



**Using *Wisconsin's Informational Guidebook on Dyslexia and Related Conditions* to Support Collaborative Conversations for Improved Reading Outcomes:  
A Guidance Document**

This document provides a framework for having school/district collaborative conversations about strengthening an equitable multi-level system of supports (E-MLSS) to address the needs of learners who struggle with reading, including those with characteristics of dyslexia and related conditions.

*Wisconsin's Informational Guidebook on Dyslexia and Related Conditions* (2021) provides a foundation for these conversations.

## **Introduction**

*Wisconsin's Informational Guidebook on Dyslexia and Related Conditions* supports parents, guardians, teachers, and administrators in understanding dyslexia and related conditions. Written through a process described in 2019 Wisconsin Act 86, the Guidebook discusses:

- screening processes and tools available to identify dyslexia and related conditions;
- interventions and instructional strategies that have been shown to improve academic performance of pupils with dyslexia and related conditions; and
- resources and services related to dyslexia and related conditions that are available to students with dyslexia and related conditions, parents and guardians of pupils with dyslexia and related conditions, and educators.

The guidebook and related information can be found at <https://dpi.wi.gov/reading/dyslexiaguidebook>.

As the title states, the Guidebook exists to provide information. Per Act 86, DPI provides the guidebook on their website; districts must link to the guidebook on their websites. This guidance, in contrast, was not required under Act 86, and was developed solely by DPI staff (based on input from the advisory committee) to provide suggestions regarding how to use the Guidebook to a primary audience of district staff.

DPI believes that the Guidebook can be one part of district conversations about meeting students' needs as readers. Specifically, the Guidebook can support conversations about how a local equitable multi-level system of support (E-MLSS) serves learners when they struggle with reading, including those with characteristics of dyslexia and related conditions. As you begin using the Guidebook, DPI offers the following considerations:

- Learners are complex and change over time. No single assessment or method is guaranteed to provide results. A robust E-MLSS uses assessments and instruction that anticipate and respond to learners' diversity.
- Parents, families, and/or guardians are students' first teachers. They contribute to a child's literacy development in meaningful ways and are full partners with educators, schools, and systems.
- Universal instruction should be designed and implemented in ways that allow the vast majority of learners to develop the knowledge and skills to read. When necessary, intervention targets a student's exact needs and is intentionally connected to universal instruction.
- Research has suggestions about assessment and instruction that are likely to be successful in teaching students when they struggle to read, including those with dyslexia and related characteristics. The Guidebook highlights findings about learners with dyslexia and related conditions to support schools/districts in making decisions to serve the students they are responsible for.
- Existing Wisconsin laws address improving reading outcomes and can be leveraged to ensure the needs of readers can be met, including those with dyslexia and related conditions. For example, Wisconsin law requires the use of a reading readiness assessment in 4K through grade 2 and intervention requirements for students who do not yet meet assessment benchmarks (see Appendix B of the Guidebook for further information).
- There is much research and many ideas about how to improve reading outcomes. Collaborative conversations may result in agreement. Collaborative conversations may result in improved understanding of differing perspectives.

## **Preparing for Collaborative Conversations**

As a school/district begins planning for conversations supported by the Guidebook, they may consider preliminary goals for the conversations. However, the group will ultimately be collaborative. Therefore, planning for the group may include leaving space to meet goals identified by the group, even if those are different from the preliminary goals established by the school/district.

Assemble a group who will engage in the conversation and who reflect fully the demographics of the community (race, socioeconomic status, ability status, etc.). The list below provides membership ideas.

- Individuals with dyslexia
- Parents and/or family of individuals with dyslexia and related conditions

- Parents and/or family of individuals who struggle with reading for reasons other than dyslexia
- Classroom teachers (including general education, special education, and teachers of English learners)
- Reading teachers and/or reading interventionists
- Reading specialists
- School psychologists
- Principals
- District administrators (such as curriculum director and director of special education)
- School board members
- Community members who support reading development (including service providers such as diagnosticians and/or reading tutors, including those with expertise in dyslexia and those with expertise in all areas of reading difficulty)

Group membership may need to be adjusted as the goals of the group are further developed.

