Georgia Dyslexia Pilot Program Implementation Analysis

2022–2023: Year 3 of Implementation

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The purpose of this brief is to provide information about the third and final year of implementation of the three-year Georgia Dyslexia Pilot Program. This 2022–23 brief is the fourth in a series of briefs developed at the request of, and in collaboration with, the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE).

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Citation:

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Durrance, S., McColskey, W., & Williams, M., (2023). *Georgia Dyslexia Pilot Program Implementation Analysis: 2022–2023: Year 3 of Implementation*. Greensboro, NC: SERVE Center.

Acknowledgements:

The authors are grateful to Jennifer Lindstrom and April Aldridge at the Georgia Department of Education for their contributions to, and review of, the final document.

This brief was prepared by the Region 6 Comprehensive Center under Award #S283B190055 for the Office of Program and Grantee Support Services (PGSS) within the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) of the U.S. Department of Education and is administered by the SERVE Center at UNC Greensboro. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the PGSS or OESE or the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government. © 2023 SERVE Center at UNC Greensboro.

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Contents

I. Introduction

The purpose of this brief is to provide information about the third and final year of implementation of the three-year Georgia Dyslexia Pilot Program. The Region 6 Comprehensive Center (RC6) at the SERVE Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro conducted this descriptive work on the Georgia Dyslexia Pilot Program at the request of, and in collaboration with, the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE).

This brief summarizes information gathered in March 2023 from interviews conducted with a total of 13 key Dyslexia Pilot Program leaders across each of the seven pilot districts. Content analysis was conducted by the first report author. Figure 1 and Table 1 on the following page show the seven pilot districts participating in Year 3 (2022–23) of the three-year pilot program.

This 2022–23 brief is the fourth brief produced. It follows the *Georgia Dyslexia Pilot Program Implementation Analysis: 2019–2020*, which provided information on how pilot districts approached the planning year of the pilot, and the *Georgia Dyslexia Pilot Program Implementation Analysis: 2020–2021: Year 1 of Implementation* and *Georgia Dyslexia Pilot Program Implementation Analysis: 2021–2022: Year 2 of Implementation,* which provided information on the first and second years of implementation, respectively.

Part II provides an overview of the March 2023 pilot district interview findings, organized by six areas:

1) Successes and Challenges
2) Resources Used to Support the Pilot
3) Support Needed from the GaDOE
4) Moving Forward: Districts' Plans for the Future
5) Pilot Districts' Advice for Other Districts
6) Looking Ahead to 2024–25: Lessons Learned from the Pilot

Part III provides details about the third year of implementation as reported in the district interviews. Implementation details are described in five areas:

1) Pilot Structure
2) Reading Instruction
3) Screening for Reading Difficulties and Characteristics of Dyslexia
4) Intervention
5) Data-Based Decision Making and Progress Monitoring

Appendices A-G contain a short history of the Georgia Dyslexia Pilot Program, a summary of how the GaDOE structured its leadership of the pilot, information about pilot-related professional learning opportunities the GaDOE offered in 2022-23, and descriptions of successes and challenges districts identified in 2022–23. Also included are lists of the screening and progress monitoring tools and interventions the pilot districts used that year.

Seven districts participated in the Georgia Dyslexia Pilot Program in 2022–23, as seen in Figure 1 and Table 1. A total of 134 schools were reported by the districts to be involved in the pilot in 2022–23.

Figure 1. 2022–23 Participating Pilot Districts

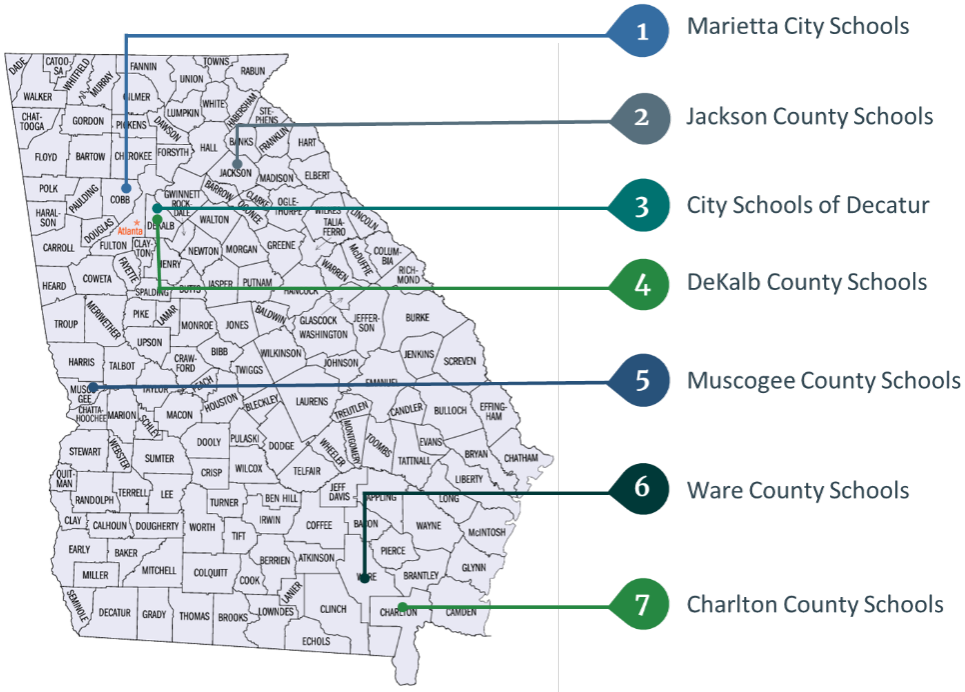


Table 1. Pilot District Location, Student Enrollment, and Number of Pilot Schools

District	Location	Student Enrollment 2022–23	Number of Schools in Pilot
1. Marietta City Schools	Atlanta (Urban)	8,690	4
2. Jackson County Schools	Near Athens (Non-Rural)	10,036	3
3. City Schools of Decatur	Atlanta (Urban)	5,680	7
4. DeKalb County Schools	Atlanta (Urban)	91,659	83
5. Muscogee County Schools	Columbus (Non-Rural)	29,521	32
6. Ware County Schools	South GA (Rural)	5,942	1
7. Charlton County Schools	South GA (Rural)	1,643	4

Part II of this brief contains a summary of district pilot leaders' reflections on the three years of pilot implementation overall: the successes and challenges they experienced, resources they used to support the pilot, needs for support from the GaDOE, expected changes to implementation in the future, and pilot district leaders' advice for other districts. It also summarizes lessons learned by the district pilot leaders over the three years of pilot implementation.

