

Annual Report on Dyslexia and House Resolution 261

R.S. 17:392 and HR 261 (2023)

February 2024

Overview of Act

Dyslexia Identification Reporting

[Act 419](#) of the 2021 Louisiana Legislative Session requires each public school governing authority to submit a report to the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) annually relative to the occurrence of dyslexia. [Act 622](#) of the 2022 Louisiana Legislature updated the due date of the report to December 15 to better align with reporting cycles. The report shall include numbers of students of all grade levels identified as dyslexic, pursuant to the provisions of either [R.S. 17:392.1](#) or [R.S. 17:2112](#), and shall include, per grade, all of the following:

- For students identified as dyslexic through a Section 504 Plan:
 - The number initially identified during the preceding school year
 - The total number

- For students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) identified as having a specific learning disability, dyslexia:
 - The number initially identified during the preceding school year
 - The total number

If the number of students in a grade level identified as dyslexic is not zero and not more than ten, the report shall not indicate an exact number but shall indicate that there are fewer than eleven students in the grade identified as dyslexic and is displayed as 11 on the graph.

Annually on March 1, the LDOE must submit a report compiling the data that has been collected from school systems to include the number of students statewide reported as dyslexic.

Data - Dyslexia Occurrence

The following graphs include statewide data and the subsequent data includes each school system's data for each table.

Table 1. Students Identified as Dyslexic Served Through a Section 504 Plan by Grade

	PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	T9	9	10	11	12
Number initially identified in preceding school year	<11	<11	64	192	339	293	291	215	205	183	<11	206	190	175	134
Total Number	<11	187	207	353	572	720	706	664	600	548	34	552	495	444	418

Graph 1. Students Identified as Dyslexic Served Through a Section 504 Plan by Grade

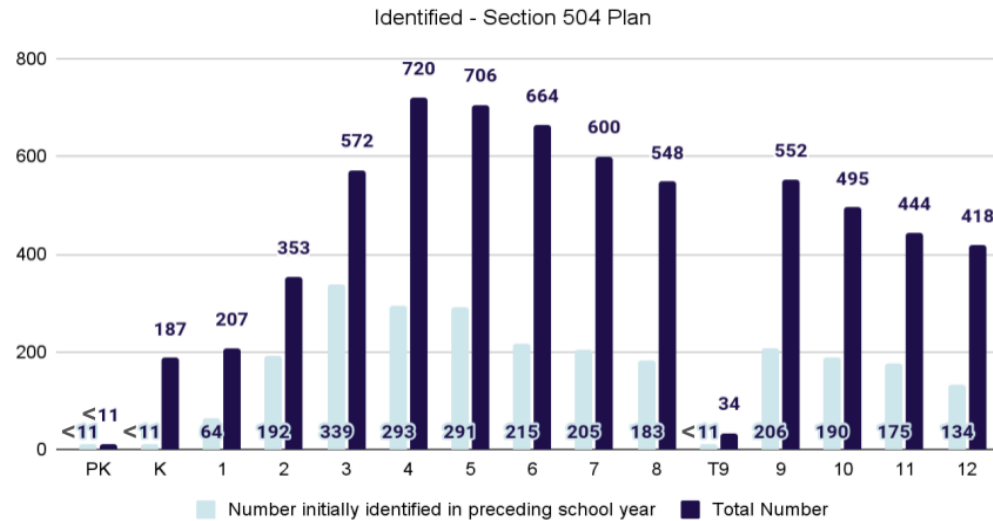
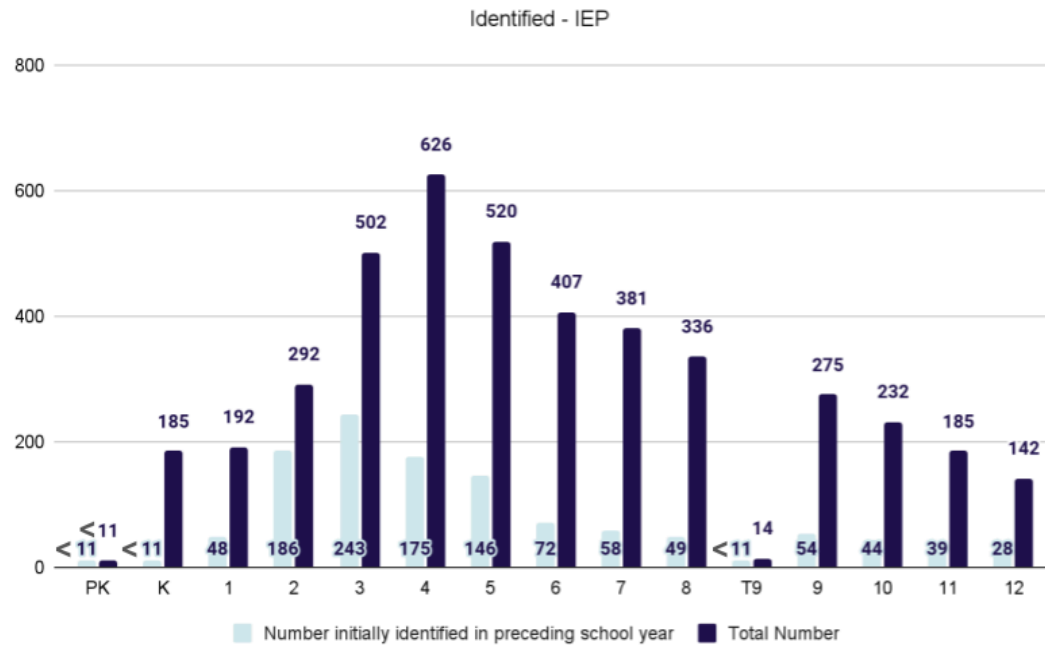


