

Screening for Risk of Reading Difficulties

Authorized by Education Code 53008

Updated April 30, 2024

Reading Difficulties Risk Screener Selection Panel (RDRSSP) Members

- Young-Suk Kim, Chair
- Yesenia Guerrero, Vice Chair
- Dominic Grasso, Carlin Graveline, Martha Martinez, Jessica Niessen, Gisela O'Brien, Timothy Odegard, and Tamara Wilson, Members

Panel Tasks

- Review, revise as needed, and approve:
 - Review Process, Review Elements and Evaluation Criteria, and Scoring Rubric
 - Request for Submission Package
 - Screener Information Template
- Evaluate submitted screening instruments.
- Approve final list of screening instruments before December 31, 2024.

Panel Meeting Dates

- February 16, March 15, April 19, June 6, July 26, August 23, September 20, October 18, November 18, and December 16, 2024

Other Events

- State Board of Education, May 8, 2024, to consider recommendation to approve Review Process, Review Elements and Evaluation Criteria, and Scoring Rubric
- Webinar for applicants, late June/early July 2024
- Submissions due late summer or early fall 2024

More Information

See RDRSSP web page <https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/cc/rd/> for panel member affiliations; agendas and minutes; governing policy; and more.

Mailing List

Send a blank message to join-rdrssp@mlist.cde.ca.gov to receive meeting notices and other information.

Education Code 53008 – Evaluation Criteria

Pursuant to EC 53008, subdivision (g) (1), the RDRSSP's recommended review process for the SBE's adoption of evaluation criteria under EC 53008, subdivision (b) shall consider the extent to which a screening instrument addresses the following factors:

- A. Use of direct measurement, supplemented by other pupil data, to determine if a pupil is at risk of a reading difficulty, including dyslexia.
- B. Measurement of domains that may predict dyslexia and other reading disorders, including, but not limited to, measures of oral language, phonological and phonemic awareness, decoding skills, letter-sound knowledge, knowledge of letter names, rapid automatized naming, visual attention, reading fluency, vocabulary, and language comprehension.
- C. Evidence that the tool is normed and validated using a contemporary multicultural and multilanguage sample of pupils, with outcome data for pupils whose home language is a language other than English as well as those who are native English speakers.
- D. Integration of relevant pupil demographic information, such as home language, English language fluency, and access to prekindergarten education, to more fully understand a pupil's performance.
- E. Guidance and resources for educators regarding how to administer screening instruments, interpret results, explain results to families, including in pupils' primary languages, and determine further educational strategies, assessments, diagnostics, and interventions that should be considered and that are specific to each type of pupil result. Guidance and resources provided shall be informed by the English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework for California Public Schools developed pursuant to EC 60207 and the California Dyslexia Guidelines developed pursuant to EC 56335, as well as knowledge of effective interventions for the specific needs of individual pupils, and shall reflect a tiered interventions model aligned with the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support.

Education Code 53008 – Excerpts Related to LEA Responsibilities

Purpose of Screening: (a) (1) ...Screening should be considered part of a school's comprehensive instructional strategy and should be used by educators like other types of formative and summative assessments: to inform individualized instruction, measure a pupil's progress, identify pupil learning needs, and enable parents and educators to discuss pupil needs in a more informed way.

Languages of Students: (c) (2) ... The list shall include screening instruments that are developed both for English-speaking pupils and for non-English speaking pupils, in languages reflecting the primary languages of pupils in the state, to the extent assessments in those languages are available.

Appropriate Administration of Screening Instruments: (c) (2) The panel of experts shall also identify information about the appropriate administration of each screening instrument, including the appropriate grade or grades for administration of each screening instrument.

Local Board Adoption of Screening Instrument(s): (d) On or before June 30, 2025, the governing board or body of a local educational agency serving pupils in kindergarten or grades 1 or 2 shall adopt, at a public meeting, one or more screening instruments from the list ... to assess pupils for risk of reading difficulties...