II. The Third Year of Implementation: Findings Overview

The pilot districts developed plans and laid the foundation for the Georgia Dyslexia Pilot Program in the planning year (2019-20) and worked through the initial challenges of familiarizing themselves with new tools and processes in Years 1 and 2 of the pilot (2020–21 and 2021–22). Their experiences in the 2022–23 school year, the third and final year of implementation, provide insights into how the rollout of S.B. 48's requirements may proceed and the supports needed by districts and schools across the state to successfully implement dyslexia screening in 2024–25. Key findings from interviews with pilot district leaders are grouped into six areas:

1. Successes and Challenges
2. Resources Used to Support the Pilot
3. Support Needed from the GaDOE
4. Moving Forward: Districts' Plans for the Future
5. Pilot Districts' Advice for Other Districts
6. Looking Ahead to 2024-25: Lessons Learned from the Pilot

1. Successes and Challenges

Interviewees were asked to reflect on what they saw as their greatest successes over the three years of pilot implementation. Figure 2 summarizes the interview responses given by two or more districts, which related to Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) implementation and building the human capacity necessary to implement the requirements of the pilot.

Figure 2. Successes Districts Identified in 2022–23

MTSS Implementation	Building Human Capacity
• Three districts reported improving their core reading instruction and use of intervention during the pilot, citing better alignment between the two and stronger core reading instruction for all students. • Three districts said they were now better able to look closely at student reading assessment data and dig more deeply into students' specific needs. • Two districts said the pilot helped their schools see the need to create a dedicated intervention block in their master schedules.	• Four districts noted positive mindset shifts in school and district staff over the three years of the pilot. These shifts included more interest in the science of reading (even from non-instructional staff), a greater commitment to building self-efficacy in teaching reading, and a stronger focus on providing individualized reading supports to students. • Four districts reported that their staff were invested and collaborative. They said they had the right people in the right positions, and both school and district staff were building their knowledge base for reading instruction such that the district's focus can be sustained. • Two districts identified their professional learning and coaching plans as strengths.

Districts also reported a variety of challenges (Figure 3) in implementing the dyslexia pilot over the three-year period. These can again be grouped into challenges related to MTSS implementation and challenges related to building human capacity for the work of the pilot.

Figure 3. Challenges Districts Identified in 2022–23

MTSS Implementation	Building Human Capacity

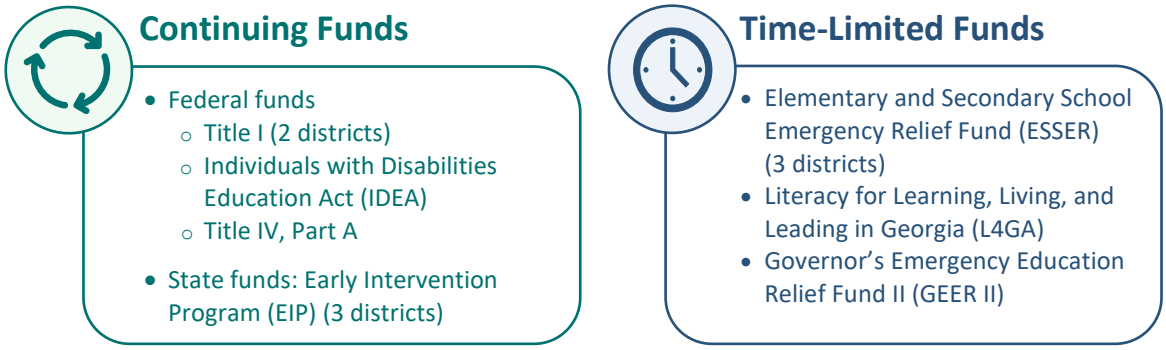
• Five districts reflected that using student data well was difficult. They mentioned the following in particular:
  ○ aligning the timing of screening windows and compiling and analyzing student data from multiple tools;
  ○ finding time for staff to analyze and communicate about student data;
  ○ helping teachers learn how to use screening data to inform their daily instructional practices; and
  ○ ensuring that the progress monitoring data collected by schools was used appropriately to make decisions about students' needs.
• Three districts said it could be challenging for schools to find the time and staff to provide reading intervention to all students who needed it.
• Two districts reported struggling with differentiating between English learners' difficulties with reading and difficulties due to English language proficiency in order to appropriately identify those who might have characteristics of dyslexia.
	• Five districts described staff turnover and staff shortages as significant challenges.
	• Five districts described a need to continue to build teachers' knowledge of effective reading instruction, intervention, and using student data to inform instruction and intervention. One district noted that school leaders also need this knowledge in order to lead the work of S.B. 48.
	• Three districts said it could be challenging to get school and district leaders to understand the need to make changes to reading instruction and buy in to those changes, especially early in the pilot.
	• Three districts mentioned difficulty finding the time to train teachers; one of these also noted that it was important to make sure teachers did not see training as a punishment.
	• Three districts reported a need for more funding for staff who could provide reading intervention.

2. Resources Used to Support the Pilot

The pilot districts reported in previous interviews that paying for the screening required by the pilot, as well as for the teacher training, intervention resources, and improvements to core instruction that supported the pilot, could be a challenge. Six of the seven pilot districts provided information on the approximate amount they spent on the pilot in 2022–23. In total, the sums they named added to $4.1 million. The smallest sum was $283,000 and the largest was $1.8 million, with a median amount of $545,000.

Districts mentioned using these funds to pay for screening tools (5 districts), staff (4 districts), intervention resources (4 districts), core instructional materials (2 districts), and professional development (2 districts). The seven districts named several different funding sources they used to pay for pilot-related expenses, as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. District Funding Sources Used to Support the Pilot



The pilot districts also used a variety of resources from the state, commercial publishers, and other external sources to support their work through the three years of the pilot, as shown in Figure 5. All districts relied heavily on and reported finding great value in resources provided by the GaDOE.

Figure 5. Resources Districts Used to Support the Dyslexia Pilot

GaDOE Resources
• ***Pilot supports:*** Three districts said the pilot's support structures were key to their implementation efforts. They specifically mentioned the value of pilot implementation chats, the two state panel webinars offered in 2023, and opportunities to collaborate with their counterparts in other pilot districts in general. • ***Dyslexia endorsement:*** Three districts identified the state's dyslexia endorsement as an important source of knowledge and training not just for those who earned it, but also for the colleagues who then relied on their expertise. • ***On-demand tools and professional learning offerings:*** Three districts said that GaDOE-created resources were key to supporting their implementation efforts. They named the Georgia Dyslexia Informational Handbook, professional development offered by the GaDOE, support from the Statewide Dyslexia Coordinator, and the Georgia's Multi-Tiered System of Support/Student Support Team (GO-MTSS/SST) data management tool.
Professional Learning
District pilot leaders looked to a variety of sources for pilot-related professional learning for dyslexia and early literacy, including the following: • ***RESAs:*** Four districts said they relied on their local Regional Education Service Agencies for high-quality professional learning. • ***Commercial Sources:*** Three districts purchased professional learning from private sources, including training in the Orton-Gillingham Approach, LETRS, courses offered by the Atlanta Speech School's Cox Campus online learning platform, science of reading courses offered by Hill Learning Center, and skill-specific offerings from Heggerty. • ***Literacy for Learning, Living, and Leading in Georgia (L4GA):*** One district participating in the state's L4GA grant received a great deal of professional learning through L4GA supports.
External Organizations
• Two districts mentioned support they received from external organizations, including the International Dyslexia Association Georgia Branch, the Schenck School, and the Student Support Team Association of Georgia Educators (SSTAGE).

