computation	.98 	2.11 	.93 	20
KTEA–3 Dyslexia Index: Grades K–1	K–1 Ages 5–7	Phonological Processing + Letter Naming Facility + Letter & Word Recognition	.92 	1.79 	.90 	18–20
KTEA–3 Dyslexia Index: Grades 2–12+	2–12+ Ages 7–25	Word Recognition Fluency + Nonsense Word Decoding + Spelling	.97 	1.76 	.89 	12–15
WIAT-4 Dyslexia Index: Grades PK–3	PK–3 Ages 4–9	Phonemic Proficiency + Word Reading	.98 	2.11 	.95 	20
WIAT-4 Dyslexia Index: Grades 4–12+	4–12+ Ages 9–50	Word Reading + Orthographic Fluency + Pseudoword Decoding	.98 	2.05 	.92 	5

Note. Data for KTEA–3, WIAT-4, and WRAT5 were derived from age-based standard scores. Alpha reliability is reported for the Shaywitz DyslexiaScreen forms; split half reliability is reported for all other tests. All scores from the dyslexia groups were significantly ($p < .01$) lower than those of the nonclinical matched control groups. Clinical n -counts for the KTEA–3 Dyslexia Index at Grades K–1 were insufficient (< 20) for group comparisons; for this reason, group means, effect sizes, and AUC estimates were based on samples of students in Grades 1–4. The clinical sample for the WIAT-4 Dyslexia Index at Grades PK–3 included students in Grades 1–3.

Literacy Screener vs. Dyslexia Screener

Test developers must provide data that support the use of a test for each intended use (Standard 12.2).¹ Data that support the use of a test as a dyslexia screener include AUC, sensitivity/specificity, and clinical effect size. A test that *only* provides validity evidence for predicting or estimating reading skills is a reading screener. Reading tests vary in how well they detect risk for dyslexia. As part of a dyslexia screening process, individuals who perform poorly on a literacy/reading screener should also be given an empirically validated dyslexia screening test.

Diagnostic Assessment Tools

The diagnostic process for specific learning disability (SLD) identification or a dyslexia evaluation typically involves three steps:⁴

Step 1: Rule out other potential causes of learning difficulties including pervasive or specific developmental disabilities, intellectual disability or borderline intellectual functioning, vision or hearing difficulties, socioemotional or cultural/linguistic factors, etc.

Step 2: Assess learning profiles for specific learning disabilities and assess for common comorbid conditions

Step 3: Make a differential diagnosis

To support this process, the Pearson dyslexia toolkit includes assessments of academic achievement, intellectual functioning, and oral language.

Assessment of Academic Achievement

The Pearson dyslexia toolkit includes four academic achievement-related tests:

- Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement (3rd ed.; KTEA-3) Comprehensive Form
- Process Assessment of the Learner (2nd ed.; PAL-II): Diagnostics for Reading and Writing
- Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (4th ed.; WIAT-4)
- Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests (3rd ed.; WRMT-III)

Table 2 summarizes the key features of the academic achievement assessment tools.

Table 2. Key Features of Academic Achievement Assessments

Test	Publication	Grade/age	Form	Admin./scoring options
KTEA-3 Comprehensive Form	2014	PK-12 Ages 4-25	2 parallel forms	• Hand score • Q-global • Q-interactive
PAL-II Reading and Writing	2007	K-6	1 form	Hand score

WIAT-4	2020	PK-12 Ages 4-50	1 form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand score • Q-global • Q-interactive
WRMT-III	2011	K-12 Ages 4-79	2 parallel forms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand score • Q-global

The KTEA-3 Comprehensive Form²⁷ is designed to provide information about normative and personal strengths and weaknesses in reading, writing, math, oral language, and key processing areas relevant to dyslexia. The KTEA-3 assessment information may be used to make eligibility, placement, and diagnostic decisions; plan intervention; and monitor progress over time. The clinical validity data²⁹ indicate that, with the exception of Associational Fluency, all subtest and composite scores for the dyslexia (SLD-reading/writing) group were significantly ($p < .01$) lower than those of the matched control group with large effect sizes. Although the dyslexia group scored significantly lower than the control group across nearly every academic measure, mean scores for the dyslexia group were lowest (below 85) on the reading, reading-related, and spelling subtests.

The PAL-II Reading and Writing³ is designed to measure reading- and writing-related processes to facilitate the differential diagnosis of dyslexia, dysgraphia, and oral and written language learning disability (OWL-LD) and to link assessment results with interventions. The PAL-II, which is often used to complement an evaluation that includes the KTEA-3, WIAT-4, or WRMT-III, is ideal for pinpointing why a student struggles in reading and/or writing.

The WIAT-4³⁶ provides information about normative strengths and weaknesses in reading, math, written expression, and oral language. Results obtained from the WIAT-4 can be used to inform decisions regarding eligibility for educational services, educational placement, or a diagnosis of a specific learning disability, and the results include suggestions for instructional objectives and interventions. According to the clinical validity data⁹ for the dyslexia (SLD-reading) group, all subtest and composite scores, with the exception of Essay Composition, were significantly ($p < .01$) lower than those of the matched control group. Large effect sizes were observed for all reading and reading-related subtests. The largest effect sizes were for the Reading, Basic Reading, Decoding, and Dyslexia Index composites. Relative strengths were observed on math and oral language subtests that showed mostly moderate effect sizes.

The WRMT-III⁶⁰ provides a comprehensive battery of tests that measure reading readiness and reading achievement for the purpose of developing tailored intervention programs. According to the clinical validity data,⁶¹ the mean scores for the dyslexia group were significantly ($p < .01$) lower than those of the matched control group for all scores except Rapid Automatic Naming: Number and Letter Naming. All effect sizes were large except those for Listening Comprehension and Rapid Automatic Naming: Number and Letter Naming which were moderate.

Table 3 lists the key skill areas recommended for dyslexia assessment by the IDA,²⁴ as well as secondary areas that are important to consider, and the relevant measures provided by the KTEA-3, PAL-II, WIAT-4, and WRMT-III. The measures listed include subtests and subtest component scores.

Table 3. Content Coverage of Academic Achievement Assessments

Key area for dyslexia assessment	KTEA-3	PAL-II	WIAT-4	WRMT-III
Phonics skills/letter knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter & Word Recognition Letter Naming Facility Letter Checklist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Word Reading (early items) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter Identification
Decoding pseudowords	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nonsense Word Decoding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pseudoword Decoding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pseudoword Decoding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Word Attack
Word reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter & Word Recognition 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Word Reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Word Identification
Reading fluency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Word Recognition Fluency Decoding Fluency Silent Reading Fluency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RAN-Words Morphological Decoding Fluency Sentence Sense 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral Reading Fluency Decoding Fluency Orthographic Fluency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral Reading Fluency
Spelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Word Choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spelling 	
Written expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written Expression Writing Fluency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentences: Writing Compositional Fluency Expository Note Taking and Report Writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentence Composition Essay Composition Writing Fluency 	
Receptive vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading Vocabulary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are They Related? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listening Comprehension: Receptive Vocabulary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Word Comprehension
Rapid naming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Object Naming Facility Letter Naming Facility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RAN-Letters RAN-Letter Groups 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rapid Automatic Naming
Phonological awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phonological Processing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rhyming Syllables Phonemes Rimes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phonemic Proficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phonological Awareness
Auditory working memory (phonological memory)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phonological Processing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentences: Listening Letters Words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral Expression: Sentence Repetition 	
Secondary area				
Reading comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading Comprehension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentence Sense 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading Comprehension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Passage Comprehension
Listening comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listening Comprehension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentences: Listening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listening Comprehension: Oral Discourse Comprehension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listening Comprehension
Orthographic processing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Orthographic Processing composite 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receptive Coding Expressive Coding Word Choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Orthographic Fluency Orthographic Choice (Q- interactive only) Orthographic Processing composite 	
Grammatical ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral Expression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does it Fit? Sentence Structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral Expression Sentence Composition 	

Assessment of Intellectual Functioning

The Pearson toolkit for dyslexia evaluations also includes tests of intellectual functioning. Within the context of a dyslexia evaluation, tests of intellectual functioning are used for the following purposes:

- To assess individuals with complicated learning profiles, such as gifted students with dyslexia, and better understand their unique learning profile and needs²⁴
- To facilitate the differential diagnosis of dyslexia, developmental disability, intellectual disability/borderline intellectual functioning, and a language disorder, which involves the assessment of overall cognitive ability, verbal reasoning, and nonverbal reasoning^{2, 4, 42}
- To identify dyslexia using a pattern of strengths and weaknesses (PSW) approach, whereby individuals with dyslexia show consistency between areas of cognitive processing weakness and academic weakness coupled with a significant discrepancy between areas of cognitive processing strength and cognitive processing weakness or by using an ability-achievement discrepancy (AAD) approach^{19, 20}
- To develop individualized approaches to intervention that consider areas of processing weakness as well as strength³²

The Pearson dyslexia toolkit includes several tests of intellectual functioning for practitioners with varying qualification levels (qualification criteria are provided at [pearsonassessments.com](https://www.pearsonassessments.com)):

Qualification Level C

- Differential Ability Scales™ (2nd ed.; DAS™-II)¹⁵
- Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children (2nd ed.) Normative Update (KABC™-II NU)³⁰
- NEPSY® (2nd ed.; NEPSY-II)³³
- Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale® (4th ed.; WAIS®-IV)⁵¹
- Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children® (5th ed.; WISC®-V)⁵³
- Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence® (4th ed.; WPPSI®-IV)⁵²
- Wechsler Nonverbal Scale of Ability (WNV®)⁵⁵

Qualification Level B

- Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test™ (2nd ed.) Revised (KBIT™-2 Revised; expected 2022)³¹

The WISC-V is one of the most commonly used school-age tests of intellectual functioning. The WISC-V is linked with the WIAT-4 and the KTEA-3, and it includes measures that differentiate individuals with dyslexia (SLD-Reading) from matched controls. The clinical validity data⁵⁴ indicate significant difficulties among the dyslexia group with immediate paired associate learning, naming speed, verbal comprehension, and working memory. The mean scores for the dyslexia group were significantly ($p < .05$) lower than those of the matched control group for all index scores, with largest effect sizes observed for the Working Memory Index (WMI) and the Verbal Comprehension Index (VCI). All global, ancillary, and complementary composites were significantly lower ($p < .05$) and showed large effects as well. Several of the ancillary and complementary composites correspond to the previously discussed causes/correlates of dyslexia.

Table 4 summarizes the key cognitive processing areas measured by the WISC-V that may be impaired for individuals with dyslexia or that may be a relative strength/promotive factor.

Table 4. WISC-V Measures of Key Cognitive Processing Areas for a Dyslexia Evaluation

Cognitive processing area	WISC-V index score
Auditory working memory (phonological memory)	Auditory Working Memory Index (AWMI)
Rapid automatic naming	Naming Speed Index (NSI)
Verbal comprehension and reasoning	Verbal Comprehension Index (VCI)
Processing speed	Processing Speed Index (PSI)
Long-term storage and retrieval	Storage and Retrieval Index (SRI)
Associative memory (learning efficiency)	Symbol Translation Index (STI)
Fluid reasoning	Fluid Reasoning Index (FRI)

New for 2022: The KBIT-2 Revised provides information about verbal and nonverbal intellectual functioning in about 20 minutes, and it can be administered by a wide range of qualified professionals with training in assessment. Table 5 summarizes the key cognitive processing areas measured by the KBIT-2 Revised in the context of a dyslexia evaluation.

Table 5. KBIT-2 Revised Measures of Key Cognitive Processing Areas for a Dyslexia Evaluation

Cognitive processing area	KBIT-2 Revised measure
Verbal comprehension and reasoning	Verbal score (Verbal Knowledge, Riddles subtests)
Fluid reasoning	Nonverbal score (Matrices subtest)

Table 6 summarizes the cognitive ability linking studies available for the KTEA-3 and the WIAT-4. A linking study is conducted by administering a diagnostic achievement test and a test of intellectual functioning/cognitive ability to the same group of examinees for the purpose of understanding relations between their scores. These studies provide the necessary data for conducting a pattern of strengths and weaknesses (PSW) analysis or an ability-achievement discrepancy (AAD) for the identification of a specific learning disability such as dyslexia.

Table 6. Cognitive Ability Linking Studies

Cognitive ability test	KTEA-3	WIAT-4
WISC-V	•	•
DAS-II	•	•
KABC-II NU	•	
WNV		•
KBIT-2 Revised	•	

Assessment of Oral Language

The Pearson toolkit for dyslexia diagnostic evaluations also includes tests of oral language. Within the context of a dyslexia evaluation, tests of oral language are used for the following purposes:

- To establish oral language skills as either a promotive factor or a risk factor in dyslexia screening⁴⁶
- To facilitate the differential diagnosis of dyslexia, developmental disability, developmental language disorder (DLD), or oral and written language learning disability (OWL-LD)^{2, 4}
- To develop individualized approaches to intervention that consider areas of oral language weakness and strength^{2, 4}

The Pearson dyslexia toolkit includes the following tests of oral language:

- Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals® (5th ed.; CELF®-5)⁵⁶
- Auditory Skills Assessment (ASA™)¹⁷
- Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test™ (5th ed.; PPVT™-5)¹⁴
- Expressive Vocabulary Test (3rd ed.; EVT™-3)⁵⁹

Of these measures, the CELF-5 provides the most comprehensive battery of tests for language assessment including measures of oral language and written language (i.e., reading, writing). The CELF-5 is designed primarily to identify and provide follow-up evaluations for individuals with language and communication disorders. Table 7 lists the CELF-5 measures that may be used to assess some of the key skill areas recommended for dyslexia evaluations by the IDA²⁴ as well as secondary areas that are important to consider. Results support the development of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that considers communication needs and for planning interventions in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004.²¹

According to the CELF-5 clinical validity data,⁵⁷ students diagnosed with a learning disability in reading and/or writing scored significantly lower on all tests and composites except for the Sentence Comprehension test compared to students with typical language skills. Score differences for all tests except the Pragmatics Profile showed medium to large effect sizes.

Pearson tests of oral language may contribute to an interdisciplinary dyslexia evaluation process. The use of these tools by a speech-language pathologist or similarly trained professional may support team decision-making in a differential diagnosis, a profile of strengths and weaknesses, and intervention planning.

Table 7. CELF-5 Measures of Key Language Areas for a Dyslexia Evaluation

Language area	CELF-5
Auditory verbal working memory (phonological memory)	Recalling Sentences
Receptive vocabulary	Linguistic Concepts Word Classes Word Definitions
Written expression	Structured Writing
Listening comprehension	Following Directions Semantic Relationships Sentence Comprehension Understanding Spoken Paragraphs
Reading comprehension	Reading Comprehension
Grammatical ability	Formulated Sentences Recalling Sentences Sentence Assembly Word Structure

Intervention Tools

The Pearson dyslexia toolkit includes the following intervention resources:

- Intervention Guide for Learning Disability (LD) Subtypes
- SPELL-Links to Reading & Writing,³⁴ SPELL-Links Class Links for Classrooms,³⁵ and, SPELL-Links Wordtivities
- Process Assessment of the Learner (PAL) Intervention Materials: Guides for Intervention—Revised, Research-Based Reading and Writing Lessons—Revised, Handwriting Lessons—Revised, and Talking Letters—Revised
- KTEA-3 teaching objectives and intervention statements
- WIAT-4 intervention goal statements

The Intervention Guide for LD Subtypes⁸ accessible through Q-global, compares an examinee's skill level profile with the theoretical profiles of various types of reading difficulties (including dyslexia) with a phonological core deficit and readers with poor language comprehension. The report provides tailored, research-supported intervention suggestions. Examinees may benefit from the interventions provided in the report regardless of whether they have been identified or diagnosed with dyslexia. Information about the examinee's cognitive processing, language, and achievement skills may be obtained from assessments in Q-global; however, other test results as

well as qualitative data are also considered.

SPELL-Links to Reading & Writing,³⁴ SPELL-Links Class Links for Classrooms,³⁵ and SPELL-Links Wordtivities (see [PearsonAssessments.com](https://www.pearsonassessments.com)) use a speech-to-print word study approach that leverages the brain's innate, biological wiring and organization for oral language. Students first learn how to attend to the sound structure of spoken English words and then how to connect and combine sounds (phonology), letter patterns (orthography), and meanings (semantics, morphology) to read and spell words.

SPELL-Links to Reading & Writing is a word study curriculum for Grades K–12 that delivers all components of assessment and instruction identified by the U.S. Department of Education-funded Center on Instruction as crucial for developing reading and spelling skills in every student. This program is appropriate for Tier 1, 2, and 3 students as well as students receiving services for dyslexia/special education, speech/language impairment, English language learners, or Title I.

