

Teacher Checklist for Characteristics of Dyslexia

This checklist has been designed to support educators as they identify characteristics of dyslexia; however, it is not intended to make a diagnosis. This checklist should be used to consolidate multiple sources of information. This checklist should be completed within six weeks of the first universal screening. The summary statements will help teams determine next instructional steps and match intensity of instruction to the data indicating “how worried we should be.”

The characteristics are organized into categories that match the Four Part Processing Model of Word Recognition (Figure 1). This model illustrates the underlying processes involved in word recognition and decoding. This data informs what needs to be a target for further intervention.

When completing this checklist consider all the sources of data you have including observations of the student during instruction, history of scores from screening, formative assessment, summative assessment, progress monitoring, and work samples. Information from parent report, student report and prior education and tutoring are all valuable sources of data to use when completing this checklist.

Given that students with characteristics of dyslexia may have very strong cognitive ability, reasoning skills or academic strengths in other areas, teachers are encouraged to use the notes section to describe student strengths. The teacher should add information to this checklist for every student who falls in the at-risk range on universal screening.

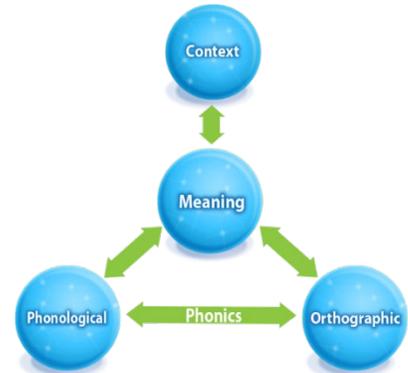


Figure 1. Four Part Processing Model of Word Recognition based on work of Seidenberg and McClelland. Graphic above is from Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS). This model is used as a foundation for assessment and to guide instructional planning.

Results from Universal Screening

	Listening and Reading Comprehension	Phonemic Awareness	Decoding, Oral Reading Fluency Spelling for later elementary grades	Rapid Automatized Naming (RAN)
Scores and assessment measure	Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA)	Phoneme blending, deletion, substitution	Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) (benchmark) Nonsense word fluency Word Reading	Letter Naming Fluency

Language Indicators: Context and Meaning-Making

Indicators of Language Difficulties	Mark concerns with X	Notes: Consider describing frequency, context, what supports are helpful.
Struggles to learn and retain words such as names of colors, shapes, other's names		
Difficulty finding the right word. Student relies on descriptions, pointing, or use of imprecise language (says "stuff" or "thing"). Speech is interrupted with pauses to find right word, needs extra time to respond to questions.		
Confuses words that sound alike, such as saying "tornado" for volcano, or "lotion" for ocean		
Struggles to accurately and efficiently process orally presented information. Student may stare intently at the speaker or use visual cues to support understanding when oral information is provided too quickly or when there is "too much language" for the student to follow. Student may look around the classroom to follow what peers are doing.		
Mispronunciation of long, unfamiliar, or complicated words (e.g. says "aminal" for animal or "calerpitter" for caterpillar)		
Difficulty remembering multi-step directions or sequences (ABCs, days of the week, months)		
Relates stories in a disorganized manner that is hard for the listener to follow		

Complete a statement summarizing language Indicators. In place of the italicized text, insert the indicators marked. Multiple indicators suggest the need to consult with a speech and language pathologist. Be sure that the indicators exemplify where performance is unexpected compared to that of typically developing peers who have received same amount of instruction. **For English learners (EL)** note differences between student and EL peer group.

Suggested language for summary statement: Given (*list indicators of language difficulties*) and (*current performance relative to expectations and peers*) the student requires additional instruction and practice. The following instructional strategies and supports will be used to improve performance (*breaking directions down, extra think time, use of objects or manipulatives in learning or communicating, etc.*).

Phonemic Awareness: Mapping Sounds within Words

Indicators of Phonemic Awareness Difficulties	Mark concerns with X	Notes: Consider results of error analysis, skill inventories, observation. Indicate if there are difficulties with specific sounds.
Difficulty identifying initial, medial or final sound of a word	_Accuracy _Automaticity ¹	
Struggles to identify or create rhyming words, does not enjoy rhyming	_Accuracy _Automaticity	
Unable to break words into separate speech sounds ('cat' has three sounds /c/ /ă/ /t/). <i>Note: EL learner's first language may break words into syllables rather than phonemes (e.g. Spanish). Document student differences relative to EL peer group.</i>	_Accuracy _Automaticity	
Difficulty deleting or substituting phonemes during phonemic awareness activities	_Accuracy _Automaticity	

Complete the phonemic awareness summary statement. In place of the italicized text, insert the indicators marked. Be sure that the indicators exemplify where performance is unexpected compared to that of typically developing peers who have received same amount of instruction. **For English Learners**, it is important to be explicit about opportunities to practice with phonemes. EL students may require more practice due to phonemic differences across languages. While slow acquisition of phonemic awareness from EL students does not necessarily indicate characteristics of dyslexia, it is an indicator of the need for more instruction and practice.