3. Support Needed from the GaDOE

As they reflected on the past three years of pilot implementation, districts agreed on a number of ways in which the GaDOE could help them continue to improve—and in some cases expand—their efforts to improve reading instruction and intervention in the coming years (Figure 6).

Figure 6. District-Identified Needs for Support

Building Human Capacity

- Five districts expressed a desire to receive more professional learning on topics related to reading instruction, including the science of reading, dyslexia, structured literacy, and Tier I reading instruction in general.
- Three districts reported a need for more personnel. Two of these said they would benefit from having a dedicated MTSS lead in each elementary school; one needed more speech language pathologists and school psychologists to assist with screening and second-level assessment.
- One district reflected that its new teachers often enter the classroom without the background in phonics and phonological awareness they need to teach children to read well. This district would like to see teacher preparation programs place a greater focus on the science of reading.

Technical Assistance and Guidance

- Five districts spoke of a need for additional state guidance, including:
  - a list of state-approved screening tools;
  - a list of state-recommended sources for professional learning;
  - guidance on and direct support for Tier I reading instruction;
  - assistance with identifying English learners who may have characteristics of dyslexia; and
  - recommended intervention strategies and resources.
- Two districts suggested that the GaDOE work to align different aspects of screening and reading instruction—such as the Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (GKIDS) assessment and the new English Language Arts standards—with best practices in reading instruction and help districts as they seek to align the work of different district divisions, such as MTSS and core reading instruction.

Funding

- Five districts cited a need for funding to continue their work. They said additional funds could be used for professional learning, improving core reading programs, and ensuring that each elementary school has a dedicated MTSS lead. One district requested that the state pay teachers stipends for earning the dyslexia endorsement.

4. Moving Forward: Districts' Plans for the Future

Though the pilot officially ended in May 2023, all seven pilot districts planned to continue their efforts to improve reading instruction, identify students in need of support—whether due to characteristics of dyslexia or not—and match that support to students' specific needs. When asked about their plans for the future, district leaders described ways in which they would build on the work of the pilot (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Pilot Districts' Plans for the Future

MTSS Implementation	Building Human Capacity

• Three districts planned to make changes to screening in the coming year:
  ○ One district would change a screening tool because the current tool was discontinued by the publisher.
  ○ One district was considering changing screening tools but had not made a final decision at the time of the interviews.
  ○ One district was reducing screening frequency.
• Three districts spoke of specific plans to continue to improve core reading instruction. These included moving away from leveled readers and toward decodable readers, embedding structured literacy and the science of reading into core instruction, and using new reading specialist staff to assist with core reading instruction.
• Two districts reported plans to add new districtwide intervention resources to their current resources.
• Four districts said they would continue to work on improving and using student data in the coming year. These plans included developing a platform to combine data from different screening tools, exploring progress monitoring tools for secondary students, and refining decision rules for screening and progress monitoring.
	• Six districts reported on their professional learning plans for the near future. In addition to training staff on new screening tools and intervention resources, these plans included training on the science of reading and structured literacy, and financially supporting staff in earning the dyslexia endorsement.
	• Three districts mentioned increasing parent involvement, such as including parents on the district dyslexia team, developing more parent resources on literacy and dyslexia, and increasing the use of parent engagement strategies.
	• Three districts planned to expand the work of the pilot districtwide in the coming year by, for example, creating a district implementation manual for literacy practices and beginning to screen students in all schools.
	• Two districts identified a need to involve additional staff members on dyslexia or MTSS teams. One planned to add speech language pathologists and English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) representatives to district and school teams.

5. Pilot Districts' Advice for Other Districts

The seven pilot districts drew upon their experience implementing the Georgia Dyslexia Pilot and offered advice for other Georgia districts who are beginning to consider how they will implement the requirements of S.B. 48 in Fall 2024. These are summarized by category below.

Examine and Strengthen MTSS Implementation

Most of the pilot districts felt that other districts beginning to implement S.B. 48 should take a close look at their current MTSS structures and processes, including staff roles, and strengthen or streamline implementation as needed. The requirements of S.B. 48 work together with and rely on MTSS, so making sure these structures and processes are clear if they already exist—or developing them if they do not— provides a critical foundation for implementing S.B. 48. Once the underlying MTSS implementation is addressed, said interviewees, a district can integrate its screening process for characteristics of dyslexia and ensure that the process is clear to all staff.

> "Go ahead and have those conversations about how you're teaching, how you're assessing, what resources you have, and what your interventions are so you can understand at least what your starting point is to map out what your next steps should be.

A few districts recommended that those preparing for 2024–25 create decision rules and intervention pathways as they begin planning for S.B. 48 implementation. In other words, they said districts should decide which students will be considered at risk and what that means for any additional support those students should receive, including considering which staff are available to provide that support.

Create a District Team

Nearly half of interviewees recommended that districts beginning their journey to implement S.B. 48 create a team or task force at the district level to guide and monitor implementation. They indicated that this group should also consider how their elementary schools might vary in how they will implement the district's plan based on their individual contexts, resources, and needs.

Select a Screener and Train Staff

The majority of pilot districts reported that selecting a screener should be among the first actions a district new to S.B. 48 implementation might take. Screening students for characteristics of dyslexia is S.B. 48's focus, and interviewees said doing this well requires careful consideration of available screening tools. According to district leaders, the selected screening tool should not only meet the requirements of S.B. 48, but also provide detailed data on students' foundational reading skills that can be managed and analyzed by the district.

> Unless you're doing a foundational skill screener, you're going to miss students . . . if you get that wrong, you get the whole thing wrong.

Pilot district leaders explained that training on administering and understanding data from the selected screening tool(s), on the reading process, and on MTSS was just as important as selecting a high-quality screening tool. They said training on the screening tool should include all staff who are involved in screening students and anyone who will see students' screening data, such as instructional coaches, administrators, teachers, and even counselors. One district recommended that to avoid overwhelming teachers, training for teachers should focus first on how students learn to read, followed by using screening data to inform instruction. Another district wished it had created a comprehensive professional development plan at the beginning of the pilot to better structure its efforts to train staff.