SPELL-Links Class Links, based on SPELL-Links to Reading & Writing, provides everything needed to deliver a year of high-quality Tier 1/Tier 2 classroom instruction for kindergarten and early Grade 1 to meet educational development standards for spelling, word decoding, reading fluency, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and writing. The curriculum includes quick and easy lesson plans for word study to improve reading and writing success and downloadable mini-books that help students apply taught skills.

SPELL-Links Wordtivities features a variety of engaging activities and materials for use with whole class, small group, and 1:1 instruction for Grades K–12. Students will improve spelling; build depth and breadth of vocabulary; advance word decoding, reading fluency, and reading comprehension; and enhance writing performance. It can be used as a stand-alone word study program within an existing language-arts curriculum or in conjunction with SPELL-Links to Reading & Writing.

The PAL Intervention Materials⁵ include a series of resources for reading and writing including handwriting. The PAL Intervention materials can be accessed via Mimeo:

<https://marketplace.mimeo.com/pearsonPAL>

Guides for Intervention—Revised highlights conceptual foundations of reading, writing, and assessment-to-intervention links and the underlying research. Following these foundations, Part II outlines a step-by-step, detailed approach to designing intervention plans with 10 case examples.

Research-Based Reading and Writing Lessons—Revised includes an instructional manual and a second volume of reproducible materials. Fifteen lesson sets include five sets for Tier 1/early intervention, five sets for Tier 2/curriculum modification, and five sets for Tier 3/tutorials for dyslexia and dysgraphia.

Handwriting Lessons—Revised encompasses two sets of 24 lessons, several of which are used in connection with the Reading and Writing Lessons. Each set presents all 26 letters of the English alphabet in two different writing styles.

Talking Letters—Revised focuses on spelling-sound and sound-spelling correspondences as well as the alphabetic principle. Student teaching materials for consonants and vowels

organized by syllable type are included.

The KTEA-3 score reports in Q-global and Q-interactive include customizable teaching objectives and intervention suggestions based on error analysis results.

- Example of a teaching objective for an error norm weakness in the Silent Letter category for the Letter & Word Recognition subtest: Given a list of __ words containing silent letters as part of the sound pattern, the student will pronounce each word with no more than _ silent letter errors.
- Example of an intervention suggestion for errors made on the Letter & Word Recognition subtest: Scavenger Hunt—Ask the student to look in the lesson book to find examples of words that begin with, end with, or contain a particular sound.

The WIAT-4 score reports in Q-global and Q-interactive provide customizable intervention goal statements based on skills analysis results. These statements include instructional recommendations for writing annual goals and short-term objectives based upon the results of the skills analysis or, for subtests without skills analysis, overall subtest performance.

- Example of an intervention goal statement for the category of Schwa Vowel Sounds for the Word Reading subtest: Given a list of _ (circle/enter: one, two, three, __) -syllable words containing schwa vowel sounds, the student will read the list aloud with no more than _____ schwa vowel errors. Schwa vowel sounds will include (circle): a, e, i, o, u, y.
- Schwa vowel (a) examples: above, alone, disappoint

Progress Monitoring Tools

The Pearson dyslexia toolkit for progress monitoring includes the following tools:

- Growth Scale Values (GSVs) and Progress Monitoring Assistant (PMA)
- Relative Performance Index (RPI) scores
- aimswebPlus
- Review360

GSVs and RPI scores within diagnostic achievement tests are designed to measure growth over extended periods of time, such as annually.

AimswebPlus and Review360 progress monitoring measures are designed to be sensitive to growth over shorter periods of time.

Growth scale values (GSVs) are preferred over standard scores and percentile ranks for measuring growth because GSVs reflect the examinee's absolute (rather than relative) level of performance. GSVs are useful for comparing an examinee's performance on a particular subtest or composite relative to their own past performance, whereas standard scores and percentile ranks are useful for comparing performance relative to peers. For tests with two forms, GSVs obtained on one form are directly comparable to GSVs obtained on the other form. A significant change in GSV scores indicates that the examinee has demonstrated significant progress. GSVs are provided for the WIAT-4, KTEA-3, WRAT5, CELF-5, PPVT-5, and EVT-3. However, GSVs are not comparable across tests or subtests.

A Progress Monitoring Assistant¹¹ software application is provided for the WIAT-4, PPVT-5, and EVT-3 that analyzes changes in an examinee's GSVs and standard scores over time. An example of an interpretive statement that might be provided: *These results suggest that the student's decoding skills improved relative to personal performance but at a similar rate relative to peers.*

Relative Performance Index (RPI) scores, provided on the WRMT-III, are designed to translate a normative score into task performance terms. The RPI is expressed as a quotient: the numerator is the examinee's probability of success on the target items and the denominator is the probability of success of the average individual in the reference group—which is always 90%. An RPI of 70/90, for example, indicates that the examinee will perform with 70% accuracy on items that the average individual in the same grade or age performs with 90% accuracy. RPI scores describe the probability of successfully performing a task, not relative standing in a group. Changes in RPI scores over time can be used to measure progress if the educational team establishes criteria for sufficient growth based on RPI scores.

aimswebPlus progress monitoring measures are designed to be sensitive to growth over relatively short periods of time. Depending on the intensity of the intervention and other factors, progress can be monitored as often as once a week. aimswebPlus offers enhanced screening and progress monitoring measures for Grades K–8. In addition to curriculum-based measurement (CBM) measures, aimswebPlus standards-based assessments provide information about a student's reading skills to help teachers develop individualized and effective interventions. The Early Literacy measures are intended for Grades K–1 and include Print Concepts, Letter Naming Fluency, Initial Sounds, Auditory Vocabulary, Letter Word Sounds Fluency, Phoneme Segmentation, Word Reading Fluency, and Oral Reading Fluency. The Reading assessment system developed for Grades 2–8 includes Vocabulary, Reading Comprehension, Silent Reading Fluency, and Oral Reading Fluency measures.

Review360 provides several dyslexia-related progress monitoring plans within the application. The *Academic Progress Plan*, *Speech-Language Pathology*, and *Student Support Team* plans allow detailed progress monitoring for general and special education settings.

Interpreting Assessment Data

Table 8 provides a sample summary of dyslexia assessment data for each of the indicators included in the multifactorial, hybrid model for dyslexia identification. For best results, cross-validate assessment data across multiple sources of information, consider exclusionary factors, and assess for common comorbid conditions.

Table 8. Sample Summary of Dyslexia Assessment Data

	Skill/ability/indicator	IDA key indicator ^a	Test/ source	Low/ below average	Average	High/ above average	At risk (Y)/ not at risk (N)	N/A or not observed
Symptoms of difficulty	Intervention response ^b							
	Alphabet writing							
	Letter knowledge and phonics	✓						
	Decoding pseudowords	✓						
	Word reading	✓						
	Reading fluency	✓						
	Spelling	✓						
	Written expression	✓						
	Reading comprehension							
	Listening comprehension ^c							
Causes/correlates	Phonological processing	✓						
	Rapid automatic naming	✓						
	Auditory verbal working memory	✓						
	Processing speed							
	Long-term storage and retrieval							
	Associative memory							
	Orthographic processing							
Risk factors	Dyslexia screening results							
	Family history							
	History of language impairment							
	Receptive vocabulary ^d	✓						
Possible	Fluid reasoning							
	Oral language; verbal comprehension							
	Math skills							

^a The key skill areas recommended for dyslexia assessment by the International Dyslexia Association.²⁴

^b Including poor response to instruction and *n* or more symptoms as inclusionary criteria may improve the stability of dyslexia identification over time.

^c Greater impairment in reading comprehension relative to listening comprehension is a symptom of dyslexia when there is not a co-occurring developmental language disorder.

^d Receptive vocabulary may be either a risk factor for dyslexia at a young age when associated with a language impairment, a correlate among older individuals with dyslexia who read less than their peers, or a relative strength for individuals with dyslexia.

How the Pearson Dyslexia Toolkit Works: Two Scenarios

School-based processes and procedures for dyslexia identification vary widely. The following two scenarios exemplify how different school systems may implement the dyslexia toolkit.

Scenario 1

A school district implements a universal screening process whereby all students, starting in kindergarten, are screened for dyslexia using the Shaywitz DyslexiaScreen. Those students who are identified as at risk are given a follow-up behavioral screener, using the WIAT-4 Dyslexia Index score.

