

North Dakota Literacy Task Force: Convening #2 on Dyslexia April 4, 2024 | 9:30 – 11:00AM CT | Virtual

OVERVIEW

The recent enactment of House Bill 1231 requires the State Superintendent to appoint a task force to review all sections of the North Dakota Century Code related to literacy, dyslexia, and teacher professional development. The second convening of this North Dakota Literacy Task Force took place on April 4, 2024. The Task Force is comprised of [19 members](#) who will be responsible for developing a report of findings and recommendations to be presented to the sixty-ninth legislative assembly. The second convening focused on various topics related to supporting students with dyslexia and other learning disabilities when accessing literacy. Representative Cindy Schreiber-Beck began the convening with opening remarks on the significance of literacy and a brief history of literacy work in North Dakota. Most of the time was spent in break out groups, focused on discussing various supports and interventions to help struggling students access literacy.

North Dakota Department of Public Instruction:

- [The Honorable Kirsten Baesler](#), State Superintendent | North Dakota Department of Public Instruction

The Hunt Institute Staff:

FACILITATOR:

- [Maureen Stover](#), Deputy Director | K-12

STAFF:

- Jaalil Hart, Deputy Director of K-12
- Kathleen Arney, Policy Analyst K-12
- Robel Kelkile, Policy Analyst K-12
- Joshua Walker, Policy Analyst K-12

RESOURCES

[Meeting #2 Agenda](#)

[Power Point Presentation](#)

[Recording Link](#)

Key Takeaways from Breakout Groups

DYSLEXIA SCREENERS

- Universal dyslexia screeners enable teachers to identify students who may struggle with reading. A key aspect of the screeners is phonological processing, and teachers should consider subtest scores to fully identify potential reading deficits.
- Screener administrators should be trained in administration practices and identification of reading disorders, specific learning disabilities in reading, and reading differences. State-level experts could support data collection and analysis and each district should oversee the administration of screeners and validate the results.
- Interactive, on-going administrator training programs can ensure screeners are administered to align with the most update research and analysis standards and practices. Dyslexia specialists should be specifically trained and credentialed.
- Training on dyslexia screeners should include how to administer and analyze the assessment.
 - Consider adjusting legislation to include language about identifying the appropriate intervention for students.
 - Identify a person in each district who can oversee the administration of screeners and validate the results.
 - Explore opportunities to clarify the process for administration of screeners and the interpretation of results.

RESOURCES

[National Center on Improving Literacy](#) | This resource provides an analysis of the current policies in North Dakota with an emphasis on dyslexia legislation.

[House Bill No. 1461](#) | This 2019 North Dakota Bill codifies the reading and dyslexia screenings requirements.

INTERVENTIONS KEY TAKEAWAYS

- [North Dakota Reading Corps](#) is a strategic initiative demonstrating how national service and literacy science can accelerate the improvement in both students and systems.
 - By mobilizing the people power of AmeriCorps, Reading Corps provides evidence-based interventions and data-based assessments to children from age three to grade three.
 - Initiatives such as Reading Corps help to fill in the gap of implementing interventions and capacity issues.
- Reading Corps Program has proven to be beneficial for kids not right at the reading level but also not title 1 qualifying.
 - Future implementation of this program for certain schools unknown due to lack of funding and staffing
- Further support needs to be given in building out capacity and incorporating time to maximize interventions.
- Strains on intervention methods trickle down to capacity issues and lack of support within school systems.
- Developing open spaces for systems of communication for district leaders and teachers to engage with one another to get a better grasp of the challenges of literacy interventions could prove helpful in helping teachers feel more supported.
- Outlining potential and ongoing challenges of literacy interventions is imperative to the overall success of supporting students in classrooms.
 - Ensuring that all staff are adequately trained and supported in identifying students in need and carrying out interventions properly for overall student success.
- Addressing staffing shortages and lack of substitute teachers
- There has been promise in screening and identifying students in need of interventions, further support needed for concentrated classrooms/schools of students in need of these supports.

RESOURCES

[Training Provider Opportunity: Multi-Tiered Systems of Support for Reading](#) | This resource provides an outline of the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) as applied to reading intervention.

[MTSS-R Implementation Guide](#) | This resource provides a step-by-step guide to implementing multi-tiered systems of support in reading (MTSS-R).

SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY IN READING

- The addition of a “non-specific delayed” category would enable educators to identify students with reading difficulties without providing a specific category. This practice could provide additional data collection while interventions are implemented.
- Specific Learning Disabilities (SLDs) in reading assessments should identify specific decoding and vocabulary deficiencies to determine the most appropriate interventions and should be considered in development of challenging curricula that supports individual student needs.
- Common challenges for teachers when teaching reading to students with disabilities with specific learning disabilities include lack of training on intervention and lack of qualified staff to provide additional support.
- Misconceptions about students with specific learning disabilities influence teacher perceptions of literacy. For example, when students struggle with dynamic assessments, providing vocabulary support may reduce the need for pursuing Specific Learning Disability identification.
- The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction offers training to teachers for free and opportunities for participants in educator preparation programs to participate in LETRS training.
- Supporting fidelity checks within the school building may increase effectiveness of interventions as experimentation is sometimes needed to determine the most effective intervention for a given student.

RESOURCES

[Family Resource Toolkit](#) | This toolkit offers resources to support families and communities with crisis intervention, social-emotional and behavioral health, and educational resources for distance learning.

[Using Texting to Help Families Build Their Children’s Vocabulary at Home](#) | This study demonstrates the impact of texting with families on developing children’s literacy skills as a family engagement strategy.

HIGH-IMPACT TUTORING

- [High-impact tutoring](#) programs that engage students in one-on-one or small group instruction can lead to substantial gains for students by supplementing classroom instruction.
- Discussions surrounding high-impact tutoring delve into the efficacy of replicating successful methods, exploring funding sources, and ensuring the sustainability of tutoring programs. There's a concerted effort to maintain continuous student engagement to mitigate learning loss and maximize the effectiveness of tutoring interventions.
- Efforts to strengthen weaknesses in reading instruction involve a recent legislative focus on dyslexia, conversations about improving testing procedures, and a commitment to adopting flexible screening methods that accommodate diverse learning needs and challenges. Training opportunities, such as those provided by institutions like St. John's Training Academy, offer educators the chance to enhance their skills and knowledge in evidence-based reading instruction.
- Emphasizing morning interventions and district-provided training underscores the commitment to continuous professional development, while tailored approaches cater to the unique learning profiles of students.
- Additional proposed changes include initiatives such as:
 - Site visits to observe best practices firsthand.
 - Exploring the integration of technological interventions like "Milo the Robot" to enhance reading instruction.
 - Fostering stronger connections between stakeholders to promote collaboration and knowledge sharing within the education community.

RESOURCES

[St. John School Humanoid Robot to Teach Social Skills](#) | An overview of St. John School District facially expressive humanoid robot which provides students with a foundation of social skills to help decrease behavioral distractions.

[North Dakota Council of Educational Leaders | Amira Learning](#) | An overview of Amira Learning which is personalized reading assistant to support students reading fluency.

Appendix A

North Dakota Literacy Task Force Members

Task Force Members:

- Kirsten Baseler | North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, State Superintendent
- Angie Waletzko | Parent and Family Engagement
- Dr. Pam Krueger | Dickinson State University
- Janet Bassingthwaite | Mandan Public Schools, Early Learning Coordinator
- Tina Pletan | Bismarck Public Schools, K-5 Literacy Specialist
- Jerlyn Gaberielson | Flasher Public Schools, Elementary Teacher
- Nicole Manson | Fargo Public Schools, Interventionist
- Nicole Polum | Grand Forks Public Schools, Middle School Teacher
- Ben Scallon | Lakota Public Schools, High School Teacher
- Dr. Nicole Reybok | Griggs-Steele-Traill Special Education Unit, Director of Special Education
- Cheryl Hagar | Minot Public Schools, Title I and Family Engagement Coordinator
- Kerri Whipple | Southeast Education Cooperative, Director of Literacy
- Beth Slette | West Fargo Public Schools, Superintendent
- Dr. Sherry Tandeski | St. John School District, Elementary Principal
- Dr. Noelle Green | McKenzie County Public Schools, Middle School Principal
- Representative Cindy Schreiber-Beck | North Dakota State House
- Senator Donald Schaible | North Dakota State Senate
- Kari Bucholz | Haley's Hope Dyslexia Learning Center
- Dr. Cory Steiner | North Dakota Education Standards and Practices Board, Chair

Ex-Officio Members:

- Dr. Becky Pitkin | North Dakota Education Standards and Practices Board, Executive Director
- Brenda Ehrmantraut | North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, Assistant Director of Academic Support
- Lea Kugel | North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, Assistant Director of Specially Designed Services
- Ann Ellefson | North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, Director of Academic Support
- Jessica Thomasson | North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services, Executive Policy Director