

Dyslexia and Iowa Literacy Screening

Screening for reading difficulty and dyslexia screeners are very closely related. This article illustrates how they align and relate to each other.

Dyslexia is characterized by:

- Difficulty with phonological processing - recognize and manipulate speech sounds.
- Noticeable difference in the ability to recall letter names and rapid automatic naming (RAN) activities with colors or shapes.
- Slow and choppy reading, even with good instruction and intervention.
- Difficulty with writing, especially spelling.
- Noticeable difference in expressive and receptive language skills.
- Noticeable difference between oral listening comprehension and reading comprehension.

Iowa Literacy Screening

Iowa has had an early literacy screening and intervention requirement in place for over a decade. This established a systematic process for Iowa schools to screen K-6 students for reading concerns three times a year using assessments that are sensitive to reading difficulty and aligned with the important components of early reading development. This screening aims to identify at-risk students so that immediate work can be done to get the child back on track. This is in alignment with the appropriate response to students with dyslexia. The Iowa Department of Education provides a screening package that meets the screening requirements and may be used by all Iowa schools. However, schools may opt to use other approved assessments instead. This article focuses on the Iowa-provided screening assessments.

An effective process to support early identification of potential reading problems, including dyslexia, involves a systematic and regular screening program. The purpose of this is to quickly and accurately identify the students who are at high risk for reading problems. Schools use a test or battery of tests that are efficient and sensitive to students with needs. These tests need to assess key concepts and skills for each grade that are part of early reading development. Once these students are identified, teachers can begin interventions and/or further, more diagnostic assessment depending on what they know about the child's needs. Diagnostic assessments may take longer to administer and go into greater detail than screening measures. They are useful for expanding the understanding of the child's specific instructional needs. This two-step process allows the initial identification to move quickly, providing students with initial support as quickly as possible, without burdening the teachers by conducting diagnostic assessments for all students. Often, and especially in Kindergarten and first grade, the screening measures used have enough skill-based detail to give the teachers a good idea of the initial instructional needs. As the teachers work with students with additional needs, diagnostic measures can be included in instruction formally or informally as appropriate.

The chart below is intended to provide a crosswalk to help clarify how important characteristics of dyslexia align with the State provided literacy screening assessments from FastBridge and how additional information may be gathered for further diagnostic data.

Correlation Table

Dyslexia Characteristic, difficulty in...	Available Statewide Assessments	Potential Supplemental Diagnostic Information
Phonological Awareness and Phonological Memory	Onset Sounds Word Segmenting Word Rhyming Word Blending Oral Repetition	Additional Phonemic Awareness Task Assessments
Recalling Letter Names	Letter Names	
Rapid Automatic Naming (RAN)	Letter Names Rapid Automized Naming	RAN for colors or shapes
Recalling Letter Sounds	Letter Sounds Nonsense Words Decodable Words	
Reading. i.e., slow and choppy	Sentence Reading Sight Words CBMR	Diagnostic Decoding Survey
Spelling		Dictated Sentences
Oral Expressive / Receptive Language		See paragraph below.
Oral Listening Comprehension / Reading Comprehension		See paragraph below.

Reading is a component of the FastBridge assessment suite. It assesses a range of skills (i.e., phonemic awareness, phonics, word reading vocabulary, and comprehension) depending on the student's grade and reading skill. It is often used as a general reading screener for upper grades but is not suitable to provide skill-specific feedback.

“The assessment of oral expressive and receptive language (including vocabulary, syntax and comprehension) provides key information in an individual’s reading profile and is predictive of reading outcomes. Unfortunately, there are limited measures at the K-2 level to assess these areas for screening purposes. Without such screening measures, testing for expressive and receptive language is usually done in diagnostic evaluations (Gersten et al., 2008).

There is no one test or assessment tool that measures all reading skills. Different assessments measure different discrete skills. Ideally, multiple measures for screening purposes should be used to ensure that all identified skills have been assessed at the appropriate grade level. When multiple measures are used to screen students, the accuracy of identifying those at risk improves significantly.”

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Frequently Asked Questions

- **Can the school's literacy screening system identify dyslexia?**
 - No, however, the screening process identifies students who are at high risk of not becoming successful readers due to difficulty with essential early reading skills, which include students who are exhibiting characteristics of dyslexia. Screening assessments do not provide a diagnosis of dyslexia or any other reading disorder. A diagnosis is required to determine if a student has dyslexia.
- **Will a dyslexia screener provide additional information to guide instruction for dyslexic students?**
 - Structured Literacy and the Science of Reading best meets the instructional needs of all students, including students with dyslexia and other reading difficulties.
- **What is the purpose of gathering spelling information?**
 - The information gathered through dictated sentences will inform instruction. If a child can produce grapheme patterns correctly when writing a sentence (i.e., the letter combinations representing specific sounds), they likely will not need instruction on that pattern. Please note that typical spelling tests will not support this.
- **Why aren't other additional measures included in the school's universal screening process?**
 - The screening process balances efficiency and effectiveness. Some assessments may not be needed for the initial screening, but can be administered to attain additional information on a student's learning as needed.
- **What about the areas, such as receptive and expressive language, that were not screened with an approved screener?**
 - This information can be gathered formally after screening if the school finds it valuable for instruction. It is likely that an SLP or school psychologist will be requested to administer this assessment.