

Dyslexia Working Group

2025 Annual Report

Submitted to:
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By:
Dyslexia Working Group

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Executive Summary

House Bill 19-1134, enacted during the 2019 legislative session, mandated the establishment of the Dyslexia Working Group (DWG) as outlined in Section 22-20.5-103, C.R.S. The legislation directs the Commissioner of Education to assemble this group with the goal of enhancing educational outcomes for students with dyslexia. As part of its charge, the DWG is expected to review and, where appropriate, incorporate the efforts and recommendations from existing and prior state initiatives aimed at improving the identification and support of students with dyslexia. This statutory authorization for the DWG remains in effect through September 1, 2029.

Building on prior DWG recommendations and current-year discussions, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) has continued enhancing dyslexia-related initiatives across multiple areas. These efforts include ongoing collaboration with READ Assessment vendors to provide professional development for identifying reading risks like dyslexia, refining its website to increase accessibility and visibility of dyslexia resources, and reviewing teacher training programs to align with the science of reading. The CDE updated and expanded its READ Act Training to include K-12 instruction with new facilitator guides and routines released in 2025. It also launched a Science of Reading Literacy Series to support research-based professional development and equipped district leaders through Train the Trainer sessions. Additionally, a Senior Literacy Consultant with dyslexia expertise was appointed to coordinate resources and serve as liaison with the DWG, while the Colorado Dyslexia Pilot Program website hosts resources developed with the University of Oregon.

During the 2024-25 school year, the DWG identified nine key recommendations to improve literacy support in Colorado:

- LEAs should monitor READ Act designations to ensure highly trained staff work with students who have significant reading difficulties.
- Expanding stakeholder resources - especially for families, teachers, and underserved areas - and updating the CDE Dyslexia Handbook with vetted tools.
- Phased implementation of universal K-3 dyslexia screening starting in 2027–28, while encouraging early adoption and staff training in data use and evidence-based instruction.
- Forming a stakeholder task force to integrate the Science of Reading into RANDA staff evaluations.
- Advocate for a dyslexia therapist/specialist endorsement through accredited programs.
- Outline criteria screeners must meet - such as targeting key reading competencies and meeting validity standards.
- Trained educators - not paraprofessionals - should lead literacy instruction for high-need students, highlighting poor performance data as justification.
- Making kindergarten attendance compulsory prior to first grade.
- Creating a state-guided, mandatory reading skills course for at-risk secondary students rooted in the Science of Reading.

Collectively, these recommendations aim to strengthen reading outcomes and better support students with dyslexia across Colorado.

For the 2025-26 school year, the DWG will prioritize supporting multilingual learners and seek a presentation from CDE experts in language acquisition. The group will also provide input during public reviews of assessments



and screening tools, follow up with WestEd to inform rubric development, and determine evolving needs of parent advocacy groups considering new legislation. Additional goals include improving communication between schools and families about screener results, exploring next steps for intervention and instruction within MTSS frameworks, and learning from effective models already in practice. The DWG will also examine ways to reduce the risks of over-, under-, or misidentifying dyslexia, and enhance collaboration with other organizations focused on dyslexia.

Introduction

House Bill 19-1134 (HB 19-1134) which passed during the 2019 legislative session, called for the creation of a Dyslexia Working Group (DWG). See section 22-20.5-103, C.R.S. According to the statute, the Commissioner of Education is required to convene a working group to improve the educational outcomes for students with dyslexia. The DWG is statutorily authorized through September 1, 2029. The DWG has seven tasks outlined in statute:

- Analyze current national and statewide data related to students identified as having dyslexia, including but not limited to identification rates and achievement rates.
- Analyze the implementation and demonstrated effectiveness in other states of statewide legislation for dyslexia screening, educator training, and other dyslexia related laws.
- Identify and recommend appropriate dyslexia screening tools and processes as well as comprehensive assessments that address the recognized challenges of dyslexia, including phonological processing, phonemic awareness, and decoding and encoding skills.
- Identify and recommend a statewide plan for supporting students who are identified as having dyslexia, including specific intervention structures and their components, which must include evidence-based interventions, progress-monitoring systems, and data collection systems.
- Identify and recommend components of dyslexia awareness training for Colorado educators, including the content, target audience, time frame for training, and projected cost.
- Identify and recommend educator training for in-state approved programs of preparation for teacher and alternative teacher programs and recommended training for current educators, based on effective practice in other states, as well as recommendation from state and national organizations focusing on literacy. The recommendations concerning educator training may include the content, target audience, time frame for training, and projected cost.
- Provide recommendations to the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) concerning the design and implementation of the pilot program.