Table 2. Students with an IEP Identified as Having Specific Learning Disability, Dyslexia by Grade

	PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	T9	9	10	11	12
Number initially identified in preceding school year	<11	<11	48	186	243	175	146	72	58	49	<11	54	44	39	28
Total Number	<11	185	192	292	502	626	520	407	381	336	14	275	232	185	142

Graph 2. Students with an (IEP Identified as Having Specific Learning Disability, Dyslexia by Grade



*Data is self-reported by Local Education Agencies.

Data was not collected during reporting for the following school systems:

East Carroll Parish
Louisiana School for Math Science & the Arts
Southern University Lab School
New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts
Paul Habans
Fannie C. Williams
Morris Jeff Community School
ReNEW SciTech Academy at Laurel
ReNEW Schaumburg Elementary
Sophie B. Wright
Thrive Academy
Homer A. Plessy Community School

Office of Juvenile Justice
Dr. Martin Luther King Charter School for Sci Tech
RSD-Capitol Education Foundation
GEO Prep Academy of Greater Baton Rouge
Benjamin Franklin High School
Robert Russa Moton Charter School
McDonogh 42 Charter School
Living School, Inc.
GEO Next Generation High School
GEO Prep Mid-City of Greater Baton Rouge
GEO Prep Baker

Screening and Identification of Dyslexia

Overview

[House Resolution 261](#) of the 2023 Regular Session requests that the LDOE address the screening and identification of students with respect to dyslexia and submit a report to the House Committee on Education and the Louisiana Literacy Advisory Commission by 30 days prior to the 2024 Regular Session. The report includes information regarding the analysis of the identification of dyslexia and potential steps for continued improvement.

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act are two fundamental federal guides for the identification and intervention of students with disabilities. These laws require school districts to provide a free, appropriate public education to each qualified student with a disability. The Louisiana Dyslexia Law and Regulatory Policy, *Bulletin 1903-Louisiana Handbook for Students with Dyslexia*, provides specific guidance on identifying, evaluating, and providing intervention for students suspected of having or who have dyslexia. Other policies including *Bulletin 1706 - Regulations for Implementation of the Children with Exceptionalities Act*, *Bulletin 1508 - Pupil Appraisal Handbook*, and *Bulletin 1530 - Louisiana's IEP Handbook for Students with Exceptionalities* also support IDEA regulations.

Louisiana state law defines *dyslexia* as “an unexpected difficulty in reading for an individual who has the intelligence to be a much better reader, most commonly caused by a difficulty in phonological processing, which affects the ability of an individual to speak, read, and spell.” The LDOE is committed to supporting the early and accurate identification of students with dyslexia and the impetus of this House Resolution, which includes the essential tasks of screening, identifying, providing early intervention and quality instruction as strategies that can prevent cumulative challenges that may coexist and emerge when students are identified in later grades.

