



DYSLEXIA DC

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for [DC Law 23-191](#)
Addressing Dyslexia and Other Reading Difficulties
*Amendment Act of 2020***

Updated August 2024

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BACKGROUND

Effective March 16, 2021, [DC Law 23-191 Addressing Dyslexia and Other Reading Difficulties Amendment Act of 2020](#) (“the Act”) established specific requirements for the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) and local education agencies (LEAs) to address the needs of students with reading difficulties. The Act specifically requires dyslexia awareness modules for educators, an approved list of screening implements, universal screening for reading difficulties in kindergarten through grade 2, the adoption of science-based reading programs, and publicly available compliance documentation. This FAQ document focuses specifically on these elements of the Act.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Additional information about how OSSE is supporting literacy in DC can be found here: [Literacy DC](#).

Additional information about the legislation and guidance from OSSE can be found on the Dyslexia DC webpage: osse.dc.gov/page/Dyslexia.

For questions, contact Dustin Tamsen at Dustin.Tamsen@dc.gov.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Dyslexia Awareness Modules

1. How do educators access the dyslexia awareness modules?

Educators can access the dyslexia awareness modules and other professional development opportunities through the [OSSE Learning Management System \(LMS\)](#).

Instructions for accessing the LMS are [here](#). All District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) and DC public charter school educators have access to the LMS using the email associated with the LEA by which they are currently employed.

2. The legislation states that all educators must complete awareness training. What is OSSE’s definition of all educators?

“Educator” is defined as a “teacher, school administrator, guidance counselor, social worker, or an individual who works with students with special needs in an academic capacity.” An educator is **any professional directly involved in the regular creation of learning environments that foster students' development.**

- **INCLUDE** Teachers, Paraprofessionals, Classroom Assistants, School Administrators (Principals, Vice Principals, Academic Directors), Instructional Specialists (Coaches, Literacy Specialist, English learners [EL] Specialist), Instructional Coordinators and Supervisors, Librarians/Media Specialists, School Counselors/Directors, Special Education Support Staff: Audiologists, Psychologists, Physical Education Teachers, Therapeutic Recreation Specialists, Speech-language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Social Workers, and Guidance Counselors.
- **EXCLUDE** LEA-level Administrators (Chief Executive Officers, Chief Financial Officers, Executive Directors), LEA Administrative Support Staff and School Administrative Support Staff (Secretarial Staff).

3. If an educator works with multiple grades (i.e., they serve pre-K and kindergarten students), are they required to take both the pre-K and K-5 dyslexia awareness modules?

Educators are only required to complete one module. Since the content of the dyslexia awareness modules has been differentiated to include content for supporting students of different ages, **it is strongly recommended** that educators take the modules associated with the age of all the students they serve.

4. When is the deadline for staff to complete the dyslexia awareness modules?

All educators need to complete the modules prior to an LEA certifying compliance on Oct. 31 of each year.

5. Where is the certificate of completion located?

All educators need to complete the course survey to receive their certificates. To locate the course survey, sign in to the LMS from [PowerSchool](#). Next, select the “Courses” tab. The survey will be posted in the top right-hand side of the screen immediately after completing the

module. Once staff have completed the module and survey, they can locate their certificates in [PowerSchool](#) under the transcript tab. Professional Learning Unit (PLU) certificates can be located by clicking on the certificate number link. After completing the module and course survey, PowerSchool may take up to 48 hours to generate the PLU certificate.

6. I have educators who are new hires or on extended leave. Do they need to complete the dyslexia awareness modules?

Educators who are on staff and working within the school building up to Oct. 5 of each compliance year are required to complete the dyslexia awareness modules.

7. Many LEAs and schools have developed and are implementing dyslexia and reading difficulties training. Can an LEA or a school substitute their training for OSSE’s dyslexia awareness module?

The dyslexia legislation requires all educators employed by DC LEAs to take OSSE’s awareness training. Any LEA may continue to use its own training, but all educators must complete OSSE’s dyslexia and reading difficulties awareness module.

8. My staff took the dyslexia awareness training last school year. Do they have to do it again?

Yes, the dyslexia awareness module is an annual requirement.

K-2 Training on Preventing Reading Difficulties

1. How do educators access the training on reading difficulties?

Educators can access the dyslexia awareness modules and other professional development opportunities through the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) Learning Management System (LMS). Instructions for accessing the LMS are here. All District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) and DC public charter school educators have access to the LMS using the email associated with the local education agency (LEA) by which they are currently employed.

