

The background of the slide is a composite image. The top left shows a line of yellow school buses with "SCHOOL BUS" written on the front. The bottom left shows a classroom with blue walls, decorated with colorful balloons and framed pictures. There are several small desks and chairs in the classroom.

Supporting Students with Dyslexia: KDE's Dyslexia Toolkit & Evidence-Based Practices

Interim Joint Committee on Education
July 6, 2026

Empowering Literacy for All

KDE Dyslexia Toolkit Guidance

KRS 158.307 requires the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) to make available a dyslexia toolkit that includes guidance, technical assistance, and training to assist all local school districts in the implementation of evidence-based practices for instructing students identified with or displaying characteristics of dyslexia.

Statute requires the toolkit to provide guidance for local districts targeting students in K-3 who have been identified with or displaying characteristics of dyslexia:

- Evidence-based practices designed specifically for students with dyslexia;
- Characteristics of targeted instruction for dyslexia;
- Guidance on developing instructional plans for students with dyslexia;
- Best practices toward meaning-centered reading and writing;
- Structured multisensory and literacy approaches to teaching language and reading skills; and
- Suggested professional development activities.

Empowering Literacy for All

KDE Dyslexia Toolkit Guidance

The KDE has updated the Dyslexia Toolkit and provided a list of approved universal screeners and reading diagnostic tools to assist districts in developing and implementing their local dyslexia policy.

In KDE's Dyslexia Toolkit, schools and districts can find more information on:

- The definition and characteristics of dyslexia
- Evidence-based explicit and systematic instruction for students displaying characteristics of dyslexia
- Dyslexia screening within a multi-tiered system of supports
- Tiered interventions and supports for students displaying characteristics of dyslexia
- Instructional supports for students with characteristics of dyslexia



Kindergarten to Grade 3 Dyslexia Toolkit

Guide &
Resource

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Defining Dyslexia

KRS 158.307 defines dyslexia as a specific learning disability that is neurological in origin.

- **Primary Characteristics:**
 - Difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition
 - Poor spelling and decoding abilities
- **Underlying Cause:** Typically results from a deficit in the phonological component of language.
- **Secondary Consequences:** May include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede the growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.

Defining Dysgraphia

KRS 158.305 defines dysgraphia as difficulty in automatically remembering and mastering the sequence of muscle motor movements needed to accurately write letters or numbers.

- **Primary Characteristics:**
 - Difficulties with transcription skills (handwriting, typing, and spelling).
 - Inconsistent letter formations, spacing, and sizing.
 - Discrepancy between verbal expression and written output.
- **Co-occurrence:** Frequently overlaps with dyslexia, requiring a dual approach to reading and writing interventions.

Implications for Kentucky Students

- Reading is the foundational life skill - the basis for all other learning - with a lasting impact on success in school and beyond.
- Dyslexia, a common barrier to reading, affects as many as 15–20% of the population, according to the International Dyslexia Association (IDA).
- This high prevalence necessitates that teachers and families be equipped with the appropriate tools to recognize the signs and the practices needed to forge a pathway for accelerated learning and literacy success.
- The IDA emphasizes that while dyslexia is lifelong, early screening, diagnosis, and evidence-based intervention can lead to highly successful outcomes for students and adults.

The Foundation: The “Science of Reading”

- **Evidence-Based:** Proven effective and backed by decades of cognitive science and neurobiological research; does not include the three-cueing system model of word reading.
- **The Framework:** Addresses how the human brain explicitly learns to read.
- **The Reading Brain:** Confirms that reading is not a natural process (like speaking) and must be explicitly taught.
- **Universal Benefit:** Essential for students demonstrating characteristics of dyslexia, but beneficial for all learners.

The Instructional Approach: Structured Literacy

The "What" (Elements)

Phonology & Phonemic Awareness:

- Recognizing and manipulating spoken sounds

Sound-Symbol Association:

- Mapping sounds to letters (phonics)

Syllable Instruction:

- Understanding syllable types to decode longer words

Morphology & Syntax:

- Studying meaningful word parts (prefixes, roots, suffixes) and grammar

The "How" (Principles)

Explicit:

- Providing direct teaching and instruction

Systematic & Cumulative:

- Moving from simple to complex sequentially, or in a logical order

Multisensory:

- Utilizing two or more sensory pathways (auditory, visual, kinesthetic, tactile)

Diagnostic:

- Continuously assessing data to drive targeted instruction

Kentucky's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (KyMTSS)

- **Tier 1 (Universal):** High-quality, evidence-based structured literacy instruction for all students, accompanied by universal early literacy screening assessments.
- **Tier 2 (Targeted):** Small-group, strategic interventions focusing explicitly on identified skill deficits (e.g., advanced phonemic awareness or intensive decoding practice).
- **Tier 3 (Intensive):** Highly individualized, intensive daily interventions with increased frequency and smaller group sizes.
- **Data-Based Decision-Making:** Frequent progress monitoring to fluidly move students across tiers based on their response to the intervention.

Evidence-Based Classroom Accommodations

Instructional Adaptations:

- Use explicit multi-sensory techniques (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile).

Environmental & Materials Support:

- Provide audiobooks or text-to-speech tools alongside physical text.
- Use structured graphic organizers for writing tasks.

Assessment Modifications:

- Allow extra time for reading/writing assignments and offer alternative ways to demonstrate knowledge (e.g., oral presentations).

Focus:

- Reduce cognitive load on decoding and transcription so students can access grade-level content.

Local Policy Considerations

- Effective intervention is essential to ensure struggling readers receive appropriate scaffolding and coherent accelerated learning, aligned with strong, daily Tier 1 universal/core instruction grounded in a high-quality instructional resource (HQIR).
- Whenever possible, schools should begin by providing support in the general education classroom to ensure access to appropriate grade-level learning. In order to intervene before a student's performance falls below grade level, schools must screen all students in accordance with KRS 158.305.
- In addition to the Dyslexia Toolkit, the KDE has identified model policy recommendations to assist schools and districts in supporting students displaying characteristics of dyslexia. These recommendations include best practices for screening, intervention and family engagement.

Statutory Reporting Requirements

Per HB 253, Section 2, "[b]y June 30, 2028, and June 30 of each year thereafter for five (5) years, each local school district shall provide the department the following data for the current school year:

- (a) The number of students in K-3 that were identified through the approved universal screener and reading diagnostic assessment as defined in KRS 158.305 as displaying characteristics of dyslexia;
- (b) The number of students in paragraph (a) of this subsection that were identified as needing enrichment programs as defined in KRS 158.305;
- (c) The number of students in K-3 that were participating in literacy interventions within the school setting; and
- (d) The process or tools used to evaluate student progress."

Questions?

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