Current Policy and Screening Requirements

In accordance with *Bulletin 741 - Louisiana Handbook for School Administrators*, all students enrolled in kindergarten through third grade shall be administered an early literacy screener within the first 30 days of the school year. *Bulletin 1566 - Pupil Progression Policies and Procedures* requires each local education agency to identify all students in kindergarten, first, second, and third grade with scores falling below grade-level benchmarks on the literacy screener. Schools shall notify the parents or legal custodians of students with scores below grade level within 15 days of identification. The notification shall include at-home literacy activities, information about supports, and interventions that will be provided to support the student. A timeline shall be provided for updates of progress monitoring and include a middle and end-of-year update. Information shall be provided regarding the importance of being able to read proficiently by the end of third grade. An individual reading improvement plan that describes evidence-based reading intervention services the student will receive shall be created within 30 days.

Bulletin 1903 - Louisiana Handbook for Students with Dyslexia also outlines that students with literacy screener scores that indicate deficits result in additional screening outlined in the policy; if the student demonstrates deficits on the additional screening, then the student must be provided with appropriate structured language and literacy interventions.

[Act 266](#) (2023) now requires dyslexia-specific screening for all kindergarteners. At the January 2024 Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) meeting, the LDOE proposed, and BESE approved, revisions to policy in alignment with this requirement.

Formal Evaluation and Assessment

The School Building Level Committee (SBLC), including parents/guardians, review student data to determine whether an evaluation through the Dyslexia/Section 504 Committee or the Pupil Appraisal Committee is most appropriate to address the child's educational needs. The most common way to evaluate is described below.

A. Dyslexia/Section 504 Committee Evaluations

1. Students who are not referred for a special education evaluation are evaluated in accordance with guidelines described in *Bulletin 1903 - Louisiana Handbook for Students with Dyslexia*.
2. Informed parental consent for a 504 evaluation is required and all rights must be explained to parents/guardians.
3. The school district must complete the evaluation within 60 operational days from the time parental consent is obtained.
4. Upon completion of a 504 evaluation, a written notice of findings shall be provided to the parents/guardians. All parental rights and procedural safeguards should be followed as described in the bulletin.

B. Pupil Appraisal Team/Special Education Evaluations

1. If a student is referred for a special education evaluation, parental consent for the evaluation is requested.
2. If the parent/guardian grants permission, the committee conducts an evaluation and determines whether the student is eligible for special education services. Specific evaluation procedures are described in *Bulletin 1508 - Pupil Appraisal Handbook*.
3. Students with dyslexia who qualify for special education services are typically identified as students with a specific learning disability and educational needs are addressed through an Individualized Education Program (IEP).
4. Some students identified with other primary impairments such as speech-language impairment or other health impairments may receive specialized instructional services and/or accommodations to address dyslexia if deemed appropriate by their IEP placement committee.

Challenges in Accurate Identification

Varying criteria and opinions across the country regarding screening and identification of dyslexia lead to inconsistencies in identifying students with dyslexia. Additionally, some students may not be identified with dyslexia until their reading difficulties become evident in elementary or even middle school, causing delayed interventions and increased educational gaps. Complexities of the English language pose challenges in distinguishing normal language learning difficulties from dyslexia, especially as states around the country address improving literacy for all students. Additionally, the protocol for following up on screening results and dyslexia risk has been ambiguous and treated differently across school systems; policy revisions currently underway will seek to clarify and increase consistency.

Current Improvements and Additional Solutions

1. Improved Training

Enhancing training for administrators, pupil appraisal teams, SBLC members, and educators aimed at increasing dyslexia awareness, characteristics, and interventions can enable observation and recognition of the early signs to increase early identification and intervention.

2. Pre-Educator Training

Higher education educator preparation programs in Louisiana are also now required to offer coursework for all future educators on dyslexia. Act 266 (2023) requires teacher education programs to include but not be limited to no less than three credit hours on teaching students with dyslexia.