> It's a heavy burden for a director to change directions after they've already budgeted a lot of money. But it's better to make the decision to stop and change directions, than to keep spending money . . . without any show of effectiveness.

Look Closely at Existing Resources and Core Instruction

Several pilot leaders recommended that a district just beginning to implement S.B. 48 examine the resources it already has, including curriculum, personnel, and investments in professional development, and identify any gaps that need to be addressed. As part of this inventory, reflected one interviewee, a district might carefully evaluate whether the existing resources are meeting its needs and are worth continued investment.

A few interviewees spoke specifically of the importance of examining the quality and effectiveness of core instruction at the outset, and another reflected that beginning implementation by focusing on using the data from a high-quality screener would necessarily lead districts to take a close look at their core instruction as student data revealed gaps in learning.

Communicate With Parents

Two district leaders spoke of addressing the many questions parents may have and ensuring that parents are well-informed of what screening for characteristics of dyslexia is and is not. This might be accomplished through public town hall meetings, according to one district.

> Communication with all the stakeholders is what's going to make the process smooth . . . the process needs to be black and white.

6. Looking Ahead to 2024-25: Lessons Learned from the Pilot

In the interviews conducted in March 2023, pilot district leaders were asked to identify the lessons they had learned throughout the three years of the pilot. Their responses are organized into two main categories: those that relate to MTSS implementation, and those that relate to building district capacity.

Lessons Learned About MTSS

> We learned that if the leader in the building isn't knowledgeable about MTSS and what needs to occur at each level in the process, then the building doesn't know.

Three districts reflected that the pilot revealed something to them about their current MTSS structures and processes. Two said that implementing the pilot showed the strength of their current processes; one reported that it was already providing support to most students who were identified through pilot screening, while the other said that the deeper data analysis required by the pilot helped "peel back the layers of the MTSS framework" that they were already implementing well. The third district reported that over the course of the pilot it saw the need to implement greater district oversight of school MTSS processes and more collaboration between MTSS-related staff at the district level. One district also recognized that its strongest schools, "are those where the principal has really seen MTSS as a school improvement process."

The districts reported learning lessons related to specific aspects of MTSS over the three years of the Georgia Dyslexia Pilot.

Core Instruction. Several interviewees spoke of shifting their approach to core reading instruction as a result of the pilot. They said that conducting screening for characteristics of dyslexia gave them more detailed data on students' mastery of specific reading skills, which in turn revealed areas in their core curricula and instruction that needed to be strengthened or supplemented. Thus, curriculum changes were common during the pilot.

> Much like a medical model, we don't have the doctor just go in and perform surgery without performing some sort of assessment or doing some other screenings to rule things out or to rule things in. And so when you use that metaphor, for a lot of our teachers the light bulb comes on.

Screening. Four districts reflected on what they learned about screening students for reading difficulties. Two spoke of the importance of establishing the purpose and limitations of screening. They said screening provides a snapshot of performance and can identify students in need of support, but other data also needs to be considered, and screening results should not be viewed as a diagnosis. Two districts disagreed about who needs to be screened at each assessment administration. One noted that the pilot showed them the importance of screening all students, not just those who are at risk, because even students who do not require Tier II or III intervention support might need remediation in certain skills and the screening tool can provide this information. The other felt that screening students who are at or above benchmarks at the end of the year was unnecessary because very few students were newly identified as in need of support at that point in the school year.

> [Teachers] need to know how to remedy the deficit instead of just being able to identify the deficit.

Screening and Progress Monitoring Data. All seven pilot districts described lessons learned about the use of student assessment data during the pilot. All saw screening and progress monitoring data as critically important: they are the drivers of decision-making for instruction and intervention. Several noted the importance of obtaining "good" data—data that is skill-specific and accurately depicts the student's knowledge and skills. Three districts reported that the pilot helped show them that teachers need a great deal of professional development and coaching on interpreting data and using it to inform instruction and intervention in order to do it well. Interviewees indicated school staff can be supported in their use of data by setting aside a regular time dedicated to data analysis and data-based decision making.

Lessons Learned About Building Capacity

Pilot district leaders reflected on what the pilot taught them about building human capacity for screening, intervention, and data analysis, as summarized below.

> Prior to this year, it's been a little bit of the Wild West with people using different measures, different tools. Not to say that any of them were bad, but that made it really hard to get a big picture of what's going on in the district.

Guidance and Consistency. Most of the pilot districts reported the importance of providing clear guidance and expectations and consistency across schools. This included a need for consistent tools and pilot-related language throughout the district, setting and communicating "black and white" expectations for using data, and providing ongoing support as schools put those expectations into practice. One district noted that when schools used different screening or progress monitoring tools there were inconsistencies and inequities in how students were identified for support.

Staffing and Teaming. More than half of pilot districts cited capacity-building lessons related to staffing and teaming needs. Two districts recognized the importance of having a district team composed of staff with expertise in different areas reflective of the district's students and their needs. Another district described the necessity of collaboration between district offices or divisions. One interviewee expressed a need for more school staff who are trained to assist with screening.

Planning for Implementation. Two districts identified lessons in implementation planning. One expressed that pilot implementation had been "a bigger lift" than it seemed at the outset, especially given the extra challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic posed. If they could do it over, this district would have taken smaller, more incremental steps to implement changes to screening and intervention over the past several years. The second district learned that "chunking" professional development for staff and providing ongoing coaching to reinforce the new learning was less overwhelming for staff than presenting staff with a lot of new information and skills all at once.

Monitoring Implementation. Two interviewees spoke of the need for districts to monitor the implementation of practices required by S.B. 48 and adjust them as needed (i.e., screening, intervention, and progress monitoring). One also mentioned the importance of building institutional capacity such that these practices are self-sustaining and none are dependent upon any one staff member in the school or district.

III. The Third Year of Implementation: Details

In the 2022–23 school year, the pilot districts refined the practices they had developed over the first two years of the pilot. As in the previous year, their focus remained on improving core reading instruction and continuing to train and support staff in using screening and progress monitoring data to make decisions about reading instruction and intervention. Based on interviews with the seven pilot districts, implementation efforts in 2022–23 are described in five areas:

1. Pilot Structure
2. Reading Instruction
3. Screening for Reading Difficulties and Characteristics of Dyslexia
4. Intervention
5. Data-Based Decision Making and Progress Monitoring

1. Pilot Structure

S.B. 48 gave pilot districts flexibility to establish an implementation design that best fit their local contexts. Districts could start small with one or a few schools and scale up over time, start district-wide from the beginning, or choose something in between. Table 2 shows how districts initially implemented the pilot and their implementation at the end of Year 3, 2022–23.