In addition to these activities, the Dyslexia Working Group must, “analyze and integrate, as appropriate, the work and recommendations of other previous and ongoing state initiatives related to improving the identification and support of students who have dyslexia” 22-20.5-103(3), C.R.S.

Membership and Facilitation

Members of the Dyslexia Working Group

The authorizing legislation for the DWG required the group to include the following members:

- A parent of a child identified with dyslexia.
- A parent of a child identified with dyslexia and a disability.
- A school district literacy specialist.
- A school district director of special education.
- A state or national literacy expert.
- A state or national dyslexia expert.

- Two elementary grade teachers, one of whom teaches in a rural or small rural school district.
- A principal of an elementary school in a rural school district or an employee of a BOCES who has expertise as a literacy specialist.
- A faculty member of an IHE who teaches in an approved educator preparation program for elementary grade teachers.
- A member of the local chapter of the international dyslexia association.

The CDE solicits nominations and applications for service on the DWG to determine appointment recommendations for the Commissioner of Education. Each member's determination is taken into consideration from the quality of application packet, how the applicant meets the statutorily defined role, and the applicant's ability to serve through the duration of the working group. In addition, the CDE makes it a priority that members are representative from across the state, including small rural and rural districts, urban and suburban districts. Table 1 below shows the membership of the DWG during the year 2024-25.

At the end of the 2024-25 school year, the following members completed their service in the DWG, for which the department extends its gratitude:

- Jamie Brackney, a parent of a child who is identified as having dyslexia and a disability.
- Dyann Powell, a state or national dyslexia expert.
- Michelle Qazi, a state or national literacy expert.

Table 1: Dyslexia Working Group Membership by Region and Role

Member	Region	Role
Jamie Brackney	Pikes Peak	A parent of a child who is identified as having dyslexia and a disability
Marcie Eichmann	Pikes Peak	Elementary teacher
April Gerakos-Rooker	North Central	A parent of a child who is identified as having dyslexia
Sarah Huffman	Southeast	Elementary teacher who is employed at an elementary school in a rural or small rural school district
Jennifer Imel	Southwest	A principal who is employed at an elementary school in a rural school district or an employee of a board of cooperative services who has expertise as a literacy specialist
Cindy Kanuch	Metro Area	A member of the local chapter of an international dyslexia association
Patrick McGinty	Northwest	A school district director of special education



Member	Region	Role
Dyann Powell	Metro Area	A state or national dyslexia expert
Michelle Qazi	Metro Area	A state or national literacy expert
Brian Rose, Ph.D.	North Central	A faculty member of an institution of higher education who teaches in an approved educator preparation program for elementary grade teachers
Janine Rufola	Metro Area	A parent of a child who is identified as having dyslexia and a disability
Laura Swanson	North Central	A school district literacy specialist

Facilitation of the Dyslexia Working Group

For the 2024-25 school year, the department scheduled the DWG meetings for the following dates:

- Friday, September 13, 2024
- Friday, November 15, 2024
- Friday, January 31, 2025
- Friday, March 7, 2025
- Friday, May 9, 2025

The DWG conducted their work through hybrid (in-person and virtual) meetings, except for two virtual meetings. All meetings of the DWG were open to the public; however, only working group members had an active role in the meeting. The CDE has a [DWG webpage](#) where all of the meeting dates, locations, materials, and summaries are posted for transparency.

The DWG had two working groups that focused on the different components of the DWG's charge. The working groups for the 2024-25 school year were: (1) Training and Resources and (2) Successful Models and Systems Shifts. Both groups were charged with:

- Revisiting prior DWG reports to identify opportunities, challenges, and outcomes related to the topic of their working group.
- Identifying, within the scope of the DWG, some realistic wins that could be achieved in 2025, key activities to help them achieve those wins, and a timeline for implementation of those activities.

