

Structured Literacy

FAMILY GUIDE: SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS & DYSLEXIA SCREENING



This year, the New Mexico Public Education Department has launched a statewide literacy initiative, **Structured Literacy New Mexico**. This initiative is focused on increasing the number of students reading at or above grade level and decreasing the number of students requiring special education services.

Frequently Asked Questions

The following information is intended to provide families and caregivers with additional information about what to expect this school year. If you have any questions, please contact your school administrator.

What is Structured Literacy?

Structured Literacy is an umbrella term used to describe evidence-based approaches for helping students learn to read and write proficiently. Structured Literacy combines a proven effective system for teaching reading with what brain science tells us is happening in the brain as we learn to read—it involves a dynamic, multi-sensory approach to learning. Re-search shows structured literacy approaches benefit all students and are especially effective for students with learning disabilities such as dyslexia.

What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a learning disability that impacts the way children learn to read and write. Specifically, “It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities.... Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.” (International Dyslexia Association) Students with dyslexia are typically smart and have many strengths, although their reading and writing skills often make it difficult for them to demonstrate their intelligence in an academic setting.

What is a screener?

Beginning this school year, all first-grade students will be screened for dyslexia. A screener is not a diagnostic test. In other words, a screener will not result in your child being diagnosed with any particular learning disorder or disability. It is simply a classroom tool used to identify children who may be at risk for dyslexia. Once students are identified, they will receive targeted Structured Literacy instruction in their regular classroom.

What does the screening look like? What will my child be doing?

The screener is brief and conducted one on one with the classroom teacher or a reading specialist. The screener will take between 10–20 minutes to complete. Students will answer questions from their teacher, such as, “ABC...” Teachers will look for indicators that a child demonstrates characteristics of dyslexia, as well as other pre-literacy skills that will help inform classroom instruction and individual support.

Is this required?

Yes. [New Mexico law](#) now requires that all first-grade students are screened for dyslexia.



Will this put my child in special education?

No. The intention of this entire initiative is to move our focus to prevention rather than intervention. With this knowledge, educators can support our students through targeted instruction during their learning to read period, from kindergarten to third grade, so that they don't fall behind and get referred to special education. It is important to note that this screener is not a formal assessment of your child and will not be used for grading. Screeners will NOT determine grade promotion or retention.

What are the next steps, after my child is screened?

Your child will receive help in the areas where they are struggling. If your child demonstrates characteristics of dyslexia, they will receive targeted Structured Literacy intervention. This means your child's classroom teacher or other instructional staff will support your child's learning and monitor their progress to determine if they are making adequate gains. If not, the school is required to provide increased interventions (e.g. small group instruction, intensive literacy support, etc.), consistent with [NMPED's Multi-layered System of Supports](#).

How can I learn more about dyslexia and Structured Literacy?

In support of New Mexico's Structured Literacy Initiative, the New Mexico Public Education Department has produced a [Dyslexia Handbook](#) and a [free Dyslexia and Structured Literacy 101 online course](#).



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

You can learn more about dyslexia and pursue free community seminars and additional training regarding best practices for working with students with dyslexia and other learning differences and teaching Structured Literacy here:

- [International Dyslexia Association](#)
- [Southwest International Dyslexia Association](#)
- [May Center for Learning](#)
- [CORE Learning](#)
- [Understood.org](#)

