

Maryland Senate Bill 734 *Students with Reading Difficulties-Screenings and Interventions*

Summary and FAQs

1. What are the requirements of this Bill? Beginning in 2020-2021 school year, each LSS shall ensure that a student is screened to identify if the student is at risk. Students to be screened:

- are in kindergarten,
- are in first grade and were not screened by the school in kindergarten or demonstrated difficulty mastering grade level reading in kindergarten,
- enter or transfer to a public elementary school, unless the county board makes a determination that student has already been screened and does not demonstrate difficulty mastering grade-level reading.

If a student has an IFSP or IEP, they **do not** need to be screened as they have already completed diagnostic evaluations and have supplemental instruction planned.

2. Do 1st graders need to be screened? Yes. Beginning in SY 2020-2021, any 1st grader who was not screened in Kindergarten will need to be screened in 1st grade. The bill states if a student “is in first grade and was not screened by the school in kindergarten or demonstrated difficulty mastering grade level reading in kindergarten” that student must be screened in 1st grade.

3. Who should conduct the screening? It is recommended that the classroom teacher conduct the screening, however, a classroom teacher, school psychologist, special education teacher, speech language pathologist, reading interventionist, reading specialist or any other educator trained in screening instruments and protocols may conduct screenings.

4. How should the results be used? If screening results indicate that the student is at risk of reading difficulties, the county board shall provide supplemental reading instruction in identified areas of need. Supplemental reading instruction means **evidence-based, sequential, systematic, explicit and cumulative instruction or intervention** to mastery of foundational reading skills including: **phonological or phonemic awareness and processing phonics and vocabulary to support development of decoding, spelling, fluency, and reading comprehension skills** to meet grade level curriculum.

5. Where can I find information on screeners?

- MSDE Blackboard: Professional Learning: Early Literacy Resources [Link to MSDE blackboard webpage](#)
- MSDE ELA Homepage: [Link to Ready to Read resources](#)
- Dyslexiaida.org. (2019). *Universal Screening: K–2 Reading – International Dyslexia Association*. [online] Available at: [Link to dyslexia.org universal screening article](#)
- Gorski, D. (2019). *Screening for Reading Problems in Preschool and Kindergarten | RTI Action Network*. [online] Rtinetwork.org. Available at: [Link to rtinetwork.org article on reading screening and planning](#)
- Center on Response to Intervention/American Institutes for Research [Link to RTI4success.org article on universal screening essential components](#)
- National Center on Intensive Intervention [Link to intensiveintervention.org article on multi-tiered systems of support](#)

6. When should a student be screened? The bill states the LSSs shall ensure that a student is screened to identify if the student is at risk for reading difficulties. LSSs are encouraged to screen early in the school year to determine area of need and to provide supplemental reading instruction for a sufficient period of time.

7. What happens if a student enters a school after October 1st? LSSs should screen students as they arrive throughout the year and report the data the next year. LSSs should use the September 30th student count for reporting data.

8. Should LSSs screen English Learners? Yes, all children should be screened. However, MSDE has provided guidance for screening English Learners [Link to MSDE guidance document on screening EL students](#)

9. When is the state report due? The first report is due to MSDE in August 2021 and every on or before August 1st of each following year to allow time for MSDE to compile data and publish to the website.

10. Can LEAs create their own screener? No. Developing an assessment that is valid and reliable requires extensive psychometric testing. *(And at the very least, it requires a year of pilot and/or field test data and then a year or more of post-screener data. The way the law is worded, it requires the screener predict poor learning outcomes which means the system would have to field test it's students using the screener, wait a year or more, test again for learning outcomes, compare the screener score to the later score, and verify that the screener predicts the later score. So determining predictive validity for a new test will take more than one year.)*

11. Can LEAs use a digital screener? Screeners can be administered online on a case by case basis, with assurance that there will be one-on-one adult supervision/assistance.