Implementation Updates

Following recommendations from the DWG's previous annual reports, along with discussions during the current year, CDE has continued to work on:

- The CDE continues to work collaboratively with READ Assessment vendors on providing professional development to the field on how to use available resources and a body of evidence to screen for indicators of reading risk, including dyslexia.
- The CDE continues to improve website design, structure, and content so that information about dyslexia is both accessible and visible to respective audiences including teachers, families, and the public. Website improvements include several links to resources recommended in DWG's previous reports.
- The CDE continues to review pre-service teacher training programs to ensure that they are informed by the science of reading and include training in awareness of dyslexia and appropriate instruction and intervention.
- In 2025, the CDE worked collaboratively with the Public Consulting Group, Inc. in developing and embedding facilitator guides and instructional routines in the K-12 READ Act Training, *Building a Strong Foundation for Lifelong Literacy Success*. These were released in April 2025.
- The CDE-provided READ Act Trainings continue to include information on the definition of dyslexia, indicators of dyslexia, what to look for, and information on screening and assessing students for reading deficiencies including dyslexia.
- The Office of Elementary Literacy and School Readiness appointed a CDE Senior Literacy Consultant with dyslexia expertise as a point-person to serve as a liaison between the Dyslexia Working Group and to address the intersectionality of the CDE's work on dyslexia. This role includes focusing on the continued alignment of CDE Dyslexia resources and continued efforts to disseminate CDE resources to key stakeholders and the public.
- The CDE created a dedicated cross-departmental literacy leadership team to focus on early literacy and student groups who are not meeting expectations to target support.
- Materials created and provided by the University of Oregon throughout the entirety of the Dyslexia Pilot Program are available on the [Colorado Dyslexia Pilot Program website](#).

2024-25 DWG Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) Monitor the READ Act

The DWG recommends that LEAs monitor the READ Act designation status (in compliance with SB19-199 and SB22-004) of instructional staff to ensure that the most highly trained staff provide instruction and intervention for the most struggling readers (i.e., students identified with significant reading deficiencies). This recommendation would apply to:

- Secondary classroom teachers
- Grades 4-5 in elementary settings
- Special Educators
- Anyone working with students on READ plans who receive tutoring or intervention services

Recommendation #2: Identification of Resources

The DWG recommends the identification of resources for a wider variety of stakeholders (e.g., parents of children newly identified for services, teachers, stakeholders in remote locations). These resources can extend what is already required for districts to provide (e.g., laws and such). To this end, the DWG recommends that CDE: a) update the CDE Dyslexia Handbook to include resources for administration, teachers, families, and the

community taken from the CDE-provided online READ Act training resources available through the coursework for the READ Act training designation and b) create a vetting protocol with stakeholder groups (e.g., ALTA, IDA, The Reading League Colorado).

The DWG also continues to recommend the identification and dissemination of a list of venues/trusted partnerships that make vetted resources available to their stakeholders to broaden their reach and increase the access to reliable resources for stakeholders (e.g., parents with children newly identified for services, teachers working with parents of children receiving services, school personnel, children receiving services, and including all stakeholders in underserved areas).

Recommendation #3: Screening Process

SB25-200 was signed into law by Governor Polis in May 2025. The READ Act was amended to include a requirement that all K-3 students undergo an additional dyslexia screener. This starts in the 2027-28 school year, beginning with kindergarten. The DWG recommends adding the next grade level in each additional school year and screening all students who have not been screened before until all students in grades K-3 have been screened.

The dyslexia screener shall comprehensively evaluate the following components of literacy:

- Phonemic Awareness
- Letter Identification
- Grapheme-phoneme Correspondence
- Encoding
- Fluency
- Oral Language
- Rapid Automatized Naming

The DWG also recommends that local education providers begin this screening process before the 2027-28 school year, to lessen the lasting impact of dyslexia on unidentified students.