Following this two-step screening process, the student support team meets to determine next steps. Students at risk are given supplemental instruction using the SPELL-Links Wordtivities word study program for 9–12 weeks.

To monitor academic progress, curriculum-based measures are administered weekly, and the KTEA–3 subtests from the Dyslexia Index score are readministered using the alternate form every 3–4 months. The subtest growth scale values (GSVs) are charted and compared over time to determine if significant progress has been observed.

Underperforming students are referred for a comprehensive evaluation that includes cognitive, language, and achievement measures. The student support team considers these test results and other sources of information, such as school grades/test scores, classroom observation, teacher reports, and parent/caregiver interviews (family history/background information), to determine what services a student is qualified to receive and how best to improve the student's performance.

Scenario 2

A school district administers aimswebPlus to all students as a benchmark screener. Students with low performance on the reading benchmark are further screened using the Shaywitz DyslexiaScreen.

Students identified as at risk based on these measures are administered three subtests from the KTEA–3 Brief Form to obtain the BA-3 composite score. Based on these results, the child study team meets to determine next steps. The PAL Reading and Writing Lessons–Revised and the Talking Letters–Revised are utilized for intervention.

aimswebPlus is used to monitor progress and the team continually evaluates the progress monitoring data to determine if instructional adjustments are needed.

The child study team refers students for a special education evaluation based on insufficient response to instruction. The special education assessment process includes assessments from multiple disciplines including language, achievement, ability, and cognitive areas. The child study team considers these test results and other sources of information to determine what services a student is qualified to receive and how best to improve the student's performance.

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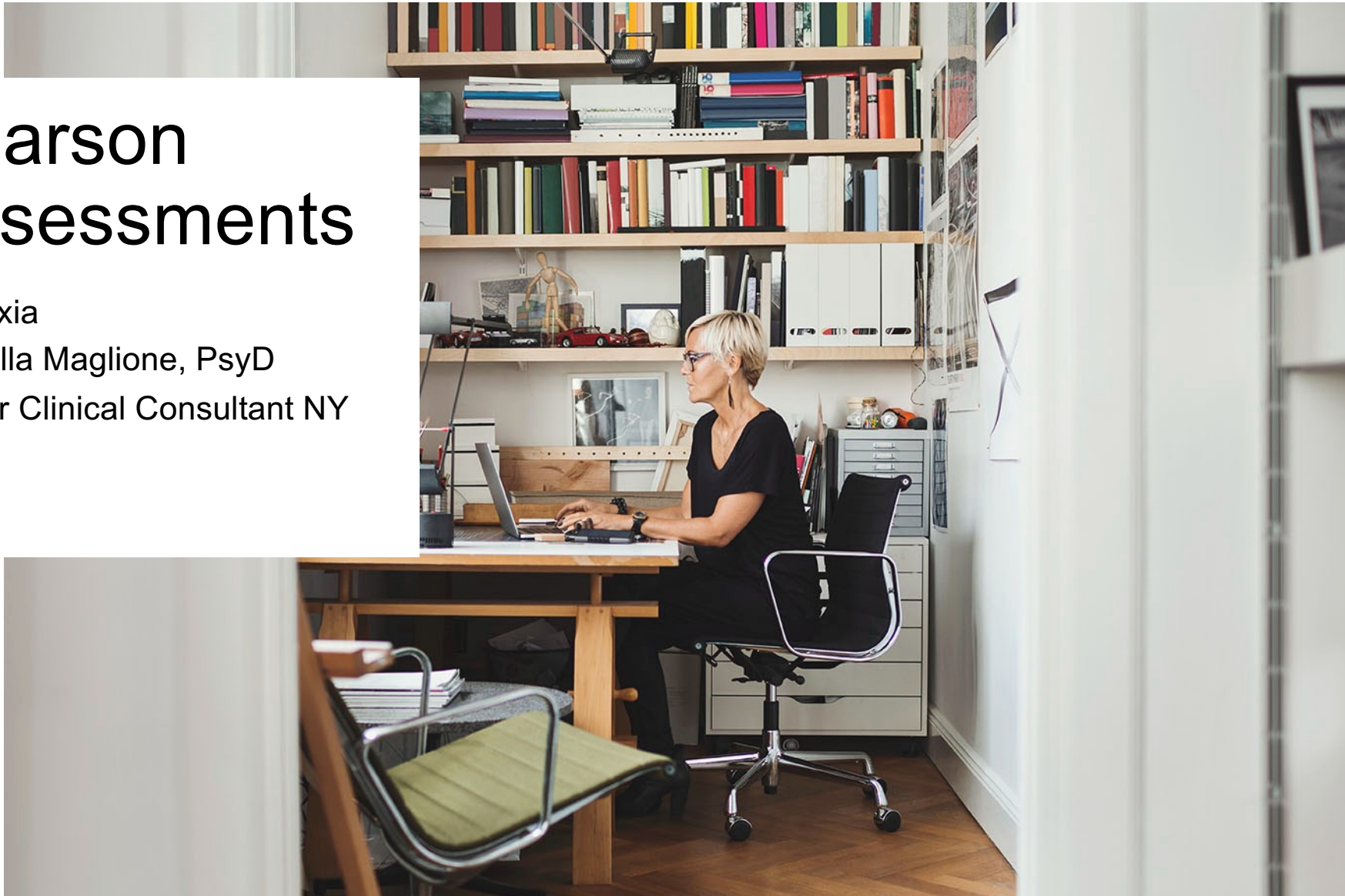
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Pearson Assessments

Dyslexia

Daniella Maglione, PsyD

Senior Clinical Consultant NY





Pearson: Your Partner in Assessment

Current contracts with NYC DOE:

- SHSAT with the Office of Assessment and
- Periodic Assessment with the Office of Periodic Assessment

Pearson develops valid and reliable solutions to address a variety of needs that have been historically used throughout the US and NYC DOE.



Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

IDEA lists 13 conditions for which students can be eligible for special education.

The definition of specific learning disability from U.S. federal special education law is:

“(A) In general - The term ‘specific learning disability’ means a disorder in 1 or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which disorder may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations.

(B) Disorders included - Such term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, **dyslexia**, and developmental aphasia.



Support for Dyslexia

In 2017, the U.S. Senate voted unanimously as part of the S. Res. 28440 to establish the following definition of dyslexia, which was also included in the First Step Act of 2018⁴¹:

- (1) an unexpected difficulty in reading for an individual who has the intelligence to be a much better reader; and
- (2) most commonly caused by a difficulty in phonological processing (the appreciation of the individual sounds of spoken language), which affects the ability of an individual to speak, read, and spell, and often, the ability to learn a second language.^{40, 41}

The New York State Education Department issued guidance in August of 2018:

Chapter 216 of the Laws of 2017, signed by the Governor in August 2017, amends New York State Education Law to include provisions for the New York State Education Department (NYSED), in cooperation with stakeholders to issue guidance on the unique educational needs of students with dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia and to clarify that school districts may reference or use the terms dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia in evaluations, eligibility determinations, or in developing an individualized education program under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.



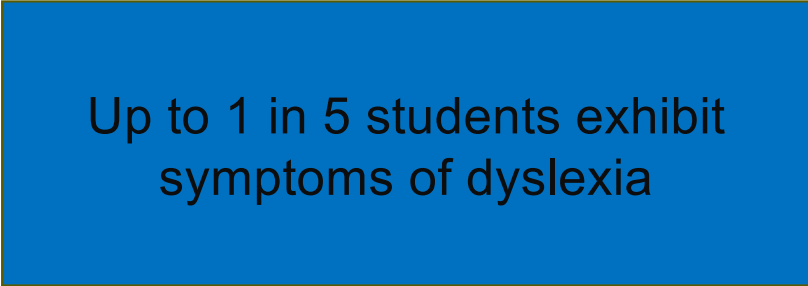
Defining Dyslexia (IDA, 2002)

1. ...a specific learning disability that is **neurobiological** in origin.
2. ... an **unexpected difficulty** in reading for an individual who has the intelligence to be a much better reader...
3. ...**language based**...
4. ...characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by **poor spelling and decoding** abilities...
5. ...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...
6. ...**secondary consequences** may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge...
7. ...often (not always) present with an uneven cognitive profile...



Prevalence

- According to the Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity, Dyslexia affects 20 percent of the population and represents 80–90 percent of all those with learning disabilities. It is the most common of all neuro-cognitive disorders.
- According to the International Dyslexia Association (IDA), it is estimated that 15 to 20% of the population as whole have some of the symptoms of Dyslexia.



