



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION

K-2 Universal Literacy Screener Guidance¹

This document provides guidance to LEAs serving students in kindergarten through second grade students and can be used to implement proper protocols and procedures for screening students for potential reading difficulties.

Schools should implement early [screening](#) and intervention for students in grades K-2 at least three times a year (*beginning, middle and end of school year*), regardless of a student's performance in the classroom. This recommendation is grounded in research on the prevention and early remediation of reading difficulties, including dyslexia intervention (Petscher et al., 2019. *Screening for Dyslexia*. Improvingliteracy.org).

What is Screening?

Screening is a brief assessment of a skill or ability that is highly predictive of a later outcome. Screening measures are designed to quickly differentiate students into one of two groups: 1) those who *may* require intervention at this time; and 2) those who do not require intervention.

Universal screening emphasizes specific skills that are highly correlated with broader measures of reading achievement. Universal screening is not intended to be diagnostic of reading difficulties including dyslexia, but to determine risk levels of reading difficulties in general and the potential risk of having or developing dyslexia.

Based on [guidance](#) from the International Dyslexia Association, and in alignment with the English Language Arts (ELA) Common Core State Standards² on foundational skills that lead to success in kindergarten to second grade, screeners must address the following skills in the respective grade levels:

¹ **PLEASE NOTE:** The information contained in, or adherence to, this guidance does not eliminate the obligations of an LEA under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), including the obligation to identify children with disabilities who require special education and the obligation to provide a free and appropriate public education.

² In July 2010, the District of Columbia adopted the Common Core Standards, a state-led initiative coordinated by the National Governor's Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. See <https://osse.dc.gov/service/common-core-state-standards>.



K-2 Reading Screener Required and Recommended Domains

DOMAIN	KINDERGARTEN	First GRADE	Second GRADE
Phonological/Phonemic Awareness	Required	Required	N/A
Rapid Automatic Naming (RAN)	Required	Required	N/A
Phonics	Required	Required	Required
Word Recognition	<i>Recommended</i>	Required	Required
Listening Comprehension	<i>Recommended</i>	N/A	N/A
Reading Comprehension	N/A	Required	Required
Oral Reading Fluency	N/A	Required (mid-year)	Required

(Adapted from International Dyslexia Association, 2019)

Data collected from screeners can also inform LEAs and schools regarding the effectiveness of their core literacy instructional program. Based on the results of the universal literacy screener, K-2 students who are identified as “at-risk” should have an individualized intervention plan created and implemented.

Universal Screener Considerations for Proper Protocols and Procedures

LEAs and schools must ensure that screeners are administered in accordance with the selected screener’s protocol and procedures to ensure fidelity of implementation. OSSE will provide professional development on general best practices of universal literacy screening that will be available on our learning management system (LMS) to further support effective school wide implementation.



How to Use Universal Screeners

Screeners should be used to:	Screeners should NOT be used to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gather data on students three times each year (within the first 45 days of the school year, middle-of-year, end-of-year) to identify students at risk for reading difficulties and student reading proficiency levels.• Determine individualized instructional levels of support based on students' needs.• Evaluate the effectiveness of core literacy curriculum and instruction for all students, as well as subgroups of students, by aggregated and disaggregated data	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote or retain students• Determine specific student grades• Determine or diagnosis specific reading deficiencies• Serve as the sole source of identifying students needing additional supports

(Petscher et al., 2019; National Center on Improving Literacy 2019).



Key Terms	Definitions
Phonological Awareness	A global awareness of speech and the sound structures of language, which allows students to discriminate, remember and manipulate sounds at the sentence, word, syllable, and phoneme level
Phonemic Awareness	An awareness of individual sounds that make up words and the ability to manipulate those sounds in words
Rapid Automatic Naming (RAN)	The rapid automatic naming of colors, shapes, numbers, letters and/or objects. (i.e., letter naming fluency)
Phonics	A system for approaching reading that focuses on the relationship between letters and sounds
Word Recognition	The ability to instantly recall familiar words
Oral Reading Fluency	The ability to read with the appropriate rate, accuracy, and expression to gain meaning
Comprehension	A multicomponent process in which readers extract, construct and interpret the meaning of written language

(Adapted from Smartt, & Hougen, 2012; Kilpatrick 2015)



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION

Additional Universal Literacy Screening Resources

- [Best Practices in Universal Screening | National Center on Improving Literacy](#)
- [Considerations in Universal Screening | National Center on Improving Literacy](#)
- [Four Questions to Ask After Universal Screening | National Center on Improving Literacy](#)