



## The Reading Room: Tips and Tricks Understanding the Difference Between Dyslexia Screeners and Diagnostic Testing

This month we are going to look at the difference between “screeners” and “testing” as many people get them confused. We also wanted to include some relevant information about screeners how you can use them with your students.

### **What National Statistics Say About Dyslexia -**

“Deficits in phonological awareness, rapid automatized naming, verbal working memory and letter knowledge have been shown to be robust precursors of dyslexia in children as young as age three.” - Gaab, 2017

According to the International Dyslexia Association (IDA), National Institute of Children’s Health and Development (NICHD), and Yale University’s Center for Dyslexia and Creativity, approximately 15%- 20% of the population at large has dyslexia. This means that 30 to 43.5 million children and adults have dyslexia. Therefore, eighty to eighty-five percent of students with learning disabilities have dyslexia. - IDA, Just the Facts

### **So, What Do Screeners Do?**

Screening measures, by definition, are typically brief assessments of a particular skill or ability that is highly predictive of a later outcome. Screening measures are designed to quickly differentiate students into one of two groups. Those who require intervention and those who do NOT.

### **Who Should Screeners Identify?**

A screening measure needs to focus on specific skills that are highly correlated with broader measures of reading achievement resulting in a highly accurate sorting of students. Screening results should identify students who might be a risk for reading failure. This includes students who might have developmental reading disabilities or dyslexia.

### **Why Do We Screen Early?**

We want to catch struggling students before they begin to fail, and we know that early intervention is the most effective. It takes four times as long to remediate in 4th grade as it does in late kindergarten.

### **What Exactly is a Screener?**

It is a quick and targeted assessments that indicate whether students are making adequate progress in reading achievement. It has standardized direction for administration and scoring, established reliability and validity standards, identifies those at risk, and identifies reading deficits.

### **What is an Evaluation?**

It is a written report. The information relates to family literacy history, medical issues, prenatal and birth conditions, and preschool development. It Includes standard assessment measures for intelligence, achievement, and processing speed, and provides evidence that supports the diagnosis.

### **Who Can Perform an Evaluation/Diagnostic Report?**

A formal clinical evaluation is necessary to determine a diagnosis of dyslexia or characteristics of dyslexia. If the student continues to struggle with literacy skills, despite quality instruction using a multi-level systems of support approach, then the student should be evaluated. Evaluations can only be completed by trained specialists in that field like psychologists, certified diagnosticians, speech and language pathologists, or educational specialists who have advanced degrees in assessment or education. (NOT the classroom teacher)

### **How is Dyslexia Identified in the School System?**

The information comes from interviews, observations, and testing. Collected by classroom teachers, speech/language pathologists, educational assessment specialists, and medical personnel. It can only be diagnosed by a professional who is familiar with the characteristics of dyslexia at different stages in the development of literacy skills. Students who meet the criteria from the collected data are identified with a Specific Learning Disability exhibiting the characteristics of dyslexia

### **What Should a Screener Measure?**

- Phoneme awareness
- Letter naming fluency
- Letter sound association
- Phonological memory
- Word recognition fluency
- Rapid automatic naming (RAM)
- Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)

### **New Mexico Dyslexia Law**

- The 2022 Legislation NMSA 1978 requires that all first-grade students must be given a dyslexia screener during the first 40 days of instruction in the 2022-2023 SY or within two weeks of enrolling in school.
- Screener data is used to identify characteristics and risk factors of reading difficulty. Data will be reported in STARS (Student Teacher Accountability Reporting System) and all screeners will be provided to districts at no cost.
- State approved screeners should be used only at BOY (beginning of year) and should not be used as a progress monitoring tool. - NMPED, May 20, 2022

## **Approved NM Screeners**

These screeners will guide teachers in data driven instruction and early identification of the characteristics of dyslexia and skills in which students need most support. It is important that screening is not implemented until teachers have received training in the administration of the tool. These training opportunities are included in the 101 courses and are available in Canvas.

- **English Screeners**

- Teach Me to Read
  - The Teach Me to Read screener is considered a paper/ pencil screener that teachers will score immediately after giving it to the student. This screener allows the teacher to access information like specific items that the student missed, and it can be done in the absence of the internet.
- Lexercise Screener
  - The Lexercise Screener is a digital screener which allows the student's score to be automatically calculated on the computer. This screener will indicate the student's risk factor for dyslexia. For example: at risk, some risk or low risk for dyslexia

- **Spanish Screeners**

- IDEL - Spanish Screener - Dibels, University of Oregon
  - The IDEL measures are not a translation of the DIBELS measures. They consider the linguistic structure of the Spanish language including the phonology, orthography, and syntax. Like DIBELS, the IDEL measures are based on the same theoretical and evidence-based principles of how children learn to read in alphabetic languages such as English and Spanish. It measures phonemic awareness, sound symbol correspondence, decoding, passage reading and comprehension, among other things.
- iStation ISIP Assessment - Spanish
  - Istation's Spanish assessment and instruction (ISIP™ Español and Istation Español, respectively) for pre-K through 5th grade provide authentic Spanish literacy intervention and instruction that teach skills most predictive of success for all bilingual implementations, including dual-language models.

## **Universal vs Dyslexia Screeners**

Universal Screeners are broad screeners that measure several aspects of reading differences. Dyslexia Screeners measure more specifically in the area of dyslexia or dyslexic characteristics. There is not one screener, test, or assessment tool that measures all reading skills. Different assessments measure different skills. In an ideal world, we would use multiple measures for screening purposes, and these would be used to make sure that all skills have been assessed at the appropriate grade

level. When multiple measures are used to screen, the accuracy of identifying the students at risk improves significantly.

Other Available Screeners to use with students

Monster Spelling Screener (Free)

<https://jrichardgentry.com/monster-test.html>

Literacy Assessment Toolkit - Spelling (Free).

<https://nashtoolkit.weebly.com/spelling.html>

Literacy Assessment Toolkits

<https://nashtoolkit.weebly.com/toolkit-part-1.html>

Learning Ally Free Dyslexia Screener

<https://learningally.org/dyslexia/dyslexia-test>

Link to NM Dyslexia Handbook

[Dyslexia Handbook: A guide to teaching ALL students to read ...](#)

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