



# Indicators of Reading Risk

## Developed in Partnership with the Colorado Dyslexia Working Group

This tool is designed for educator-use. Formative observation, alongside assessments and a body of evidence, can help determine if a student presents indicators commonly associated with reading risk, including dyslexia. When using this tool for assessing indicators of reading risk, it is essential to consider the unique linguistic and cultural backgrounds of multilingual learners to accurately distinguish between language differences and language disabilities.

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. The impact of dyslexia on students varies widely and exists on a continuum, with each child experiencing a unique range of challenges and strengths.

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*Combined with additional assessment and observations, the data collected using this tool should inform instructional decisions. This resource is not intended to screen, diagnose, or identify specific learning disabilities.*

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**Directions:** Begin by assessing indicators within the student's current grade level. Complete any known history or information from prior grade levels to help inform the body of evidence. Categories are listed in descending order from left to right based on their predictive value for reading risk at each grade level.

### Preschool

#### Language

- ☐ Language delay (often earliest indicator)
- ☐ Trouble learning common nursery rhymes
- ☐ Mispronounced words; persistent baby talk
- ☐ Difficulty in learning/remembering names of letters/numbers
- ☐ Difficulty learning/remembering days of the week, numbers, or other sequences

#### Pre-Reading/Emerging Literacy

- ☐ Failure to know letters in own name
- ☐ Difficulty learning sound letter correspondences

- ☐ Lack of interest/appreciation/recognition of rhymes and rhyming patterns (cat, bat, rat)

#### Social/Emotional

- ☐ Expresses dislike for reading and other academic tasks
- ☐ Exhibits anxiety or frustration
- ☐ Avoidance behaviors

#### Other

- ☐ Confuses left and right/dominant hand delay
- ☐ Difficulty remembering spoken directions
- ☐ Appears distracted, unfocused

## Kindergarten-1st Grade

### Language

- ☐ Confuses names or pronunciations of letters with similar sounds (p/b, z/s, v/f, d/t)
- ☐ Demonstrates poor memory for classmates' names
- ☐ Difficulty retrieving specific words
- ☐ Doesn't easily recognize that words begin with the same sound

### Pre-Reading/Early Literacy

- ☐ Failure to understand that words come apart (batboy > bat boy)
- ☐ Inability to associate letters with sounds (learning sound letter correspondences)
- ☐ Reading errors show no connection to sounds of letters (big read as goat)
- ☐ Inability to read or sound out common one-syllable words (cat, map, nap)

### Social/Emotional

- ☐ Complaints about reading or spelling, avoidance, misbehavior when time to read
- ☐ Lack of motivation about school or learning
- ☐ Lack of confidence in learning
- ☐ Negative self-image compared to grade-level peers

### Other

- ☐ History of reading problems with parents or siblings
- ☐ Trouble easily clapping hands to rhythm of a song

### Notes:

## 2nd Grade – 6th Grade

### Reading

- ☐ Relies on pictures or memorization when reading
- ☐ Has trouble reading/spelling sounds in sequential order
- ☐ Confuses similar looking letters and words (b/d, p/q, was/saw)
- ☐ Difficulty reading/sounding out multisyllabic words
- ☐ Lack of strategy in decoding
- ☐ Slow progress in reading
- ☐ Trouble reading unknown words
- ☐ Frequent guessing
- ☐ Inability to read function words (that, at, in)
- ☐ Omits parts of words when reading
- ☐ Oral reading full of substitutions, omissions, mispronunciations
- ☐ Choppy, labored, word by word reading
- ☐ Lacks inflection, prosody
- ☐ Lacks interest in books and shared reading activities
- ☐ Fails to understand age-appropriate stories
- ☐ Keeping up with comprehension on longer reading assignments
- ☐ Difficulty making inferences, predicting outcomes, drawing conclusions

### Writing

- ☐ Spells words incorrectly, even in high frequency words (was, then, were)
- ☐ Spells words phonetically
- ☐ Difficulty proofing written work
- ☐ Poor/Messy handwriting

### Social/Emotional

- ☐ Complaints about reading or spelling, avoidance, misbehavior when time to read
- ☐ Lowered self-esteem
- ☐ Anxiety
- ☐ Lack of motivation about school or learning
- ☐ Lack of confidence in learning
- ☐ Negative self-image compared to grade-level peers

### Language

- ☐ Mispronunciation of long words, or fracturing of words (cinnamon for synonym)
- ☐ Difficulty breaking spoken words apart into sounds or syllables
- ☐ Speech is not fluent
- ☐ Use of imprecise language (stuff, things)
- ☐ Difficulty retrieving correct word/confusing words that sound alike (lotion/ocean, tornado/volcano)
- ☐ Trouble remembering dates, names, telephone numbers, lists, rote memorization
- ☐ Difficulty remembering isolated pieces of verbal information
- ☐ Need time for oral response or inability to provide quick verbal response
- ☐ May have much to say, but provides little specific detail

### Other

- ☐ History of reading problems in parents or siblings
- ☐ Suffers writing/reading/task fatigue
- ☐ Poor performance on multiple choice tests
- ☐ Inability to complete tests on time

## 6th Grade and On

### Reading

- ☐ Rarely reads for pleasure
- ☐ Avoids reading aloud
- ☐ Hard time making inferences and/or understanding sarcasm

### Writing

- ☐ Spells words incorrectly, even in high frequency words (was, then, were)
- ☐ Spells words phonetically
- ☐ Avoids writing, handwritten responses are brief and simplistic
- ☐ Word processing compositions are disorganized or lack cohesion

### Social/Emotional

- ☐ Complaints about reading or spelling, avoidance, misbehavior when time to read
- ☐ Lowered self-esteem
- ☐ Anxiety
- ☐ Lack of motivation about school or learning
- ☐ Lack of confidence in learning
- ☐ Negative self-image compared to grade-level peers

### Language

- ☐ Pauses or hesitates, uses “um”, “like” repeatedly
- ☐ Not fluent or anxious when speaking
- ☐ Often pronounces names incorrectly, avoids vocabulary words that might be mispronounced
- ☐ Talks in short sentences
- ☐ Relates stories or events in a disorganized or incomplete manner
- ☐ Struggles when put on spot in conversation or writing
- ☐ Oral vocabulary smaller than listening vocabulary
- ☐ Difficulty remembering names of people, places
- ☐ Confuses similar sounding names

### Other

- ☐ Has to study more than peers
- ☐ Difficulty with directionality, walking in building or driving
- ☐ Difficulty learning foreign language or reading music
- ☐ History of reading struggles or learning foreign language in family members

### Sources:

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