As you prepare to convene the the group, consider:

- working with a trusted member of the community (such as a parent or community member) to form and plan for the group;
- meeting logistics, including when to meet (such as time of day or day of the week) and platforms for meeting (such as face-to-face or virtual meetings), that promote equitable participation; and
- providing all group members with equitable access to information and participation (such as ensuring all participants are able to access and understand the content of the Guidebook and other provided materials).

Establish systems and structures for the meetings. These might include:

- a consistent format for agendas and notes;
- communication protocols (such as who will send emails and when agendas and notes will be sent);
- securing meeting space that is accessible to all participants; and
- ensuring all meeting materials are accessible to participants.

Some schools/groups may benefit from the services of a facilitator. The facilitator is someone neutral who focuses on meeting processes, including designing conversation tools and activities and supporting the group in working toward the stated objectives of each meeting.

### **At the Initial Meeting**

The initial meeting is a time to conduct the business of the group but also a time to establish trust and rapport.

### *Building Trust and Rapport*

Group members bring previous experiences with reading, teaching, and educational systems. Work to build and maintain trust and rapport begins with the first group meeting and continues throughout the work of the group.

The group might engage in:

- introductions that include an explanation of the passions an individual brings to this work;
- discussion of the qualities of readers that group members want the school/district to foster; or
- listing hopes or desired outcomes for the conversations the group will have.

### *Business of the Group*

Establish norms for the group and expectations for how the norms will be used. Norms can support the health of the group and may be especially supportive when conversations become difficult or tense. The list below details the norms used by the advisory committee who worked on the guidebook.

- Stay engaged and listen fully – with open ears, eyes, mind and heart.
- Share the airtime, two before me.
- Speak your truth and listen without blame or judgment.
- Value and leverage our interconnectedness and disconnectedness.
- Foster risk-taking (creating a brave space).
- Assume good intentions-Seek common shared points of agreement.

Agree on how the norms will be used during the meetings. For example, how will norms be presented/shared at each meeting? How will the group recognize when norms are being applied? How will the group recognize when norms are not being applied?

Explain systems and structures for the meetings. This includes ensuring all participants can access meeting materials (such as demonstrating how to use GoogleDocs or other file sharing systems). The group may also need to establish additional procedures. For example, some groups may choose to have rotating roles, such as notetaker, facilitator, or time keeper.

### *Moving Forward*

Explain how the group will move forward. Maybe this is determined by the school/district prior to the first meeting and shared with participants. Maybe this is determined by the group's desired outcomes and questions.

## Possible Topics for Collaborative Conversations

Collaborative conversations supported by the guidebook have the potential to improve a local E-MLSS to better meet the needs of readers when they struggle, including readers who have dyslexia and related conditions. Action can happen as a result of these conversations; however, knowledge and understanding also need to be built.

The Guidebook could support collaborative conversations about any of the topics summarized in the chart below. Schools/Districts could supplement information in the Guidebook with additional resources, such as videos, guest speakers, or readings. The chart below includes topics organized by sections of the guidebook; it is not an exhaustive list. Figures and tables referenced in the chart are found in the Guidebook. In addition, each chapter of the Guidebook and Appendix F include reflective questions.