Up to 1 in 5 students exhibit symptoms of dyslexia

DYSLEXIA



SYMPTOMS

Lack of response to treatment

Pre-reader difficulties

- Alphabet writing
- Phonics/Letter knowledge

Reader difficulties

- Word reading/Decoding
- Reading fluency
- Spelling
- Written expression
- Reading comprehension < Listening comprehension



CAUSES/ CORRELATES

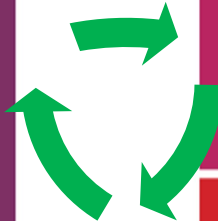
- ★ • Phonological processing
- ★ • Rapid automatic naming
- ★ • Auditory working memory
- Processing speed
- Long-term storage and retrieval
- Associative memory
- Orthographic processing



RISK FACTORS

- Family history
- Language impairment/
Poor receptive vocabulary

**Low scores on a dyslexia screening





Why is screening and identification important?

- The impact that dyslexia has is different for each person and depends on the severity of the condition and the effectiveness of instruction or remediation.
- As with all neurobiological conditions, early identification is essential. One particular study found that academic outcomes were twice as effective when interventions were delivered in the 1st and 2nd grades.
- According to Dr. Sally Shaywitz, “The human brain is resilient, but there is no question that early intervention and treatment bring about more positive change at a faster pace than an intervention provided to an older child. The sooner a diagnosis is made, the quicker your child can get help, and the more likely you are to prevent secondary blows to her self-esteem.”



Co-occurring Conditions for Dyslexia

1. Language and Communication disorders ~50%
2. ADHD ~25-40%
3. Mental disorders (anxiety, depression, bipolar) ~20%
4. Dyspraxia (developmental coordination disorder) ~50%
5. Dysgraphia (writing) ~40%
6. Dyscalculia (math disorder) ~25%

What is a screener?

What is a screener?

Screeners are *brief* measures that are intended to sort individuals into two groups—those at risk and those not at risk. Some screeners use a cut score—that is, a “cut-off” score—that divides the two groups.



1 2 3 **4** 5

There are two broad categories of screeners:

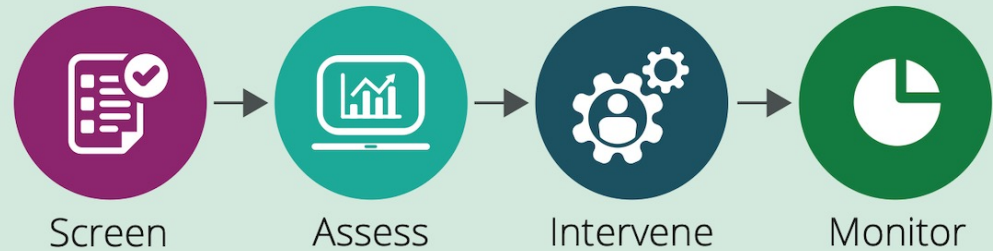
(1) **Performance-based measures**, which require the person being screened to complete specific tasks

(2) **Rating scales**, which require a rater, such as a teacher or parent, or the individual being screened to respond to a series of statements or questions by providing each one with a rating.

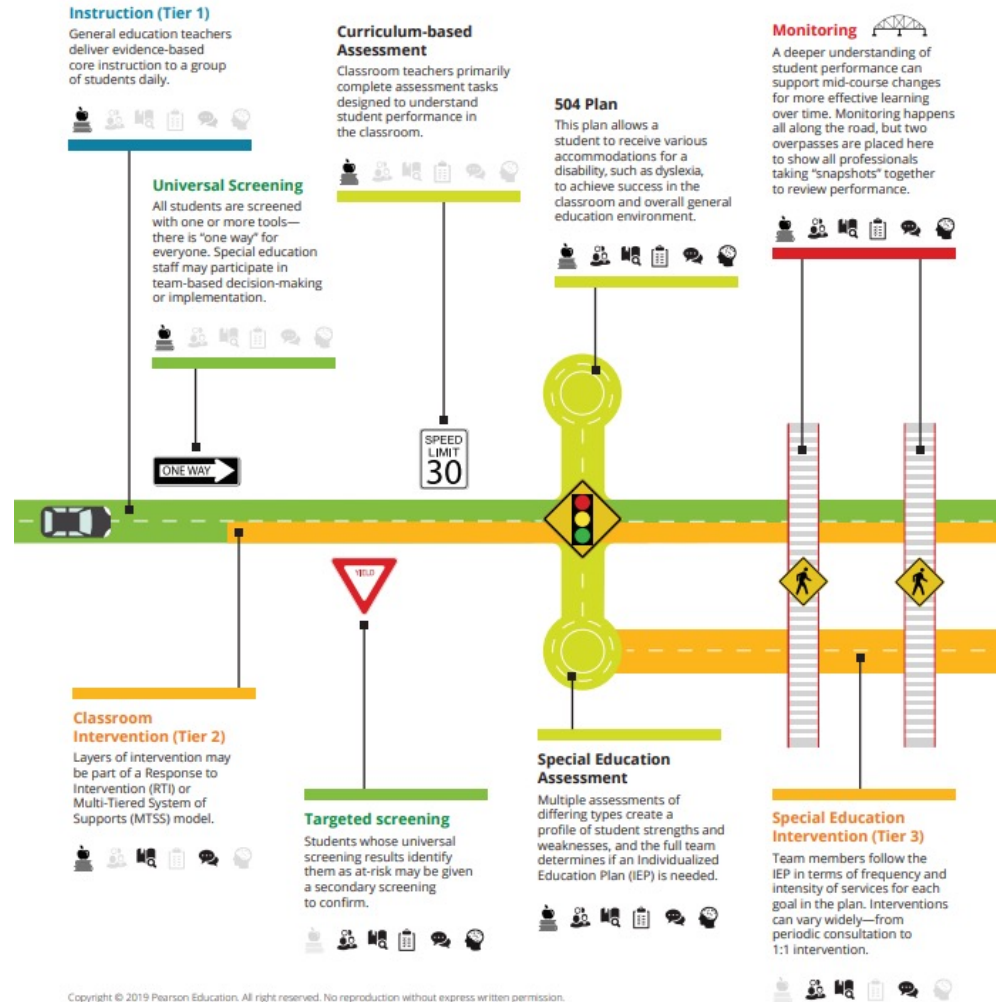
Dyslexia Identification

Dyslexia identification is a *process* that incorporates multiple sources of information and includes screening, assessment, intervention or instruction, and progress monitoring. Learn more at

www.PearsonAssessments.com/dyslexia.



Pearson Assessments offers a dyslexia toolkit with resources for screening, identification, intervention, and progress monitoring.



Everyone has a role.....



General Educators focus on the performance of the student in the classroom academically and behaviorally. They complete classroom-focused measures for assessment and need to implement the most efficient and efficacious instruction in the context of the curriculum. For dyslexia, one place to begin evaluating performance is at the spelling curriculum. For assessment, an integrated set of measures with the ability to measure progress saves time.

aimswebPlus®
Shaywitz DyslexiaScreen™

Developmental Reading Assessment®,
Second Edition PLUS (DRA2+)

SPELL-Links Class Links for Classrooms™
(SPELL-Links™)

aimswebPlus®



Special Educators play a key role in delivering effective assessment, intervention, and progress monitoring. They often collaborate across professionals in education. These tools provide information that accelerates academic progress and helps to inform intervention plans.

Wide Range Achievement Test™, Fifth Edition (WRAT5™)
Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement™,
Third Edition (KTEA™-3) Brief Form

Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement™,
Third Edition (KTEA™-3) Comprehensive Form
Wechsler Individual Achievement Test®,
Fourth Edition (WIAT®-4)

Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests™,
Third Edition (WRMT™-III)

SPELL-Links to Reading & Writing™
(SPELL-Links™)

aimswebPlus®



School Psychologists tend to focus on the screening and assessing part of the workflow in their daily activities. This subset of Pearson's Dyslexia Toolkit supports rigorous, empirically-validated measures for screening and assessment, with assessment results paving the way for recommendations for intervention. The delivery of this content in an integrated system leads to success.

Dyslexia Index scores from the KTEA™-3
and WIAT®-4

Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement™,
Third Edition (KTEA™-3) Comprehensive Form
Wechsler Individual Achievement Test®,
Fourth Edition (WIAT®-4)

Intervention Guide for LD (Learning Disability)
Subtypes*

Everyone has a role (continued)....