Table 2. Pilot Districts and Their Implementation Approaches

District	Initial Implementation	Implementation in Year 3
1. Marietta City Schools	Three schools	Four schools
2. Jackson County Schools	Three schools	Three schools formally*
3. City Schools of Decatur	Districtwide	Districtwide
4. DeKalb County Schools	Subset of schools	Districtwide
5. Muscogee County Schools	Three schools	Districtwide
6. Ware County Schools	One school	One school
7. Charlton County Schools	Districtwide	Districtwide

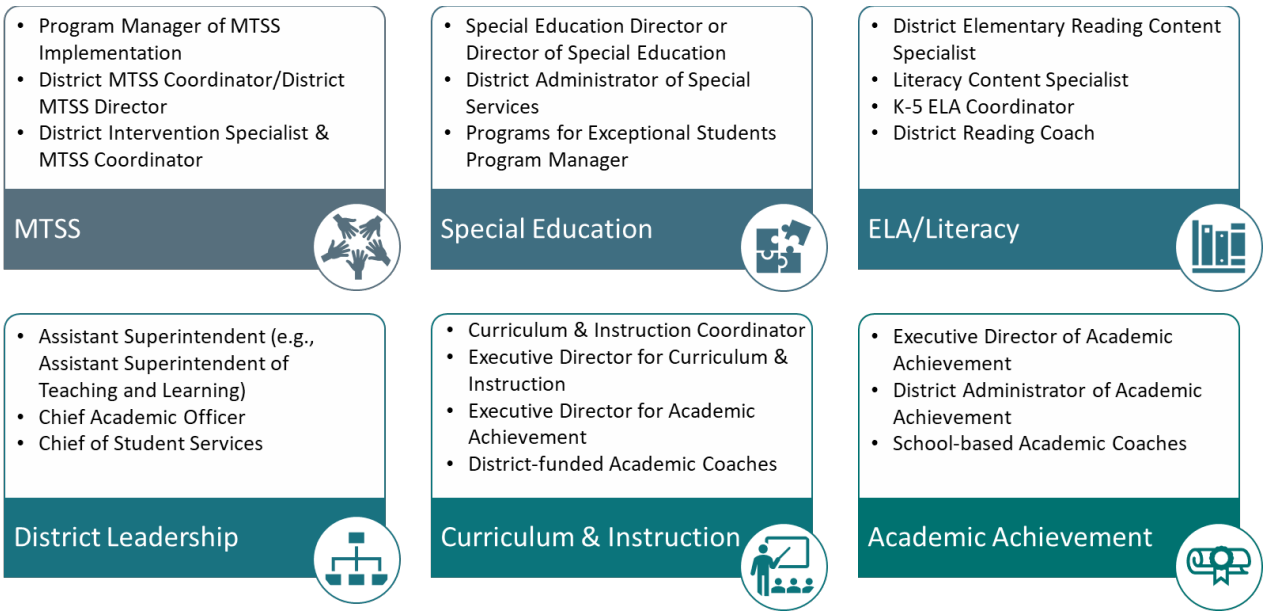
**While Jackson County Schools formally reported pilot data for three schools, they reported that pilot practices were implemented in all elementary schools throughout the district by the end of Year 3.*

Over the three years, the pilot districts explored and formalized the ways in which various district and school staff roles contributed to reading instruction, screening, intervention, progress monitoring, data analysis, and other aspects of pilot implementation. In the interviews, district leaders were asked to identify the staff who were key to pilot implementation. These key district and school staff roles are described below.

Key District Staff

Pilot district leaders were asked to identify district staff who played key roles in implementing the Georgia Dyslexia Pilot. Staff identified are grouped in Figure 8 by six types of roles. The district-level staff roles that district leaders reported were the most critical to implementation included those in charge of MTSS and English Language Arts (ELA)/Literacy.

Figure 8. Examples of Key District Staff Roles Identified in 2022-23



When asked which district staff roles were key to their pilot implementation, nearly every district named staff with titles placing them within offices overseeing special education or exceptional students and staff with MTSS in their titles. District MTSS staff monitored the fidelity of MTSS implementation, assisted schools with data analysis and aligning interventions with student needs, facilitated screening for the pilot, and provided training and coaching on literacy, the pilot, and MTSS. Staff whose roles related to special education or exceptional students supported teachers with literacy strategies for all students, ensured that teachers received training in dyslexia-specific interventions, and monitored implementation of S.B. 48.

District staff whose roles clearly related to ELA or literacy were identified as key in five districts. They participated in instructional decision-making at the district level, developed resources and instructional documents to support best practices in literacy instruction across the district, reviewed academic improvement plans, and assisted with training and discussion of current curricula, as well as with strategic plans to create a resource for evidence-based interventions.

> The role that would be most important would be whoever is [in charge of] gathering and collecting and analyzing student data and then aligning supports accordingly based on your data.

In four districts, school psychologists and district leaders each played a key role in implementing the dyslexia pilot. At the district level, school psychologists served on district dyslexia leadership teams, provided training and resources to team members and staff around literacy development and instruction, and served as resources to other staff for information about dyslexia and evaluations. District leaders served as leaders and facilitators of district literacy and dyslexia pilot teams and in some cases oversaw funding for professional development.

Three districts named key staff in district curriculum and instruction or academic achievement roles. Curriculum and Instruction staff guided implementation of the district's literacy plan and supported implementation at the school level by monitoring school data and helping instructional coaches with instructional planning and professional learning. Academic achievement staff included school-based coaches who provided support for screening and instructional planning for core reading instruction.

In two districts, ESOL or English Learner Coordinators and staff whose roles centered on assessment (e.g., Assessment Specialist) were identified as key district staff. Staff with English learner expertise worked with school and district teams to represent the needs of English learners. Assessment staff provided training on screening tools and supported instructional planning.

Key School Staff

Pilot district leaders were also asked to identify school-level staff who played key roles in implementing the Georgia Dyslexia Pilot. The staff roles district leaders reported were the most critical to implementation at the school level included principals and instructional or academic coaches. Interviewees described buy-in and leadership from principals as necessary in order for "the work to happen the way it needs to happen." Principals are also critical for their role in holding school staff accountable for implementing required practices. Instructional coaches were identified as among the most critical staff because they provide professional learning on and support teachers with screening

and instructional planning and are familiar with their school's instructional resources. This helps them take student data and identify the best supports for each student's needs.

Classroom teachers were identified as key school staff for pilot implementation in six out of seven districts. They were generally involved in conducting screening, reviewing student data, and providing intervention and often served on MTSS teams at their schools.

> [If a school did not have an MTSS coordinator] I think that the whole process would really be in trouble. The fidelity of implementation would not be there at all. . . . the management of it can't happen without a designated person.