Timeline for Local Implementation: (e) Commencing no later than the 2025–26 school year, and annually thereafter, a local educational agency serving pupils in kindergarten or grades 1 or 2 shall assess each pupil in kindergarten and grades 1 and 2 for risk of reading difficulties... In determining when during the school year to administer each screening instrument, a local educational agency shall consider whether pupils have received sufficient instruction in foundational reading skills to support a valid assessment.

Newly Enrolled Students: (f) If a pupil enrolls for the first time in kindergarten or grades 1 or 2 after the screening instrument or instruments have been administered to all pupils in the given grade in that school year ..., the LEA shall assess the pupil ... within 45 calendar days of enrollment...

Not an Evaluation or Diagnostic Tool to Establish Eligibility: (g) (2) Assessments administered pursuant to this section shall not be considered an evaluation or diagnostic tool to establish eligibility for special education and related services pursuant to the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. Sec. 1400 et seq.), or an evaluation to determine eligibility for a plan pursuant to Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. Sec. 794). However, assessments administered pursuant to this section shall not be used to delay the child find process required under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Additionally, assessments administered pursuant to this section may be used by a local educational agency to recommend that a pupil receive further assessment and evaluation to establish eligibility for special education and related services pursuant to the federal Individuals with

Disabilities Education Act, or to determine eligibility for a plan pursuant to Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Students Not Fluent in English: (h) Pupils who do not speak sufficient English to be screened with an English-language instrument shall be screened ... in their primary language if a screening instrument in their primary language ... is available.

Process Required if Screening Instrument Is Not Available in a Student's

Language: (h) If a screening instrument is not available in at least one language in which a pupil is proficient, before the pupil can be screened, the pupil's risk for reading difficulties shall be evaluated through an analysis of the pupil's developmental history, educational history, and literacy progress, taking into account the pupil's home background and evolving English language abilities, including speaking, listening, reading, spelling, and writing, consistent with the California Dyslexia Guidelines. Components of screening instruments that do not require English language proficiency may be used in this evaluation.

Once a Student Is Fluent in English: (h) When a pupil acquires sufficient English language knowledge and fluency to be able to be assessed using a screening instrument ... or if a screening instrument in their primary language becomes available, the LEA shall assess that pupil using the appropriate screening instrument.

Exemptions from Screening: (i) A pupil may be exempted from the requirements of this section with the prior written consent of the parent or guardian if ...

- (1) The pupil has a current identification or diagnosis of a reading difficulty, reading disorder, or other disability.
- (2) The pupil is eligible for special education and related services ... or a plan pursuant to Section 504 ...
- (3) The pupil is in the process of being assessed for eligibility for special education and related services ... or a plan pursuant to Section 504 ..., and the pupil is being evaluated with diagnostic assessments that make screening pursuant to this section redundant.

Notification to Parents or Guardians of Screening and Opportunity to Opt Out:

(j) A LEA shall provide parents or guardians of pupils eligible for screening ... with information about the screening, including the date or dates of the screening and instructions for how parents or guardians can opt out of the screening on behalf of their child, no later than 15 calendar days before the administration of the screening instrument or instruments ...

Communication of Pupil Results to Parents or Guardians: (k) Pupil results from assessments administered pursuant to this section shall be made available to the pupil's parent or guardian in a timely manner, but no more than 45 calendar days from the date the assessment was administered. These results shall include information about how to interpret the results, as well as the next steps pursuant to subdivision (l), if applicable.

Results as a Flag for Potential Risk, Not as a Diagnosis: (l) Screening results shall be used as a flag for potential risk of reading difficulties, not as a diagnosis of a disability.

Results Used as a Part of a Broader Process: (l) Results from a screening instrument shall be used as part of a broader process that further evaluates pupil needs and progress, identifies supports for classroom instruction, enables targeted individual intervention as needed, and allows for further diagnosis if concerns do not resolve.

Supports and Services to Be Provided: (l) Accordingly, if a pupil is identified as being at risk of having reading difficulties after being screened ..., the LEA shall provide the pupil with supports and services, appropriate to the specific challenges identified by the screening instrument and other pertinent information about the pupil, which may include, among other supports and services, any of the following:

- (1) Evidence-based literacy instruction focused on the pupil's specific needs.
- (2) Progress monitoring.
- (3) Early intervention in the regular general education program.
- (4) One-on-one or small group tutoring.
- (5) Further evaluation or diagnostic assessment.