Educational Diagnosticians focus primarily on assessment. For dyslexia, assessment tools must be theoretically rigorous and empirically sound. The educational diagnostician looks for a profile of strengths and weaknesses across symptoms, underlying cognitive processes, and other historical or educational factors for a particular student. Because they see many students individually, their subset of tools provides results that communicate clearly to other team members.

Shaywitz DyslexiaScreen™
 Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement™, Third Edition (KTEA™-3) Brief Form
 Dyslexia index scores from the KTEA-3 and WIAT®-4

Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement™, Third Edition (KTEA™-3) Comprehensive Form
 Wechsler Individual Achievement Test®, Fourth Edition (WIAT®-4)

Intervention Guide for LD (Learning Disability) Subtypes*



Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) are involved in the whole continuum of services, from inclusive service delivery modes to assessment to intervention connections. This role gives SLPs insight into the connection between oral language and written language, including language in the classroom. This subset of tools offers options to collaborate with other professionals across the educational effort.

Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement™, Third Edition (KTEA™-3) Brief Form

Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals®, Fifth Edition (CELF®-5)
 Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests™, Third Edition (WRMT™-III)

SPELL-Links to Reading and Writing™ (SPELL-Links™)
 Intervention Guide for LD (Learning Disability) Subtypes*

Review360® for SLPs



Reading Specialists have a unique focus as they have significant depth in the entire domain of reading. As Literacy or Reading Coaches or those with similar titles, reading specialists place a high value on high quality reading instruction, especially as it relates to struggling readers. This subset of an overall dyslexia toolkit resonates with diagnostic assessments that pave the way for explicit and diagnostic prescriptive literacy intervention and/or instruction.

aimswebPlus®
 Shaywitz DyslexiaScreen™
 Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement™, Third Edition (KTEA™-3) Brief Form

Developmental Reading Assessment®, Second Edition PLUS (DRA2+)
 Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests™, Third Edition (WRMT™-III)

SPELL-Links to Reading and Writing™ (SPELL-Links™)

aimswebPlus®

Literacy Screeners & Dyslexia Screeners

Literacy Screener vs. Dyslexia Screener

Test developers must provide data that support the use of a test for each intended use (Standard 12.2).¹ Data that support the use of a test as a dyslexia screener include AUC, sensitivity/specificity, and clinical effect size. A test that *only* provides validity evidence for predicting or estimating reading skills is a reading screener. Reading tests vary in how well they detect risk for dyslexia. As part of a dyslexia screening process, individuals who perform poorly on a literacy/reading screener should also be given an empirically validated dyslexia screening test.

Dyslexia Toolkit White Paper:

<https://www.pearsonassessments.com/content/dam/school/global/clinical/us/assets/shaywitz/dyslexia-toolkit-white-paper.pdf>

<https://www.pearsonassessments.com/professional-assessments/featured-topics/dyslexia/product-toolkit.html>



Pearson



Video Interaction Project – NYC City Council Testimony

We submit this testimony on behalf of Video Interaction Project (VIP) in support of City's First Readers (CFR), a New York City Council initiative that provides comprehensive early education services to families with the greatest needs across all boroughs and in every Council District. Video Interaction Project is one of CFR's 17 partner organizations who serve some of NYC's most vulnerable families and children on a daily basis in over 15 Council Districts.

There is no question that early literacy is **essential** to the well-being of our city's children and their fair opportunity for school readiness. The programming offered through City's First Readers, such as VIP, can also help families cope with stressors of parenting, reduce maternal depressive symptoms, reduce early harsh discipline that can lead to child maltreatment, and prevent child behavior problems that interfere with learning. My research, funded in part by the National Institutes of Health, has shown this scientifically.

By supporting parents early in their child's life, City's First Readers has the potential to protect children against long-term impacts on mental health and school achievement, and even reduce large costs that the city will otherwise face to address this challenge. We, at VIP and CFR broadly, work with families who have young children from birth to 5 years old as it is a critical time for learning with brain development being the most crucial during the first few years. Supporting parents and children during the first few years of life sets them up for success when they begin school and later in life.

As the city deliberates on difficult choices regarding the city's budget, we urge you to **maintain funding** for these incredibly important services for parents, infants, and toddlers. The economic and educational impacts of such a decision will be felt by children for their entire lives. It is **critical** that we are able to continue to provide City's First Readers' services for parents and young children.

Thank you for your strong consideration in maintaining this **vital** service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "A. Mendelsohn".

Alan L. Mendelsohn, MD
Professor of Pediatrics and Population Health
Director of Clinical Research, Divisions of General and Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics
Director, Video Interaction Project
NYU Grossman School of Medicine and NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue
alan.mendelsohn@nyulangone.org

Questions and Answers for 12/14/23 Testimony to NYC Council on Science of Reading

**Barbara Foorman, Ph.D., Emerita Professor of Education
Emerita Director of the Florida Center for Reading Research
Past Director of the Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast
Florida State University**

Q: What is meant by the Science of Reading?

A: The science of reading refers to the compelling evidence that informs (a) how children learn to read and (b) instructional practices that promote proficient reading. This compelling evidence has been known for several decades and has been summarized in consensus documents (e.g., National Reading Panel, 2000), practice guides produced by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES; Baker et al., 2014; Foorman, Beyler, et al., 2016; Gersten et al., 2007, 2008; Kamil et al., 2008; Shanahan et al., 2010), and in meta-analytic summaries of research (e.g., Berkeley, Scruggs, & Mastropieri, 2010; Ehri, Nunes, Stahl, & Willows, 2001; Ehri, Nunes, Willows, et al., 2001; National Institute for Literacy, 2008; Therrien, 2004; Wanzek et al., 2013, 2016).

Q: If the Science of Reading has been known for so long, why are we still debating it?

A: Differing truth systems (i.e., epistemologies) seem to lie at the heart of the debate. For example, Group A typically prioritizes deductive methods that embed hypothesis testing, precise operationalization of constructs, and efforts to decouple the researchers' beliefs from their interpretation and generalization of empirical evidence. Group B prioritizes inductive methods, such as phenomenological, ethnographic, and grounded theory approaches that embed focus on the meaning and understanding that comes through a person's lived experience, and relies on the researcher's own observations to shape meaning and principles. Group A says "Look at this mountain of evidence? How can you not believe it?", whereas Group B says "It doesn't make sense! It doesn't match up with our experiences! Why should we value your knowledge above our own?" [See Stanovich, 2003, and Petscher et al., 2020, for further elaboration.]

As the National Research Council (2002) points out: "...Advances in scientific knowledge are achieved by the self-regulating norms of the scientific community over time, not, as sometimes believed, by the mechanistic application of a particular scientific method to a static set of questions" (p. 2). Group A scientists, whose body of research comprises the science of reading, use qualitative and quantitative methods to study within and across years how teachers' instructional practices impact students' reading progress and outcomes (e.g., Conner et al., 2007; Foorman et al., 2006).

Q: What does the science of reading say about how children learn to read?

A: As members of a literate community, we read and write to express thoughts and emotions. These are *learned* activities that reside on a foundation of linguistic skills and are mutually

supportive. We decode from written letters to oral or silent language to comprehend word meaning. We encode from spoken language to letters to express meaning. Through *explicit* instruction in the decoding and encoding of words we grasp the *alphabetic principle*—that sounds in speech (phonemes) relate intentionally and conventionally to letters in written language (i.e., orthography). In English, this *orthographic mapping* extends beyond the consistent letter–sound relations of phonological decoding to include learning frequent, irregular words (e.g., *of, said*), morphemic elements (e.g., inflectional endings, plurals, affixes), and reliable syllable patterns (e.g., closed syllables such as *in-sect*). Mastering the depth and structure of English orthography is essential if students are to recognize words accurately and efficiently, thereby freeing cognitive resources to activate the linguistic devices and world knowledge critical for making text cohesive and, therefore, comprehensible (see Castles, Rastle, & Nation, 2018; Foorman, 2023; Rayner, Foorman, Perfetti, Pesetsky, & Seidenberg, 2001, 2002).

Additionally, we know from the Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Reading = Word recognition X Language Comprehension) that language comprehension plays an equally important role in our ability to make sense of the text on the page. We understand words and text by applying vocabulary, syntax, semantics, and background knowledge (e.g., Foorman, 2022).

Q: If we know which reading instructional practices are based on empirical evidence, why aren't these evident-based practices used in classrooms?