School staff with MTSS in their titles (e.g., MTSS Lead/Specialist, School MTSS Coordinator) were also considered key by almost every district. They tended to support teachers and other staff with the MTSS process as a whole and facilitate communication between the school and the district; but they also supported teachers with reading intervention and data analysis, communicated with families, and sometimes served as interventionists.

School principals and assistant principals were considered key staff in five of the seven districts. Their roles included reviewing and approving screening procedures, overseeing screening, communicating with the district, and meeting with staff teams.

School psychologists were identified as key staff by five districts in 2022–23, compared to two districts in the previous year's interviews. District leaders reported that the school psychologists assisted school MTSS teams in making data-based instructional decisions, provided intervention recommendations, and assisted with meetings and assessments for students under the purview of Student Support Teams.

Special education teachers were also key players in five districts, with roles that focused on administering screeners, reviewing and analyzing data, and serving on School Wide Assessment Teams.

Instructional or academic coaches were considered key staff by four districts, as were interventionists. Coaches might create the screening schedule, provide teachers with training and instructional coaching, and assist with analyzing and interpreting student data. Interventionists largely provided intervention to students and administered screening and progress monitoring.

Three districts mentioned paraprofessionals as key staff who administered screening, supported instruction, and in some cases assisted with data management.

Key Teaming Structures

When asked about teams that were key to implementing the pilot, districts mentioned several types of school-based teams, as described in Figure 9.

Figure 9. Key School-Based Teams in 2022–23

School MTSS Team (2 districts)
School-based team membership often varied from school to school, but both of the MTSS teams described included the school's MTSS leader, classroom or intervention teachers, and the school psychologist. These teams reviewed student data to make decisions about intervention needs and managed the overall MTSS process in their schools.
School Wide Assessment Team (SWAT) (2 districts)
The School Wide Assessment Teams that districts described included interventionists and special education teachers. In one district instructional coaches were also part of the team; in another, school MTSS coordinators and paraprofessionals were included. As their name implies, these teams were tasked with administering screenings and analyzing screening data to help make decisions about intervention needs.
School Leadership Team (1 district)
The school leadership teams in one district involved an administrator, academic coach, teacher, and sometimes other staff as well. They addressed implementation of the pilot at the school level.

Interviewees also provided insight into a number of district-level teams that they said were key to implementing the pilot. These teams can be roughly divided into two types: those whose focus was pilot implementation and its intersection with MTSS, and those guiding literacy and MTSS efforts more generally. In some cases, their responsibilities overlapped.

Two districts said they had district-level teams focused on pilot implementation and MTSS as it relates to the pilot. These teams' membership included upper-level district leadership, district ELA leaders, and the district MTSS leader. Their responsibilities included overseeing pilot implementation, providing professional development and coaching to school staff, and assisting school teams with data analysis and decision-making.

Four districts identified teams that worked to improve literacy instruction and/or oversaw MTSS more generally at the district level. These teams' membership varied but in two districts each included district leaders in Teaching & Learning roles, ELA leaders, the district MTSS leader, and a special education leader. One or more principals were also included in two districts. These teams were engaged in high-level planning for districtwide literacy instruction goals and providing training and coaching to schools. In some cases they also played a role in examining student data.

2. Reading Instruction

While core reading instruction is not addressed by S.B. 48., interviewees shared across the three years of the pilot that participating in the Dyslexia Pilot Program revealed a need for their districts to focus more on improving core reading instruction for all students. Georgia's Tiered System of Supports for Students (MTSS) is the framework the GaDOE recommends districts and schools adopt to provide a comprehensive, data-based approach to teaching and learning. The pilot districts found that the MTSS framework was inextricably intertwined with pilot practices. That is: strong MTSS practices provided a necessary foundation for strong pilot practices. The MTSS framework consists of three tiers of support intended to encourage positive educational outcomes for all students. The first, Tier I, is core instruction, provided to all students and considered the primary level of prevention of academic difficulties. Students cannot be adequately supported with intervention if the core curriculum does not provide a strong instructional foundation.

When asked whether they are now at the point where they feel all the pilot schools in their district have the right materials in place to support evidence-based core reading instruction, three interviewees answered yes. Four were more equivocal, noting that the instructional materials were available to schools, but they needed to continue working to support staff in using the resources and in adhering to instructional practices aligned with the science of reading.

> "We're getting the material, sure. The strategies, techniques and instructional practices and knowledge base to understand how to implement those for maximum benefit is the next step.

Core Curricula and Instruction

The number of curriculum programs and instructional resources and strategies the pilot districts said they used increased over the course of the pilot, from 12 in 2020–21 to 24 in 2022–23. Districts reported in Year 2 interviews that they identified gaps in the skills addressed by their core curricula early in the pilot and worked to address those gaps in subsequent years by changing curricula or acquiring new resources. In Year 3 interviews, these included comprehensive core literacy curricula, curricula that target specific skills (i.e., phonics, spelling, or phonological awareness), strategies and programs based in structured literacy principles or the science of reading, and other resources and strategies (e.g., blending boards, sound walls; and decodable, fiction, and non-fiction texts).

Curriculum Programs. A curriculum consists of the lessons and content students are taught in a given grade or program of study, and multiple curricula may be used. Districts reported using a total of 14 different curricula in 2022–23, including six that are advertised as comprehensive literacy curricula. Four districts reported using a dedicated phonics program (Benchmark Phonics, Fountas & Pinnell Word Study, and Saxon Phonics & Spelling). Four districts reported using a dedicated phonological awareness program from Heggerty. Each district used at least one program that was advertised as being grounded in the science of reading or structured literacy principles.

> "[Schools are] looking for one suite of programs or products that will take care of all of the needs. And I'm just like, "I don't think we're going to find that."

There was some overlap in the curricula districts reported using. Four districts used Heggerty programs and two districts each used Fundations, Journeys, Lexia Core5, and Saxon Phonics & Spelling. A majority of districts used more than three curriculum programs, which reflects districts' recognition that gaps in one curriculum required supplementation with another. (For a list of curricula and instructional resources and strategies districts used in 2022–23, see Appendix D.)

Instructional Resources and Strategies. A curriculum can be taught using different instructional frameworks, resources, and strategies. Four districts identified decodable texts as a core instructional resource in Year 3 of the pilot, and one named fiction and non-fiction texts as well. Specific strategies districts said were used in core instruction included the Orton-Gillingham Approach, structured literacy, blending boards, and sound walls.

Improving Reading Instruction. Beyond changes to curricula, the pilot districts described an array of initiatives underway to improve overall reading instruction for all students in 2022–23. These efforts are summarized in Figure 10.