Additionally, the DWG recommends that local education providers prepare and create a clear structure and protocol before the implementation of a screener to train teachers, interventionists, and Special Educator providers:

- To read and interpret data;
- To provide instruction and intervention that is multi-sensory, structured, direct, explicit, sequential, cumulative, evidence-based, with a systematic scope and sequence based on the Science of Reading, and;
- To monitor progress and implementation of instruction and intervention to improve the outcomes for students.

Recommendation #4: Working Group to Integrate the Component of the Science of Reading within RANDA

The DWG continues to recommend that CDE form a group (Working Group, Task Force, or other committee) of essential stakeholders (CDE licensure, Administrators, teachers, RANDA developers, CDE DWG, CALT, Post-secondary education, etc.) to integrate the component of the Science of Reading within evaluation performance criteria (RANDA) for all staff professional evaluations. We are recommending a working group, committee, etc. to tackle making sure that the science of reading is part of teacher evaluation rubrics. RANDA is the platform where teacher evaluation rubrics are housed for most school districts. It should be generic - not all school districts use RANDA, but all do use some sort of teacher evaluation rubric.

Recommendation #5: Dyslexia Therapist/Specialist Endorsement

The DWG continues to recommend that a dyslexia therapist/specialist endorsement, license, or designation (pool of specialists) through accredited college, university or national accreditation/certification such as ALTA-CALT, CALT-QI, or OGA Fellow, be established through the Colorado Department of Education.

Recommendation #6: Criteria for Dyslexia Screeners

The Dyslexia Working Group wants to emphasize that the vendor rubric for dyslexia screening criteria included in approved READ Act interim assessments - developed by the CDE - must specifically include the following elements, and that any vendor's universal dyslexia screener must meet these criteria before being considered for outside evaluation.

- In the identification of students who are at risk of reading difficulties:
 - Accurately and reliably identify students who are at risk of reading failure or reading disorders; and
 - Directly measure reading competency skills, including, but not limited to:
 - Phonological and phonemic awareness;
 - The alphabetic principle;
 - Encoding and word-decoding skills;
 - Letter naming;
 - Oral reading fluency; and
 - Rapid automatized naming;
- Meet established validity and reliability standards.

In addition, the rubric must ensure that there are clear grade-level guidelines related to characteristics of dyslexia for the available screening measures included in the READ Act interim assessments.

Recommendation #7: Quality Literacy Instruction

The DWG strongly recommends that special education paraprofessionals should not be primarily responsible for delivering literacy instruction to our highest-need students. Instead, the DWG advocates that special education teachers or the most qualified literacy teacher in the building be responsible for delivering multisensory, explicit, structured, systematic, sequential, direct instruction, while the paraprofessional be trained to help the student practice and receive immediate automatic feedback of already taught content. Current outcomes highlight this urgency: in 2023–2024, only 13.3% of third graders, 11.3% of fourth graders, and 11.6% of fifth graders on IEPs met or exceeded expectations on the CMAS ELA, with a declining trend across grades.

Recommendation #8: Compulsory Kindergarten Attendance

The DWG recommends that attendance in kindergarten should be made compulsory for all students before entering first grade.

Recommendation #9: Guidance for Implementing a Mandatory Reading Skills Course

The DWG recommends that the CDE provide guidance for implementing a mandatory reading skills course grounded in the Science of Reading - explicit, structured, cumulative, multisensory, evidence-based, and sequential. This course should supplement the standard ELA curriculum for secondary students identified as at risk.

Next Steps for the Dyslexia Working Group

For the 2025-26 school year, the focus for the DWG will be to:

- Focus on multilingual learners.
- Aim to have a presentation from CDE staff on language acquisition.
- Provide input on assessments/screening tools when public input is solicited.
- Follow up with WestEd and conduct a deeper dive into the information they presented and use that information to give input on rubric.
- Identify what parent advocacy groups need next considering the recent legislation passed.
- Ensure teachers and schools know how to communicate screener results with parents.
- Seek out more info on next steps related to intervention or universal instruction (linked to MTSS protocols). Pull ideas from places where this kind of work is already happening with successful results.
- Consider how to make sure we aren't overidentifying, under-identifying, or mis-identifying dyslexia.
- Work to align the DWG more intentionally with other groups focused on dyslexia.