2. DC Law 23-191 states that general education teachers working with kindergarten through second grade must complete professional development on reading difficulties. What is OSSE’s definition of general educators?

“General Educator” is defined as a “teacher, coach, or administrator who is involved in the regular creation of learning environment that fosters students’ development.”

- **INCLUDE:** K-2 Classroom Teachers, Coaches, Instructional Coordinators and Supervisors, Special Education Teachers, Literacy Specialists and Interventionists, English Learners [EL] Teachers and Specialists.
- **EXCLUDE:** Paraprofessionals, Classroom Assistants, Physical Education Teachers, Special Education Support Staff: Audiologists, Psychologists, Speech-Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Social Workers, Guidance Counselors, LEA-level Administrators, LEA Administrative Support Staff, School Administrative Support Staff.

3. When is the deadline for staff to complete the training on reading difficulties?

All K-2 general educators must complete the training on reading difficulties prior to an LEA certifying compliance on Oct. 31 of each year.

4. Where is the certificate of completion located?

All educators need to complete the course survey to receive their certificates. To locate the course survey, sign in to the LMS from PowerSchool. Next, select the "Courses" tab. The survey will be posted in the top right-hand side of the screen immediately after completing the training. Once staff have completed the training and survey, they can locate their certificates in PowerSchool under the transcript tab. Professional Learning Unit (PLU) certificates can be located by clicking on the certificate number link. After completing the module and course survey, PowerSchool may take up to 48 hours to generate the PLU certificate.

5. I have K-2 educators who are new hires or on extended leave. Do they need to complete the training?

Educators who are on staff and working within the school building up to Oct. 5 of each compliance year are required to complete the training on reading difficulties.

6. Will educators earn PLUs for this professional development?

Yes, educators will receive 3 PLUs.

7. Many LEAs and schools have developed and are implementing dyslexia and reading difficulties training. Can an LEA or a school substitute their training for OSSE's dyslexia awareness module?

Yes. DC Law 23-191 outlines that this training requirement can be provided by OSSE, an LEA, or a third party with expertise in reading and reading difficulties. This training must enable educators to:

- Understand and recognize reading difficulties;
- Screen for reading difficulties; and
- Implement instruction in the general education classroom, or during reading intervention, that is systemic, cumulative, explicit, diagnostic, and evidence-based to meet the educational needs of students with reading difficulties.

Universal Screening

1. How will OSSE assist educators in preparing to screen for reading difficulties?

OSSE has posted a list of screeners on the [Dyslexia DC webpage](#) to support LEAs with the selection of a screening tool. OSSE has also posted a [screener implementation guide](#) that includes the purpose of screening, guidance on how to screen students, and guidance specific for English learners and students with learning disabilities.

2. Many LEAs and schools already use a phonological awareness assessment. Must an LEA or school abandon an assessment for one that includes all factors required in the legislation?

No. However, selected screening tools must include all the factors listed in the legislation:

phonological awareness, rapid naming skills, correspondence between sounds and letters, and decoding. OSSE has provided LEAs with a list of screeners on the [Dyslexia DC webpage](#).

3. Is an LEA required to use a screener on the list?

No. However, OSSE strongly encourages LEAs to select a screener on the list provided by OSSE. Should an LEA select a screener that is not included in the list, the LEA must be able to provide a written justification for selecting a different screener when submitting compliance paperwork in October of each year.

4. Will OSSE provide funding to purchase universal screeners?

No. Each LEA is responsible for the procurement of universal screeners.

5. How often do I need to screen K-2 students? Is once a year enough?

The dyslexia legislation specifies that LEAs shall ensure that all kindergarten through second-grade students are screened for reading difficulties “using the guidance provided by OSSE.” The [Universal Screener Implementation Guidance for DC Law 23-191](#) document provided by OSSE outlines that students are screened three times a school year. OSSE suggests that LEAs follow the following timeline:

Beginning of Year	September – October
Middle of Year	January – February
End of Year	Late April – May

6. What are LEAs’ responsibilities for notifying families of K-2 students and sharing data?

The legislation requires that LEAs notify the families of any students identified by their universal screener data as being at-risk for reading difficulties. These notifications must include:

- The screening results,
- A description of the supplemental reading instruction that will be provided to the student, and
- A request to meet and discuss individualized student support.

OSSE strongly recommends that LEAs notify all families. OSSE has provided LEAs with templates for notifying families after each screening window. The templates are available on the [Dyslexia DC webpage](#) OSSE has also developed the [Dyslexia Family Guide](#) as a resource for families wanting to learn more about dyslexia and reading difficulties.