Administrator and Educator Training

Bulletin 996 - Standards for Approval of Teacher and/or Educational Leader Preparation Programs and Act 108 of the 2021 Regular Legislative Session require early literacy instruction for students in grades K-3, literacy support for certain students, professional development, and administrator and teacher training on foundational literacy skills instruction based on the science of reading. Beginning in 2021, school systems began providing this training to educators across Louisiana. Further, in 2023, the LDOE expanded free statewide access to science of reading training to educators in grades 4-8, specifically targeting special educators and interventionists.

Bulletin 1903 - Louisiana Handbook for Students with Dyslexia sets forth school-level responsibilities that include providing professional development about state and federal regulations regarding dyslexia, as well as the LEA policies for implementation of the assessment and program process. Additionally, school systems shall provide educator training including information necessary to implement specialized instructional interventions and strategies for students with

unexplained reading difficulty, and an intervention plan shall be developed for students identified as in need of additional support.

Most recently, in 2024, the LDOE aims to increase the number of dyslexia practitioners through a partnership with the Dyslexia Resource Center to provide educators access to a training program accredited through the International Dyslexia Association.

3. Establish Uniform Screening Protocols

Screening is intended to identify the level of risk that a student will face a challenge; specifically, dyslexia screening is intended to determine the level of risk for reading challenges and the risk of having or developing dyslexia. All students in grades K-3 in Louisiana participate in literacy screening three times a year; however, until now, there has been no universal screening for dyslexia risk. Recent updates to [R.S. 17:392](#) now require that dyslexia screening be administered to all kindergarten students before the end of the kindergarten year. The LDOE is in the process of updating policy and procedure in alignment with this requirement.

4. Early Intervention

Without early intervention and support, students struggling with foundational reading skills, such as phonological and phonemic awareness, sound-symbol correspondence, alphabet knowledge, word identification and decoding, and encoding, are at risk for not meeting proficiency standards in literacy. These students need support in deficit skills, continued access to grade-level standards, high-quality instruction, and high-quality instructional materials (HQIM).

The LDOE offers many resources to assist school systems in implementing literacy action steps, including support with creating and sustaining local school system literacy plans. State law and BESE policy have put certain requirements in place to ensure literacy screening for all students and intentional literacy intervention planning for all students. *Bulletin 1566 - Pupil Progression Policies and Procedures* requires individual student literacy plans for students who score below basic on the Louisiana Education Assessment Program (LEAP) and below grade-level reading scores on literacy screening.

Students identified as being at risk for dyslexia or as having dyslexia are entitled to intervention in an educational program that meets the requirements of the Louisiana Dyslexia Law. *Bulletin 1903 - Louisiana Handbook for Students with Dyslexia* requires that students have access to

- A. Routine intervention using a multisensory language and literacy program during the school day,
- B. A multisensory structured language and literacy program that:
 - a. Contains instruction in phonological awareness, phoneme-grapheme association, phonics, syllables, linguistics, meaning, and reading fluency.

- b. Integrates all aspects of language-based instruction including receptive, expressive, oral and written language, and handwriting.
 - c. Uses instructional methods that are explicit, systematic, sequential, cumulative, individualized, diagnostic, demonstrate automaticity of performance, simultaneously multisensory, and follow the synthetic to analytic phonics instructional process.
 - d. Allows for adequate practice opportunities to develop automaticity of performance.
- C. Progress monitoring data should be maintained on students receiving instruction in a multisensory structured language and literacy program.
- D. Students' participation should be periodically reviewed to determine appropriateness and effectiveness.

5. Multidisciplinary Collaboration

Encouraging collaboration between educators, school psychologists, speech-language pathologists, literacy specialists, educational diagnosticians, and other relevant professionals fosters a holistic approach to identifying students with dyslexia. These professionals can pool their expertise and collectively make a more informed identification and intervention plan.

The Louisiana Literacy Advisory Commission members agreed to serve on subcommittees to explore five key areas related to literacy, with one of the areas being centered on dyslexia. Subcommittees examine current initiatives and additional areas for exploration.

Accurate identification of students with dyslexia is crucial for appropriate intervention and support. Combining improved training, standardized screening protocols, intervention programs, and interdisciplinary collaborations can enhance the accuracy and effectiveness of identifying students with dyslexia. These improvements will allow students with dyslexia to receive the necessary support and resources to promote academic and life success.

For additional information regarding data, please contact specialeducation@la.gov or contact diverselearnersupport@la.gov for additional information regarding instruction and interventions.