<p>Introduction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What is our local vision for reading? What characteristics of readers do we want to foster? What model of reading do we use? What are the implications for readers who struggle, including those with dyslexia and related conditions? Figure 2 is one model of the reading process. <i>Wisconsin’s Standards for English Language Arts</i> contains additional information. This conversation is important because it articulates what your school/district wants all readers to experience and be capable of.</li> <li>● What is an E-MLSS? How can it support readers when they struggle? What already happens within our E-MLSS to support readers when they struggle, including specific resources for learners with dyslexia? Figure 1 provides a framework for an E-MLSS. This conversation is important because it emphasizes how aspects of an intentional system work together to support learners with dyslexia and related conditions.</li> <li>● What characteristics are shared by students who are currently supported well in reading and those who are not? Discuss characteristics such as race, socioeconomic status, gender, ability status, etc.</li> <li>● What is dyslexia? How is it the same as or different from other reading difficulties? What myths about dyslexia are pervasive in our system? How do we communicate about dyslexia? Tables 1 and 2 may guide this conversation.</li> </ul>
<p>Screening (Chapter 1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What screening assessments do we currently use? What do they measure? How is this related to the potential indicators of dyslexia? How is this related to other possible reading difficulties? What recommendations would the group make? Table 3 lists potential indicators of dyslexia.</li> <li>● What diagnostic assessments do we currently use? What do they measure? How is this related to the potential indicators of dyslexia? How is this related to other possible reading difficulties? What</li> </ul>

	<p>recommendations would the group make? Table 3 lists potential indicators of dyslexia.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does our system communicate with students and parents about reading-related screening and diagnostic assessment? What recommendations would the group make?</li> </ul>
<p>Instruction and Intervention (Chapter 2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do we know about universal literacy instruction in our classrooms? What are the expectations? What is actually happening? What are the implications for readers who struggle, including those with dyslexia and related conditions? Table 5 lists critical principles of reading instruction for learners with dyslexia.</li> <li>• What do we know about reading intervention in our school/district? What are the expectations? What is actually happening? What are the implications for readers who struggle, including those with dyslexia and related conditions? Table 5 lists critical principles of reading instruction for learners with dyslexia.</li> </ul>
<p>Resources (Chapter 3)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we work with families to support literacy development? How, specifically, do we work with families to support literacy development for students who may be struggling with reading? Table 7 has suggestions for supporting your child’s reading development.</li> <li>• What professional learning about supporting readers when they struggle - including readers who struggle because of dyslexia - is available to our educators? How does this learning reflect the local vision for reading and relate to educational standards?</li> </ul>
<p>Other Conversations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do parents and the school/district collaborate around reading? How are parents included in conversations? How is parent expertise and input recognized and utilized?</li> <li>• How can a 504 Plan or special education services support a learner with dyslexia and related conditions? How do we support parents and educators in understanding these supports (such as how to request an evaluation or evaluation procedures)?</li> </ul>

As you plan for conversations, consider the needs of diverse adult learners. It may be helpful to identify what background knowledge all participants may need. For example, participants may need accessible definitions and examples of terminology (such as phonemic awareness and phonics) to fully participate in conversations. Some of this information is provided within the guidebook; some may come from supplemental materials provided locally.

It may also be helpful to plan engaging and meaningful opportunities for discussion and interaction. This allows for participants to construct understandings that represent multiple viewpoints. Pairings and groups can be homogenous (such as parents meeting with parents) or heterogenous (such as a group with differing views about intervention).

Collaborative conversations build understanding and have the potential to impact how your school/district serves readers when they struggle, including readers with dyslexia and related conditions. To reflect this dual purpose of learning and action, each meeting may include time for learning about a topic, considering how the topic currently applies in the school/district, and making recommendations for the future.

### **Impacting Improved Reading Outcomes**

Conversation alone will not change outcomes for students; action steps are also needed. A school/district series of collaborative conversations supported by *Wisconsin's Informational Guidebook on Dyslexia and Related Conditions* can build understanding that leads to recommendations about how to improve learning for students who struggle with reading, including those with dyslexia and related conditions.

DPI, the Wisconsin RtI Center, and CESA partners offer support for schools/districts in learning and planning for, implementing, and evaluating change.

- [DPI Professional Learning about Reading](#)
- [Events Sponsored by the Wisconsin RtI Center and Wisconsin PBIS Network](#)
- [Links to each CESA](#) (search individual CESA sites for event calendars and services)