Adopting Science-Based Literacy Programs.

1. What are the requirements for adopting a science-based literacy program?

The dyslexia legislation requires that “all LEAs” adopt a science-based literacy program by the 2024-25 school year. OSSE is taking a phased approach to this requirement and will support LEAs that serve K-5 students first.

2. What does OSSE consider to be a high-quality, science-based literacy program?

Science-based literacy programs effectively integrate instructional content and practices that are in alignment with established research on how to teach students how to read and write. These programs are sequential, comprehensive, and aligned with the [Common Core State Standards \(CCSS\)](#) for English language arts, which the District of Columbia adopted in 2010.

- **Structured literacy** is a science-based instructional model that focuses on building the foundational literacy skills of phonemic awareness, letter-sound correspondences, syllables, morphology, syntax, and semantics using an explicit, systematic, and cumulative approach.¹ Structured literacy programs are effective in teaching all students how to read and write.² This includes students learning English as a second language, as well as students at-risk for reading difficulties.³

3. What if the program or programs that my LEA uses to teach reading are not included on OSSE’s list of science-based literacy programs?

If an LEA has adopted or is currently implementing a core literacy program(s) that is **not included** on the Science-Based Literacy Programs List, LEAs will use the High-Quality Instructional Materials (**HQIM**) rubric to analyze and evaluate literacy programs for alignment to the essential components of literacy instruction. LEAs will submit completed rubrics with evidence to OSSE for review and approval. LEAs will submit rubrics in October of every year consistent with the requirements of [DC Law 23-191](#).

4. My LEA uses various programs to teach reading. Some are on OSSE’s Science-Based Literacy List, and some are not. What are the next steps?

Programs on OSSE’s Science-Based Reading List do not need further evaluation. If an LEA is currently implementing a core literacy program included on the Science-Based Literacy Programs List, the LEA will confirm the core literacy program when submitting dyslexia legislation compliance documents in the fall. Programs that are not featured should be evaluated using OSSE’s HQIM rubric.

5. Who should fill out the HQIM rubric?

OSSE recommends that LEAs establish a program review team to review literacy materials. This review team can include LEA administrators, literacy specialists, academic coaches, and teachers who support K-5 literacy instruction.

¹ Cowen, 2016; IDA, 2018;

² Moats, 2019; Young, 2018

³ Baker et al., 2014; Gersten et al., 2009

6. My LEA filled out the rubric and found that our programs meet expectations, what are the next steps?

LEAs submit the completed rubric with evidence to OSSE by October of each compliance year. OSSE will review submitted rubrics and evidence from November – February, contacting LEAs for further evidence as needed. LEAs with rubrics that provide sufficient evidence of programmatic alignment to the science of reading can certify meeting the science-based literacy program requirement the following October.

7. My LEA filled out the rubric and found that our program doesn't meet expectations, what are our next steps?

If an LEA has an overall rating of **Partially Meets** or **Does Not Meet Expectations**, LEAs review the Science-Based Literacy Programs List and adopt a new core or supplementary literacy program(s) to fulfill the deficit(s) identified by the rubric. LEAs that adopt a core literacy program from OSSE's Science-Based Literacy Programs List can certify meeting the science-based literacy program requirement the following October. LEAs that adopt supplemental programming must submit completed rubrics with evidence to OSSE by October of that compliance year, detailing what programs have been adopted. OSSE will review submitted rubrics and evidence from November – February contacting LEAs for further evidence as needed. LEAs with rubrics that provide sufficient evidence of programmatic alignment to the science of reading can certify meeting the science-based literacy program requirement the following October.

8. Will OSSE provide additional funding to purchase new materials?

No. Each LEA is responsible for the procurement of curricular materials.

9. How does this impact dual language programs?

OSSE's Science-Based Literacy Programs List includes core programs for teaching literacy in English. In dual language programs, instruction in two languages is the core programming. To meet the dyslexia legislation's science-based literacy program requirement, OSSE strongly recommends that LEAs prioritize matching the instructional practices in English and the partner language. Implementing similar teaching approaches (e.g., explicitly teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency instruction) will benefit students as they develop biliteracy skills.

10. The legislation states that 'all LEAs shall adopt a science-based reading program.' What does this mean for LEAs that serve pre-K middle school, high school, and adult learners?

OSSE is taking a phased approach to this requirement. Resources for pre-K, middle school, high school, and adult-serving LEAs will be released in later compliance years.