Suggested language for summary statement: Given *(list indicators of phonemic awareness difficulties)* and *(current performance relative to expectations and peers)* the student requires additional instruction and practice with the following specific skills *(insert phonemic awareness skills to be addressed in the next six weeks)* using explicit, systematic instruction. The following instructional strategies and supports will also be used to improve performance *(finger tapping the sounds/phonemes, markers/tokens, mirrors, reference to articulatory features of sounds, etc.)*. Progress will be monitored *(weekly or bi-weekly)* using *(list progress monitoring tool)*.

¹ Automaticity means within two seconds. It is important to measure consolidated skills and not compensatory skills. The goal is to measure what is effortless (Kilpatrick, 2015).

Orthography: Mapping Sounds to Letters

Indicators of Orthographic Difficulties	Mark concerns with X	Note: Consider error analysis, observations, spelling inventories, etc. Note specific sounds that are difficult.
Doesn't know letters in own name (first or last)	_Accuracy _Automaticity	
Confuses similar-looking letters (directionality)	_Accuracy _Automaticity	
Difficulty learning or recalling letter sounds (despite repeated practice)	_Accuracy _Automaticity	
Difficulty with fluent/automatic naming of letters	_Accuracy _Automaticity	
Misspellings indicate not all sounds are represented or errors are not phonetic (make note in phonemic awareness that this skill is missing)	_Accuracy _Automaticity	
Misspellings are phonetically correct (all sounds are represented) but with the wrong graphemes (letters/patterns)	_Accuracy _Automaticity	
Misspellings show student isn't using morphemes correctly (e.g. 'wacht' for watched)	_Accuracy _Automaticity	
Student struggles with letter formation. Note which graphemes and/or other issues related to spacing.	_Accuracy _Automaticity	
Spells same word multiple ways within the same document. May even misspell a word the student can see or refer to on the board or worksheet.		
Limits writing to words student can spell (note differences between oral language and written work)		
Written responses are limited in length and detail compared to what would be provided in an oral response.		

Complete the orthographic mapping summary statement. Given (*indicators of orthographic difficulties*) and (*current performance relative to expectations and peers*) the student requires additional instruction and practice with the following specific skills (*insert orthographic skills to be addressed in the next six weeks*) using explicit, systematic instruction. The following instructional strategies and supports will also be used to improve performance (*use of finger tapping, boxing the syllable, mnemonics, etc.*). Progress will be monitored (*weekly or bi-weekly*) using (*list progress monitoring tool*).

Decoding

	Mark concerns with X	Note: Consider error analysis, skill inventories, and observations. Include explicit instruction, strategies, etc. that make it better.
Student's word reading errors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • show no connection to the sounds of the letters (reads "rabbit" as "bunny") • substitutes similar-looking words (reads "luck" as "lunch") • makes wild guesses at words (may use first letter) • relies heavily on the context or pictures in a story to "read" (e.g. student may look up at the ceiling to "figure out" a word) 		
Reads letters out of sequence (e.g. reads 'saw' as 'was' or 'from' as 'form')		
Difficulty holding letter sounds in mind when decoding (e.g. may sound out 'p-i-n' and then say "pick")		
Mixes up or omits small function words when reading (e.g. the, to, of, if, for)		
Frequently misreads common high frequency words even after practice (e.g. when, where, there, went, they, their, been, to, does, said, what)		
Reads or sounds out a word and then doesn't recognize that word later in the text		
Decoding is accurate but slow and labored (not automatic or fluent) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student is reading sound by sound with difficulty blending • Student is reading word by word but choppy and hesitant 		

Complete the decoding summary statement. Given (*indicators of decoding difficulties*) and (*current performance relative to expectations and peers*) the student requires additional instruction and practice with the following specific skills (*insert decoding skills to be addressed in the next six weeks*) using explicit, systematic instruction. The following instructional strategies and supports will also be used to improve performance (*use of finger tapping, boxing the syllable, dividing off morphemes, following with finger while sounding out the words, etc.*) Progress will be monitored (*weekly or bi-weekly*) using (*list progress monitoring tool*).

Educational Experiences

Indicators Additional Instruction is Necessary	Date (s)	What were the results?
Speech-language difficulties during early childhood		
Student repeated a course, grade, or service		
Student was referred for services: speech-language, special education, Title 1 services, Alternative Delivery of Instructional Supports and Services (ADSIS) etc.		
Student received / is receiving services: speech-language services or additional reading instruction		
Organizational time, study halls, other supports have been provided to help student keep up with workload and complete assignments.		
Instruction provided outside of school (tutoring or efforts provided by the family)		
Student was evaluated for special education or a 504 plan		
Student has qualified for special education or a 504 plan		
<i>Additional relevant experiences not listed above</i>		

Complete educational experiences summary statement. Given *(list student experience indicators)* the student demonstrates an ongoing need for additional interventions and supports such as *(please list interventions, supports and strategies that will be used)*.