Figure 10. Efforts to Improve Tier I Reading Instruction in 2022–23

MTSS Implementation	Building Human Capacity

• All seven districts identified instructional shifts they were making to align core reading instruction with best practices. These included:
  ○ aligning instruction with the science of reading (4 districts);
  ○ more intentional targeting of foundational reading skills (2 districts); and
  ○ using curriculum and supplemental resources more thoughtfully to address students' needs, rather than relying on the curriculum's predetermined scope and sequence (2 districts).
• One district supported its pre-K program in providing more intentional instruction in phonological and phonemic awareness so students might enter kindergarten better prepared for reading instruction.
	• All of the districts pointed to professional development they had provided for instructional staff. Specific professional development topics they mentioned included:
	  ○ using screening tools and conducting other assessments (5 districts);
	  ○ the science of reading (4 districts);
	  ○ intervention strategies or programs (3 districts);
	  ○ using data and grouping students for instruction (3 districts);
	  ○ specific reading skills, such as phonics or phonemic awareness (2 districts); and
	  ○ the Orton-Gillingham Approach (2 districts).
	• Three districts reported harnessing the knowledge of staff who had earned the dyslexia endorsement by asking them to present what they had learned to colleagues, serve as instructional leaders in their schools, and assist with identifying students in need of support.
	• Two districts provided direct support to schools via instructional coaching and by leading regular data discussions with school leaders.
	• Two districts said they purchased new instructional resources to support their efforts to improve reading instruction.

3. Screening for Reading Difficulties and Characteristics of Dyslexia

All of the pilot districts reported conducting K-3 universal screening for the pilot in 2022–23, as required by S.B. 48. One of these districts also screened Pre-K students, and one screened up to fifth grade.

Staffing

Staff Involved in Screening and Analyzing Data. A variety of different school staff were involved in conducting screening in the pilot districts. Special education teachers were the most common type of staff, reported by four of the seven pilot districts. General education teachers and EIP teachers/interventionists were involved in three districts each. Two districts indicated that paraprofessionals and instructional coaches assisted with screening efforts. Other staff named as involved in screening were MTSS Coordinators, counselors, and screening leads. Two districts said their schools had school-based teams, such as School Wide Assessment Teams (SWAT), that conduct or assist with universal screening.

S.B. 48 requires that all kindergartners and students in grades 1-3 who have been identified through the Response to Intervention process be screened for characteristics of dyslexia. The bill specifies that this screening must include phonological awareness and phonemic awareness, sound symbol recognition, alphabet knowledge, decoding skills, encoding skills, and rapid naming.

Timing of Screening Process

Six of the seven pilot districts reported conducting universal screening for K-3 students three times per year in 2022-23: in fall, winter, and spring. The seventh district scaled back screening to twice per year in Year 3—in the fall and winter—because leaders felt that an additional screening at the end of the year was redundant given all the other assessments students take at that time and how few students were newly identified as in need of support during that screening administration.

Districts described varying approaches to timing the screening windows. The length of the screening administration windows ranged from one week to four weeks. In four districts, screening windows were 1–2 weeks long; in the other three districts they were 3–4 weeks long. Districts reported that screening took up to 15 days to complete, with a median completion time of one week.

Screening Tools

Pilot districts described the use of two types of screeners in 2022–23: universal screeners given to all students, and additional assessments given to specific students identified as at risk for reading problems.

Universal Screeners. The pilot districts reported using a total of 22 different universal screening tools, an increase over the previous year. Some of the new tools were skill-specific products that were recently released by publishers (e.g., Acadience RAN, Acadience Spelling, AimsWeb RAN). There was little overlap, with only Acadience being used by more than one district. Five of the seven pilot districts used more than one universal screener—a median of three, and as many as seven. The

number of different screening tools reflects the difficulty some districts had in getting the data they needed from a single screening tool. (For a full list of universal screening tools districts used in 2022–23, see Appendix E.)

Additional Assessments. Additional assessments were usually called screeners by the pilot districts but may sometimes be considered diagnostic assessments. Whatever districts called them, their purpose was to collect more detailed data on the skills of students identified as at risk on a universal screener. This data could then be used to make decisions about intervention, identify characteristics of dyslexia, or determine the need for even more detailed assessment. A total of 12 different additional assessments were identified by the pilot districts in 2022–23. Some, such as the KTEA-3 Kaufmann Test of Educational Achievement, KTEA-3 Dyslexia Index, WRMT-III Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests RAN subtest, and Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT-4) Dyslexia Index, were specialized assessments that required the person administering them to have specific qualifications. The KTEA-3 was named by two districts; the rest were used by only one district each. (For a full list of additional assessments districts used in 2022–23, see Appendix E.)

> What I think is good for school districts to consider is really educating the teachers on the value of this data . . . so that the teachers can understand how to use it to differentiate their instruction in the classroom and the power of that.

Screening Process

Districts approached the screening process in different ways. Nearly all used one or more assessments beyond the universal reading screener(s) to inform intervention and make decisions about the need for further assessment. The pilot districts had established different decision rules for identifying students for intervention and/or further assessment based on universal screening results. These decision rules fluctuated throughout the three years of the pilot and changed when districts changed screening tools. In Year 3, the cut-offs for intervention and/or additional screening were as listed below:

- two or more grade levels below the student's current grade level (1 district);
- below the 20th percentile (1 district);
- below the 25th percentile (3 districts);
- between the 20th and 40th percentiles (1 district);
- below the 40th percentile (1 district).

In Year 3, the pilot districts' approaches to screening and, ultimately, to identifying students with characteristics of dyslexia remained the same as in Year 2. One district used a single-stage screening approach and identified students as having characteristics of dyslexia based on universal screening and other data. Five of the seven districts' processes consisted of a two-stage screening process where districts collected additional data on a group of students identified by universal screening, then based identification as having characteristics of dyslexia on all available data. One district used a three-stage screening process to increasingly narrow the group of students identified for additional assessment until they identified students as having characteristics of dyslexia based on data from the third round of assessment. All three district processes are represented visually in Appendix C.

Identifying Students With Characteristics of Dyslexia

Current GaDOE guidance does not specify cut scores or decision rules for identifying students for additional screening or as having characteristics of dyslexia. As such, each pilot district developed its own processes and decision rules. Weighing the many considerations involved in identifying students with characteristics of dyslexia—as opposed to students with reading difficulties generally—was a task districts identified as a challenge throughout the pilot. The complexities involved in teasing out English learners who might have characteristics of dyslexia from those whose screener results just reflected their growing mastery of English was also difficult throughout the three years of the pilot.

> I really wish [screening] could be something that we do more than just K-3, because . . . we're seeing students in middle school that have these needs… I wish we could have done this earlier because then they would have more support.

