

To: Authorized Reading Specialists with Training in Dyslexia and School and District Leaders

From: Joe Risch, Senior Specialist for Teaching and Learning and Dyslexia Specialist

Date: July 31, 2020

Subject: 2020-2021 Dyslexia Screener Guidance

Governor Holcomb signed executive order 20-05 on March 24, 2020. This executive order stated, “all state-mandated assessments are canceled for the 2019-2020 academic year.” This included all remaining dyslexia screening.

The start of the 2020-2021 academic school year brings a new start to the dyslexia screening requirements. These requirements state that all students in kindergarten, first, and second grade shall be screened in all six subsets (phonemic awareness, alphabet knowledge, sound-symbol relationship, decoding, rapid naming, and encoding) during the academic year. There is no specific time window in which students must be screened.

While this school year may look different, all aspects of Indiana code 20-35.5 *et. seq.*, as created by SEA 217 (2018) also known as “The Dyslexia Law” are still in place.

When considering how to meet the requirements of the law please consider the following aspects.

1. There is not a specific testing window. All students in kindergarten, first, and second grade must be screened regardless of the previous year’s performance.
2. Consider your school district’s re-entry plan. Based on this plan consider the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) approved screener that best fits the needs of your school district.

If you are **in-person**, give the screeners based on your assessment calendar while following school, county, and state social distancing, personal protective equipment (PPE), and safety guidelines.

If you are using a **hybrid model**, formulate a plan as to when students may receive a screener in each of the six subsets when students are on-site or a schedule if the screener may be given via remote learning.

If students are participating in **remote learning**, review the list of IDOE approved screeners to vet a screener that may be given via remote learning or if a screener may be

adapted for remote learning (*please see number 6 of this memo for additional information on adapting screeners*).

3. You may use video conferencing to give any subset(s) of the screener.
4. If students are participating in remote learning and access to an online screener is not possible, consider delaying the screener administration to these students until later in the school year when on-site screening is possible. You may also seek ways to make accommodations so the student can access the internet from another location to complete the online screener, or set up a time when the student may perform the screener in person when large numbers of students are not present and when the student and teacher are able to social distance and wear PPE.
5. Several IDOE approved screeners are computer-based assessments. If students need to share technology please utilize a schedule and seating chart that allows for social distancing and disinfecting computers between student use.
6. If you are using a paper and pencil screener but want to adapt it to a computer-based or online assessment please review your contract with the test publisher and work with your local school attorney to ensure that converting the screener does not violate your contract or copyright laws. Please use your professional judgment and answers from your school attorney to determine if a mix of online and in-person screening is needed.
7. If screening in person, please follow all school, county, and State of Indiana requirements for PPE and disinfection protocol of materials while still ensuring tests are given with fidelity and results are valid.
8. When gaining parent permission to give the level I screener, consider how this can be done electronically, via phone or video conference, or in-person with social distancing.
9. If students, specifically those in second grade, were not screened at the end of the 2019-2020 school year due to the closure of schools in March, consider screening these students at the start of the 2020-2021 school year. It is best practice to screen these students to ensure these students are not “at risk” or “at some risk” for the characteristics of dyslexia since no screening data exists to clearly state this.
10. Utilize guidance documents from IDOE when deciding whether to screen students who qualify for [special education](#) or who are [English language learners](#).
11. Familiarize yourself with the difference between a medical diagnosis of dyslexia and educational eligibility of a student exhibiting characteristics of dyslexia.

Please contact Joe Risch at jrisch1@doe.in.gov if you have any additional questions.

CC: Robin Conti, Assistant Director of Teaching and Learning