A: Teacher preparation in colleges of education and professional development (PD) is largely informed by group B epistemologies and, therefore, are infrequently aligned with the science of reading. This results in teachers believing that systematic, explicit phonics instruction to ensure accurate and efficient word identification and spelling instruction to ensure fluent reading and writing are NOT important. This misinformed preparation and PD leads to encouraging bad instructional habits in K–1 classrooms, such as emphasizing pictures' meaning cues over word identification skills (i.e., the three-cueing system) and failure to form reading groups in which children can practice the letter–sounds taught in decodable text. Children need to apply phonic skills to work through a word and blend sounds together rather than guessing at meaning by using pictures or using a strategy of “first sound then guess.” Reading groups should be informed by data and be flexible in composition. Teachers need to hear students read aloud and guide them to apply word identification strategies and learn to self-correct errors.

Academic diversity within classrooms makes differentiating instruction challenging. However, while teachers work with small groups other evidence-based strategies such as peer-assisted learning and meaningful center activities (e.g., Florida Center for Reading Research Student Center Activities) can be employed. Schoolwide plans for Response-to-Instruction (RtI) and Multitiered Systems of Support (MTSS) should also be in place to identify students needing additional reading support (e.g., Coyne et al., 2016; Pendharkar, 2023).

Q: Can systems-level approaches be utilized to encourage the use of evidence-based reading instruction?

A: Absolutely! Many examples exist, with the case of Mississippi being the most widely known. A private foundation (Barksdale Reading Institute) partnered with the MS legislature and the MS state board of education to bring in a superb State Superintendent of Education, Dr. Carey Wright, to implement a K–3 reading initiative. Dr. Wright worked with the IES-funded Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast to evaluate the initiative. The resulting IES report showed that gains in teacher knowledge on the procured PD modules (LETRS) were significantly associated with statewide coaches' observations of LETRS practices in the classrooms, student engagement, and students' progress on STAR reading assessments. A year later, MS was the only state in the nation to make significant reading gains on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP; Folsom et al., 2017; Foorman, 2020).

Thus, NYC Public Schools' reading mandate has the potential to realize gains in students' reading proficiency if well implemented and evaluated.

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Debbie Meyer December 14, 2023 Hearing

My name is Debbie Meyer. I consult for The Dyslexia Alliance for Black Children, serve on the Literacy Advisory Council for the NYCPS and consult for the dyslexia and literacy program at the Ralph Bunche School in Harlem. Most importantly, I am the mother of a dyslexic son and wife of a dyslexic man.

I want to first ask you all, did you know 95% of people can learn to read? Do you know how few do learn? Nationally, just over 1/3 of students read at grade level. And nationally, less than 1/5 of black children read at grade level. Do you know how many readers have parents that can outsource the reading instruction because school failed to teach these kids? The ability to read is not connected to intelligence! It isn't connected to poverty. It isn't connected to race or home language. It is connected to reading and writing instruction.

The ramifications of not learning to read are clear. Kids are frustrated. They ask for attention through poor behavior. They develop school anxiety, leading to other mental health issues. They get behavioral IEPs that don't drive literacy instruction. They can't do grade level work. Many drop out of school. They don't have college or career options. And the mental health problems have begun and continue unless mitigated.

The statistics are shocking, but not surprising: 80% of prisoners are under literate- under 6th grade level. But several peer reviewed studies have shown nearly 50% of prisoners are dyslexic and functionally illiterate. This is due to poor instruction and lack of recognition of dyslexia. Dyslexic kids – representing about 1 in 6, on a continuum, do not need “special” instruction, rather, they need more and often repeated good instruction that benefits all students.

My son attended a public progressive school in East Harlem. He learned a lot of content but didn't learn how to read. He was illiterate in 4th grade, and suicidal. We had the resources for a private neuropsych evaluation and private therapy; we didn't need to wait years for one from the public system. We had the resources for an attorney to help us navigate the education system and get our son in to the Windward School for dyslexic students. We had the resources to front two years of tuition at Windward while the DOE and comptroller's office held our reimbursement. It takes twice as long for a fourth grader to learn to read than it would take a first grader. My kid learned, and we thank the taxpayers for supporting my son in his education. He attended Bard High School Early College and is now at Colorado College in Colorado Springs.

The children learning at PS125 – the Ralph Bunche School in Harlem are fortunate. In May of 2022, a walk through the school found children struggling to behave with a paraprofessional in the hallway, and others on the classroom floors frustrated. The data for K-2 students showed 30% at or above grade level. With some hesitancy, but by gaining family and teacher support through the school SLT and PA, and with an understanding the school could remain grounded in social justice and a progressive approach to teaching content, the Ralph Bunche School (RBS/PS125), Principal Yael Leopold and Assistant Principal Daniel Calvert, both having LETRS for Administrators training, agreed to be a pilot model for the program.

In September 2023, the teachers dismantled their Fountas & Pinnell classroom libraries and created content libraries. They removed the word walls and replaced them with sound walls. They added decodable readers aligned with the phonics program they are using – Foundations. From November to February, K-3 teachers, interventionist and the Speech and Language therapist took 30 to 60 hours of

Debbie Meyer December 14, 2023 Hearing

professional learning from Edwards Orton Gillingham (EOG) trainers so they could implement Wilson Foundations well. EOG and Wilson provided classroom coaching to help the teachers even more.

A walk through of the school in May of 2023 showed a completely different picture. Every student was engaged. The paraprofessionals were not redirecting anybody. Teachers were less frustrated. The K-2 Acadience scores showed the school flipped: 70% of scholars were now reading at or above grade level. The teachers have learned how to support all children in their journey to becoming readers.

Literacy is a determinant of health, mental health, public health, economic security, workforce development and democracy – yes our ballot measures are written at 15th to 22nd grade level. We need more investment in our teachers so all can live to their potential .

Nora Oz

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council Committee on Finance,
Hon. Just Brannan, Chair
Hearing: Oversight-Mayor's November Financial Plan
December 11, 2023

11/14/23

Thank you to Chair Brannan and the City Council for your support of arts, culture, and arts education across New York City. I'm writing to support the **It Starts with the Arts** coalition — calling on our city to prioritize funding for arts in NYC schools and communities. My name is Nora Oz and I work at Dorill Initiative, Inc in the Lower East Side.

The mission of Dorill Initiative (Dorill) is to help at-risk youth tap into their limitless potential and creative power to transform communities and create social change. Over the past 5 years, we have served over 250 youths through our four programs.

The current planned budget cuts will significantly impact our organization because we will be unable to deliver programs to our in school partners to further support the personal and professional development of our young citizen artists. According to The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), 1 in 6 U.S. youth aged 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year. In The Guardian (Slawson, 2017), an evaluation of people affected by mental health issues showed a “71% decrease in feelings of anxiety and a 73% fall in depression when experiencing art.” These budget cuts will affect our ability to support the mental well being of our youth by supplying creative outlets, especially as they grapple with the continued repercussions of the pandemic.

We have seen the impact of these creative outlets on the mental health and relationship building of the youth we have served. One of our youths was able to confront her frustrations with her mother through spoken word, which initiated an authentic and difficult conversation that brought them closer. Her father expressed, “You saved our family.” That is the work we do. We create brave and safe spaces for authentic voices to ring out saving families; saving lives. These budget cuts will significantly harm and prevent this imperative work.

Budget cuts of \$17.3 million to the Department of Cultural Affairs and more than \$1B to NYC Public Schools threaten our city's creative spirit, economic prosperity, and our students. Cuts to these agencies spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. The damaging cuts laid out in the November Financial Plan are further compounded by the expiration of temporary federal COVID-19 relief funds, which has funded considerable arts education programming to support student's academic recovery and social-emotional wellbeing over the past three school years.

Let us not take it out on our students or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Programs that foster student engagement, mental health, tourism, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Our city's young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Please prioritize investment in arts education and in NYC's future because success **starts with the arts**.

Thank you for your attention and consideration,
Nora Oz

Robert Murtfeld: Written Testimony in Support of Virtual Oral Statement

Start 03:02:12, End 03:04:48

Thursday, December 14, 2023 1:00 PM Council Chambers - City Hall

Committee on Education jointly with the Committee on State and Federal Legislation: Oversight - New Phonics Based Curriculum and Dyslexia Screening in NYC Public Schools

My name is Robert Murtfeld and I am submitting this written testimony as a father of enrolled and prospective children in the NYC elementary public school system. I entered the field of education policy as a parent advocate with a project on lockdown drill reform in NY state, which resulted in the introduction of legislation (S6537/A6665). I also represent the PTA Advocacy Committee at one of the four progressive schools in the East Village that were founded during the 1990s to service the needs of the whole child.

