

Early Literacy Screening Frequently Asked Questions

Background

Due to DC Council's [Addressing Dyslexia and Other Reading Difficulties Act of 2020](#), DC Public Schools added RAN (Rapid Automatized Naming) to early literacy assessments starting school year, 2023-24. Kindergarteners and first graders who score well below grade level in their composite and well below benchmark on RAN are flagged as "at risk" for reading difficulties. This can include difficulties related to dyslexia. Being identified as at risk for reading difficulties is *not* a diagnosis of reading difficulty.

If my child is "at risk" do, they have dyslexia?

Not necessarily. Your child has been screened as being "at risk" for developing reading difficulties or dyslexia. Many children respond quickly and positively to high-quality, whole-class instruction in addition to small group instruction and move out of the "at risk" designation.

Does being "at risk" mean my child has a reading disability?

Not necessarily. "At risk" means that they may need more reading instruction to meet grade level expectations. If students receive structured literacy intervention and are not making progress, the school MTSS (multi-tiered systems of support) team will find added supports and next steps.

What can I do at home?

Reading with your child at home is the most effective support you can provide as a parent or caregiver. If your child is not yet reading independently, you can read aloud to them. You can also listen to audiobooks as a family. If your child is starting to read on their own, use [decodable text](#) with simple word patterns recommended by your child's teacher. It is also essential that students come to school so they can learn these early literacy skills from their teachers.

Where can I learn more about early literacy and how to help my child?

www.readingrockets.com has many articles and videos for families

What should I ask my child's teacher?

1. What reading strengths and weaknesses does my child have?
2. How did my child perform on DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills)?
3. What are you doing to support my child's development as a reader?
4. How will we know if my child is making progress?

Will my child be getting different instruction from their classmates?

In addition to daily whole class instruction, your child will be getting instruction that is designed just for them and their reading needs. Most students will get this teaching inside their classrooms with their teachers during daily small group reading time. Some students will get instruction outside of their classroom. The school's MTSS team (multi-tiered systems of support team) will make these choices. Students will not miss any core learning time.

I struggled with reading as a kid (or someone in my family struggled), does that mean that my child will struggle?

Dyslexia is caused by differences in brain structures and is genetic. This means that students can inherit dyslexia from their family members. If you struggled to learn to read, then your child is 50% more likely to also struggle to read.

My child did well in PreK, why are they now at risk?

The early literacy screening helps us find students who may have a hard time with the skills needed for reading later, like hearing the smaller sounds in words. We start this screening in kindergarten because this is when we start teaching these skills and need to know which students need extra help.

Why was this given at the beginning of the year?

Students at risk for reading difficulties do best with early help to teach them the skills they will need for reading. We want to find out right away who will need extra support, so they are on track with their classmates to become strong readers.

How will the school be monitoring my child's progress?

Students who are "at risk" will be given a 1-minute test every 2 weeks to see if they are making progress on early literacy skills. Teachers, school leaders, and the MTSS team will look at those test results every 2 weeks to see who is growing and who may need more help. We will monitor students until they meet grade level benchmarks.

Can my child re-take the test?

The early literacy screener is given to students in K-2 three times a year: September, January, and in June. At every testing window the student can be moved out of the "at risk" category. Students will only take RAN at the beginning of the year in kindergarten and first grade.

Does this mean that my child needs or has qualified for an individualized education plan (IEP)?

No, DIBELS and RAN are screeners for risk. They are not a diagnosis of disability nor sufficient for us to know if a child has a disability. If the student is not making progress quickly with the extra support they receive in the classroom, the MTSS team at the school will put in place more support and will be in contact with families if they think an IEP may need to be considered.

How does this fit with my child's IEP for an existing disability?

If your child already has an individualized education plan (IEP), please note that students receive special education services in addition to, not in the place of, the instructional supports that are available to all students. You can ask your child's special education case manager any questions.

What does this mean if my child is a multilingual learner?

If your child is identified as an English Learner/Multilingual Learner who is receiving ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) services, their screening results may be related to their growing knowledge of English, and we will continue to monitor their literacy growth with that in mind.

If you have other questions, please ask your child's teacher or email literacyscreening@k12.dc.gov.