Compliance and Implementation Logistics

1. What is the timeline for the compliance process?

Please see the following summary of the timeline for implementation:

- **Annual compliance process:**
 - **Oct 31:** DC Public Schools (DCPS) submit compliance documents to OSSE. All public charter LEAs submit compliance documents to the Public Charter School Board (PCSB).
 - **Within 10 business days of Oct. 31:** OSSE makes DCPS compliance letters publicly available.
 - **Nov. 15:** PCSB submits all letters to OSSE.
 - **Within 10 business days of Nov. 15:** OSSE makes all public charter school compliance letters publicly available.

2. How will LEAs be held accountable for the requirements of the legislation?

LEAs must submit compliance documentation demonstrating that they have met all the legislation requirements. This documentation will be submitted in the form of a letter. DCPS must submit this compliance letter to OSSE by Oct. 31. Within 10 business days of Oct. 31, OSSE will make all DCPS compliance letters publicly available on the [Dyslexia Legislation Compliance page](#). This transparency will be the primary accountability framework for this legislation.

All public charter LEAs will submit a letter to PCSB by Oct. 31. PCSB will then transmit all LEA letters to OSSE by Nov. 15. Within 10 business days of Nov. 15 each year, OSSE will make all LEA letters publicly available on the [Dyslexia Legislation Compliance page](#). This transparency will be the primary accountability framework for this legislation.

3. The legislation notes that an 'array of supports' will be provided – what types of supports are available beyond the required awareness module?

OSSE hosts additional professional development training to support recognizing students with reading difficulties, screening students for reading difficulties and implementing instruction in the general education classroom which meets the needs of students with reading difficulties. Please consider subscribing to the monthly OSSE [Teaching and Learning Professional Development Bulletin](#) as all upcoming professional development opportunities will be shared via that newsletter.

OSSE has also created [Universal Screener Guidance](#) and a list of Universal Screeners to support LEAs with the implementation of this legislation.

4. Realistically, when does OSSE expect LEAs to complete all these requirements?

LEAs must complete the requirements by the start of the 2024-25 school year and each year thereafter. OSSE provides technical assistance and guidance to support the implementation of this requirement.

Compliance with IDEA

- 1. Does screening for dyslexia and the application of remediation and intervention instruction eliminate the need for compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)?**

No. The Act does not alleviate an LEA from its obligations under IDEA. See DC Code § 38-2581.05. If an LEA suspects that a child may be a child with a disability, including but not limited to a specific learning disability, the LEA should refer the child for an evaluation to determine eligibility for special education and related services. The LEA must obtain parent consent before evaluation of the child. For more on this subject, read OSSE's [Intersections of Dyslexia and Special Education document](#).

- 2. Does screening for dyslexia and the application of remediation and intervention instruction eliminate the need for compliance with the IDEA?**

No. The Act does not alleviate an LEA from its obligations under IDEA. See DC Code § 38-2581.05. If an LEA suspects that a child may be a child with a disability, including but not limited to a specific learning disability, the LEA should refer the child for an evaluation to determine eligibility for special education and related services. The LEA must obtain parent consent before the evaluation of the child. For more on dyslexia and compliance with the IDEA, read OSSE's [Intersections of Dyslexia and Special Education document](#).

Definitions

Adopt	Adopt means to acquire/purchase, as in curricular materials.
Dyslexia	Dyslexia is a brain-based condition that can make it difficult for learners to read and spell accurately.
Educator	“Educator” is defined as “teacher, school administrator, guidance counselor, social worker, or an individual who works with students with special needs in an academic capacity.” OSSE further defines an educator as a professional directly involved in the regular creation of learning environments that foster the development of students.
HQIM	HQIM stands for high quality instructional materials.
Implement	Implement means to have staff trained to use a program within classrooms.
LEA	LEA stands for local education agency.
LMS	LMS stands for Learning Management System, which is a learning platform that hosts the annual dyslexia awareness modules among other professional learning opportunities.
OSSE	OSSE stands for the Office of the State Superintendent of Education.
Science-based Literacy Program	Science-based literacy program means a reading curriculum based on the science of reading, that at a minimum includes explicit and systematic instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension strategies.
Science of Reading	The science of reading means using evidence gleaned from rigorous research to guide effective classroom practices (Reyna, 2004).
Reading Difficulty	Reading difficulties are exemplified by inaccurate and/or disfluent patterns of reading. Reading difficulties can have secondary characteristics of challenges with spelling and reading comprehension.