Results Not Intended for Any High-Stakes Purpose: (m) Results of an assessment administered ... shall not be used for any high-stakes purpose, including, but not limited to, teacher or other school staff evaluation, accountability, pupil grade promotion or retention, identification for gifted or talented education, **reclassification of English learners**, or identification as an individual with exceptional needs.

Considerations for LEA Planning and Implementation

The effective use of new screening instruments for risk of reading difficulties depends on implementing them within a comprehensive assessment system that informs data-based decision making in a multi-tiered system of support in literacy. A comprehensive assessment system begins with screeners at the universal level of instruction for early identification and to determine what interventions, if any, are needed. However, screeners alone are not sufficient. A comprehensive assessment system also includes diagnostic assessments (should further assessment be indicated by the screening), periodic benchmark assessments to determine student progress and response to instruction, and ongoing classroom formative assessment processes. In addition, assessment must be accompanied by high-quality curricular and instructional resources, including interventions for students who need them.

Suggested steps for LEAs to consider taking before the RDRSSP approves the list of screening instruments:

- Review Education Code 53008 carefully to understand the intent of the legislation regarding screening for reading difficulties and specific LEA requirements.
- Form a system improvement team to plan the implementation of new screening instruments. Involve educators (including teachers, specialists, and administrators) in the planning process. Provide time and compensation as appropriate.
- Analyze LEA systems for assessment, curriculum, instruction, and intervention, including multi-tiered systems of support, to create the infrastructure needed for successful implementation of new screening instruments.
- Determine and plan the professional learning necessary to build knowledge of reading difficulties, including dyslexia.
- Look to the Reading Difficulties Risk Screener Selection Panel's evaluation criteria regarding the domains that may predict dyslexia and other reading disorders to plan professional learning. These domains include oral language, phonological and phonemic awareness, decoding skills, letter-sound knowledge, knowledge of letter names, rapid automatized naming, visual attention, reading fluency, vocabulary, and language comprehension.
- **Learn about screening and assessment considerations for multilingual and culturally diverse students, as well as how relevant demographic data impact results, and plan professional learning.**
- Learn more about how to provide evidence-based classroom interventions according to screening data in the specific domains and plan professional learning.

- Provide identified professional learning to all educators involved in kindergarten through grade two, including teachers, specialists, coaches, paraprofessionals, and administrators.
- Create plans for reviewing, evaluating, and selecting the screening instrument(s), including opportunities for piloting.

Suggested steps for LEAs to consider taking once the list of screening instruments is approved by the RDRSSP:

- Begin the review and evaluation process, including piloting.
- Involve educators (including teachers, specialists, and administrators) in the review and evaluation process. Provide time and compensation as appropriate.
- Based on earlier analysis, implement changes in educational infrastructure needed to support effective systems of assessment, curriculum, instruction, intervention, and professional learning.
- As needed, create the schedules, procedures, staffing plans, and reporting tools for implementation. Consult guidance provided by the screening instruments under consideration, the Panel, CDE, and other technical assistance providers.
- Create letters and other tools to communicate information about the screenings and their results and next steps to parents and guardians. Consult guidance provided by the screening instruments under consideration, the Panel, CDE, other technical assistance providers, and legal advisors.
- **Make plans to assess students in their home languages to the extent screening instruments are available. Identify school personnel who will conduct the screenings in those languages.**
- **Develop alternative procedures to determine risk of reading difficulties for students whose English is not sufficient to be screened in English and for whom no screeners are available pursuant to Education Code 53008 (h).**
- Finalize selection of specific screening instrument(s) and submit recommendation to local school board for approval. Ensure approval before June 30, 2025.
- Procure Board-approved screening instruments and any equipment (such as individual tablets or iPads) needed to conduct the screenings and update or procure data management systems to incorporate screening results
- Based on the selected screening instrument(s), provide specific orientation and technical training for educators who will administer the screenings and who will interpret and communicate their results. Provide professional learning as soon as possible, ideally in spring 2025 and continuing into the summer.

Begin implementation in 2025-2026 as required by Education Code 53008.