Child and Family History

Child and Family History Indicators	Mark concerns with X	Note information relevant for planning intervention frequency, duration, intensity.
A family member has reading or spelling difficulties (may or may not have a formal diagnosis)		
Student has been evaluated or diagnosed with dyslexia, specific learning disorder or reading disorder		
Student has been evaluated or diagnosed with a speech or language disorder or demonstrates speech-language difficulties requiring intervention		

Child and Family History Indicators	Mark concerns with X	Note information relevant for planning intervention frequency, duration, intensity.
Student has been evaluated or diagnosed with ADHD or has difficulty sustaining attention		
Parents have discussed concerns with the school regarding student's difficulties with reading, language and/or attention		

Complete child and family history summary statement. Family history is one of the strongest predictors of dyslexia. Data on family history along with slow or delayed progress in accurate and automatic phonemic awareness, orthographic mapping, and phonics should absolutely lead to targeted and explicit systematic, and sequential instruction. Waiting or providing a balanced reading intervention is not supported by research.

Given *(list relevant child and family history)* it is likely that the student needs *(list effective strategies)* in order to make progress in core instruction.

Student Experiences

Student Experience Indicators	Mark concerns with X	Notes
Student complains of physical illness or actively avoids reading (puts head down, find excuses to stop or distract from task, multiple breaks during reading and writing, etc).		
Student expresses how hard reading is for them compared to others (siblings, students, etc.)		
Student complains of being stupid/dumb		
It takes multiple times longer for student to complete reading or homework assignments compared to siblings and peers		
Student prefers audio supported text / apps when available		
<i>Additional relevant information from conferences with student and parent not listed above</i>		

Complete student experience summary statement: Student experiences are important in identifying the impact of reading difficulties. Indicators from this list should be used to support selection of technology and accommodations that improve performance across the day. Data may also indicate the need for emotional supports to reduce anxiety and avoidance of reading tasks.

Given *(list student experience indicators)* it is likely that the student needs *(list effective strategies)* in order to make progress in core instruction.

Summary Problem Statement to Bring to the Team

Students with characteristics of dyslexia most often have phonemic awareness deficits that create a cascade of difficulties in decoding and orthography (i.e. spelling). Although we are not providing a diagnosis of dyslexia, we have recognized the following skills require additional explicit instruction.

Insert the following summary statements here: phonemic awareness, orthography, and decoding.

- Given *(list indicators of phonemic awareness difficulties)* and *(current performance relative to expectations and peers)* the student requires additional instruction and practice with the following specific skills *(insert phonemic awareness skills to be addressed in the next six weeks)* using explicit, systematic instruction. The following instructional strategies and supports will also be used to improve performance *(finger tapping the sounds/phonemes, markers/tokens, mirrors, reference to articulatory features of sounds, etc.)*. Progress will be monitored *(weekly or bi-weekly)* using *(list progress monitoring tool)*.
- Given *(indicators of orthographic difficulties)* and *(current performance relative to expectations and peers)* the student requires additional instruction and practice with the following specific skills *(insert orthographic skills to be addressed in the next six weeks)* using explicit, systematic instruction. The following instructional strategies and supports will also be used to improve performance *(use of finger tapping, boxing the syllable, mnemonics, etc.)*. Progress will be monitored *(weekly or bi-weekly)* using *(list progress monitoring tool)*.
- Given *(indicators of decoding difficulties)* and *(current performance relative to expectations and peers)* the student requires additional instruction and practice with the following specific skills *(insert decoding skills to be addressed in the next six weeks)* using explicit, systematic instruction. The following instructional strategies and supports will also be used to improve performance *(use of finger tapping, boxing the syllable, dividing off morphemes, following with finger while sounding out the words, etc.)*. Progress will be monitored *(weekly or bi-weekly)* using *(list progress monitoring tool)*.

How Worried Should We Be? Given language indicators, child and family history and student experiences *(insert indicators)* the team believes that:

- *the student requires intensive intervention and/or*
- *technology and audio supported text should be provided across the day to support reading comprehension.*
- *a referral for a 504 plan and accommodations (for daily work and standardized testing) are justified*
- *a referral for a special education evaluation should be initiated*

Given all the information provided at this time, we are proposing *(list services)* to be provided *(number of times per week)* times per week for *(number of minutes)* minutes per session.

We will monitor progress by *(list what data will be graphed)* and document additional learnings *(such as retention, progress towards the goal, level of explicitness needed)* to determine if and when additional evaluation or changes to intervention are needed.

We will be reviewing the data and student progress *(name skill, weekly/bi-weekly)*. If in *(number of weeks)* weeks, progress *(insert decision rule)* has not been made we will convene a meeting to discuss next steps.