Together with Alex Estes, my school's PTA Co-President and fellow witness, we have tackled the literacy question and the citywide curriculum overhaul as part of the Mayor's reading initiative. We have studied the materials of the EL Education K-5 Language Arts Curriculum, which was chosen by District 1 from three vendors offered by the Mayor. EL is registered as a nonprofit¹ with a mission to "transform" schools² according to the principles of the Outward Bound movement, which is controversial. Based on the outdated ideas of German educator Kurt Hahn on adventure preventing the corruption of character, "Expeditionary Learning" (aka EL) self-proclaimed to *edreports*³ that its mission is not mere phonics, but also to build "character" and make students become "ethical people"⁴.

As per my oral testimony, I am mainly concerned about the aggressive roll-out of the reading initiative with a particular focus on the choice of the vendors for phonics. Just like EL, Into Reading⁵ and Wit & Wisdom⁶ have been discussed critically and the Brooklyn based company Amplify, which appears equally reputable to teach the

¹ See ProRepublica entry (last accessed 16 October 2023):

<https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/61576405>

² See EL Educatuion website (last accessed 16 October 2023):

<https://eleducation.org/our-results/school-transformation/>

³ See edreports (last accessed 16 October 2023): <https://www.edreports.org/reports/overview/el-education-k-5-language-arts-2017>

⁴ See edreports (last accessed 16 October 2023):

<https://cdn.edreports.org/series/ag9zfmVkcMvwb3J0cy13ZWJyGwsSCVB1Ymxpc2hlchgZDAsSBINlcmlcxhdDA/publisher-background.pdf>

⁵ See NY Post (last accessed 16 October 2023): <https://nypost.com/2023/07/01/school-reading-program-is-watered-down-and-a-snooze-fest/>

⁶ See Forbes (last accessed 16 October 2023):

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/nataliewexler/2023/06/10/most-nyc-schools-are-choosing-the-wrong-literacy-curriculum/?sh=353e7bfe40e6>

science of reading, was somehow not chosen. It was also surprising to learn that the Literacy Advisory Council with its esteemed experts was reportedly not consulted in the process for the decision on either EL, Into Reading or Wit & Wisdom. The 50+ members found out about the DOE's final preference via Chalkbeat and collectively complained. Deputy Chancellor Weisberg scheduled a Zoom call and apologized.

Many parents across all four progressive schools in District 1 (The Neighborhood School, Earth School, Children's Workshop School and East Village Community School) are skeptical about the arrival of EL in 2023/24. Unlike other vendors of phonics, EL with its prescriptive content is a direct challenge to our home-grown social studies curricula that have been used successfully for more than three decades to teach reading and writing. As Mr. Estes put it in his oral testimony, progressive principals and teachers rely on a "science to reading", which is formulated on the best practices from a number of sources. Our community is open to proper partners for direct phonics instruction, but we are not schools to be "transformed" and prefer to keep the development of our children's "character" and "ethics" to ourselves.

To that effect, I was taken aback as expressed in my oral testimony about Chancellor Banks' statement in response to Chair Joseph's first question. He said at 00:29:16:

"I recently convened the Deans of Schools of Education across the city, and some who are outside of the city. We did an analysis of all the Schools of Education, where we essentially get all our teachers from. And we brought them all in and we made it very clear. It was not just a convening, it was not just an open conversation. We made them clear that NYC Reads and our ability to teach our kids to read is the most important thing we are focused on in this administration. And that we need every teacher, who is coming into our schools to be well versed in the science of reading. It is not a request, it is not a it-would-be-nice if you would do it. We are looking for the partners, who want to work with us. And if you desire that this doesn't fit the philosophy of your school, that's fine, but we certainly won't be looking to take any of the teaching candidates that are coming from your school. They can work in other places, but not here. That message was delivered in a very very strong tone. And they got it."

Shutting down open discussion and strongman tactics will not produce reading results and dismissing different philosophies is an affront to the progressive system that we have built in the East Village for tens of thousands of students. The longest serving teacher has been with our school for 27 years, representing a dedication that deserves nothing but respect and gratitude. Bank's statement also contradicts the DOE's own commitment to teacher autonomy, which must be protected as an absolute principle. The NYC Reads website explicitly responds to the question: "will this take away teacher autonomy?":

“No! A curriculum provides the framework of what to teach and offers some suggestions on how to teach a particular topic, but a strong educator must bring their added value, strategies, personality, and knowledge of their students to the work as well.”

In conclusion, we respectfully ask the NYC Council’s Committee on Education to further investigate the DOE’s decision-making procedure on the vendors of phonics. The public deserves a full report on how choices were made with a retrospective assessment by the Literacy Advisory Council. We also seek the support from the Committee members to establish a working group with parents, teachers, principals and superintendents overseeing progressive schools to develop guidelines for the increase of phonics instruction without disrupting home-grown social studies curricula. Finally, we urge the Committee members to legislate on teacher autonomy and enshrine the principle into law to protect schools from mayoral autocracy.

1. WHY TEACHERS DEMANDED NYC READS

1. The Previous System Fueled New York's Literacy Crisis

- ❖ In the 2021-22 school year, New York ranked 37th in fourth-grade National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading scores.
- ❖ 65% of third graders from low-income backgrounds struggled with basic reading and writing tasks.
- ❖ Two-thirds of Black and Latin students were not reading at grade level.

2. The Previous System Failed To Support Teachers

- ❖ Under the previous system, only 33% of educators said they had received training that enabled them to implement their curricula effectively.
- ❖ Teachers often spent time and money creating materials from scratch since no resources were rendered to them.
- ❖ NYC's broken process of curriculum selection created significant challenges that made the jobs of teachers more complicated and negatively impacted student learning.

3. The Previous System Lacked Consistency or Cohesion

❖ Students in temporary housing and other students who have formal gaps in their education can fall behind when moving to a new school using a different curriculum.

→ It's imperative that all students receive evidence-based reading instruction, regardless of where they go to school.

HOW NYC READS WILL ADDRESS THE PROBLEM

NYC Reads addresses these three critical issues by standardizing curriculum options across all New York City public school districts. This ensures educators receive the support that's needed to address inequities, provide high-quality reading instruction, and promote better cohesion across our system.

It does this by doing the following:

4. NYC Reads Is Grounded In The Science of Reading, which encompasses

evidence-based practices like phonics, decoding, vocabulary building, fluency, and comprehension. Under the previous system, many students were not receiving these critical parts of reading instruction.

5. It Provides Curriculum Aligned Professional Learning: While there's more work to be done to ensure that professional learning is ongoing, high-quality, and meets the unique needs of educators, NYC Reads ensures that the professional learning educators receive is actually aligned to the content that they're teaching. Content-focused professional training has been proven to dramatically improve student outcomes.

6. It Provides Clear Guidance: It's easier to improve the quality, cultural relevance, and accompanied professional learning of three curriculum options than it is to do that for 100 options.

CAVEATS, CONSIDERATIONS, AND EXPECTATION SETTING

- ● **This Will Take Time:** NYC Reads will understandably require time and patience, and educators must lean into the change with a learning orientation for the first few years of its rollout.
 - ❖ In other states and districts, it has taken several years to make sustainable change and see the types of gains in student outcomes that we want to see.
- ● **This Will Not Take Away Autonomy:** A curriculum provides the framework of what to teach, but a strong educator must bring their added value, strategies, personality, and knowledge of their students to the work as well.

WHAT REMAINING SUPPORTS ARE NEEDED

- There's excitement that students are actually learning how to read correctly. Still, naturally, there is some anxiety as some are using these instructional materials for the first time, and more robust and ongoing professional learning is likely needed.

THE URGENCY

- ● That said, literacy is the foundation for all learning, and we need city leadership to build on the work of NYC Reads to help ensure every child and teacher has the tools, resources, and support needed to unlock their full potential and open every door of opportunity.
- ● If NYC Reads is implemented with fidelity, it could be the model for other large cities in the country to follow.

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I represent: New York Legal Assistance Group

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Name: Mary Vacarro, Vice President

Address: UFT.

I represent: 52 Broadway, @

Address: NYC

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I represent: NYCPS

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I represent: NYCPS

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I represent: NYCPS

Address: _____

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Date: 12/14/2023

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Debbie Mayer

Address: [redacted] W 136th Street

I represent: Dyslexia alliance for Black children

Address: _____

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Date: 12/14/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sarah Part

Address: _____

I represent: Advocates for children of New York

Address: _____

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