While what districts considered to be "characteristics of dyslexia" varied from district to district, every pilot district reported considering both reading skill strengths and weaknesses (identified using screening and progress monitoring data) and students' response to intervention when determining which students might fit this profile. The most common skill weaknesses districts were looking for to identify students with characteristics with dyslexia were word recognition/automaticity, decoding/phonics, fluency, and spelling. Phonemic awareness, rapid naming, and language comprehension were also mentioned by interviewees.

When asked how comfortable staff in their schools were with accurately identifying students with characteristics of dyslexia in Year 3 of the pilot, four of the seven districts indicated that this was "a work in progress," noting that there were still a lot of misconceptions about dyslexia that needed to be addressed in schools and that district guidance needed to be made more explicit to help schools with decision-making. Two districts reflected that school staff's level of comfort depended on their roles, with those in MTSS roles and those who had completed the dyslexia endorsement being "far more competent at immediately seeing those characteristics." One district leader did feel that school staff across the district were very comfortable with identifying characteristics of dyslexia due to the extensive professional development they had received on assessment tools, grouping students, structured literacy, and the Orton-Gillingham Approach. As in 2021–22, districts' focus in 2022–23 was less on being able to definitively label students as having characteristics of dyslexia than on identifying students' individual needs and pairing them with appropriate interventions to address those needs.

Identifying English Learners With Characteristics of Dyslexia. Interviewees reported considering an array of information about English learners to help them differentiate students who struggled with reading due to their level of English language proficiency from English learners who might have characteristics of dyslexia. The World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) *ACCESS for ELLs* assessment is used to determine the English language proficiency levels and language progress of ELs in the domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Most districts reported using *ACCESS* scores to examine the English language proficiency of students, as well as data from reading assessments (including screening tools) to identify specific areas of strength and weakness in reading.

Five of the seven districts said they engaged ESOL staff in decision making about English learners because those staff can provide valuable insight into whether a student's reading difficulties might be rooted in their level of English language proficiency or go beyond that.

Other considerations that several districts mentioned included the primary language(s) spoken in a student's home, the student's rate of progress or response to intervention, and the student's previous educational experiences. Some districts also considered factors like the characteristics of a student's native language for English transfer considerations, how long they had lived in the United States, classroom work samples, hearing and vision screenings, and nonverbal reasoning scores.

While the specific pieces of information districts considered for differentiating between students who struggled with reading due to their level of English language proficiency and English learners who might have characteristics of dyslexia varied somewhat, a common theme among the pilot districts was the recognition that English learners cannot be treated as a homogeneous group. There are many different factors that can affect English language acquisition for each individual student. The complexities mean that pilot district leaders consider this an area in which they have a lot of room to grow and improve their processes.

4. Reading Intervention

Georgia's Tiered System of Supports for Students (MTSS) is the framework the GaDOE recommends districts and schools adopt to provide a comprehensive, data-based approach to teaching and learning. The framework consists of three tiers of support intended to encourage positive educational outcomes for all students. The first, Tier I, is core instruction, provided to all students. Students who need support beyond core instruction receive either targeted Tier II or intensive Tier III intervention in addition to Tier I instruction. Effective intervention for students who need support beyond core instruction is key to addressing students' difficulties in the MTSS framework.

The line between Tier II and Tier III intervention can be determined in different ways based on school and district contexts and student needs, but Tier III intervention is more intensive and individualized than Tier II. Commercial intervention programs are sometimes used at each tier. However, evidence-based instruction from teachers who are responsive to students' specific needs is the best way to ensure that students receive the support they require. For more information about MTSS in Georgia, visit the GaDOE's MTSS web page.

> S.B. 48 requires that districts participating in the pilot program provide for *"the enrollment of students with characteristics of dyslexia in an International Dyslexia Association (IDA)-approved reading program staffed by teachers trained in structured literacy programs as outlined in IDA's Knowledge and Practice Standards"* (S.B. 48, p.4).

General Intervention Support in Reading

In interviews conducted in June 2020 for the *Georgia Dyslexia Pilot Program Implementation Analysis: 2019–2020*, pilot districts noted that, contrary to the requirement for International Dyslexia Association (IDA)-approved reading programs in S.B. 48, the IDA does not approve or endorse reading programs

designed for students with dyslexia. Thus, districts have had to do their own reviews of potential interventions each year.

> A big push for us . . . this year is making sure that the data is what points us to the intervention, that then points us to the progress monitoring so that we are making sure that we're lining up the intervention with the deficit.

For 2022–23, the seven pilot districts together listed a total of 32 intervention tools and strategies used across tiers of intervention. The actual number is higher; one district has an intervention bank with an unspecified number of options from which schools can choose. The median number of interventions used by the other six districts was six. The district with the least interventions used three; the district with the most named 10. Five intervention tools or strategies were used by more than one district: the Orton-Gillingham Approach (5 districts), Fundations (4 districts), Heggerty (3 districts), Wilson Reading (2 districts), and Fountas & Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention (2 districts). More districts were using Orton-Gillingham, Fundations, and Heggerty in 2022–23 than in 2021–22. One of the districts using the Fountas & Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention noted that it is only used for comprehension intervention.

Fifteen of the 32 intervention programs and strategies named were commercial programs. The remaining 17 were instructional strategies used outside of a specific intervention program, such as Elkonin boxes, repeated retelling, explicit phonological awareness instruction, and the use of decodable texts. The Orton-Gillingham Approach is also included in this group since it is not a prepackaged product. (For a full list of interventions districts named in 2022–23, see Appendix F.)

Over the course of the pilot there was a trend away from computer-based reading intervention programs and toward teacher-led intervention and a blended approach to using both adaptive computer-based programs and teacher-led lessons offered by those same programs. In 2020-21, the majority of the 17 intervention programs and strategies named by districts were computer-based reading intervention programs. In 2022–23, only six of the 32 programs and strategies were computer-based. There was also a trend toward interventions that use structured literacy principles for all students, not just for students with characteristics of dyslexia. Five out of seven districts used at least one intervention based on structured literacy principles for general intervention support.

Interventions for Students Needing Dyslexia-Specific Support in Reading

Interventions developed or marketed for students with dyslexia often use a structured literacy approach and incorporate multisensory methods. This design is beneficial for all students but can be used to identify an intervention as "dyslexia-specific." In the 2022–23 interviews, the pilot districts were asked to identify the interventions they used specifically for students with characteristics of dyslexia that year.

The seven pilot districts reported using 21 different dyslexia-specific interventions in 2022–23. Fifteen were commercial programs, and six were used by more than one district. Orton-Gillingham was named by five districts and Heggerty by four. Fundations, the book *How to Plan Differentiated Reading Instruction* by Walpole & McKenna, Lexia Core5, and Wilson Reading were identified by two districts each. Six of the seven pilot districts reported using an intervention that advertises having a structured

literacy approach for students in need of dyslexia-specific support. Four of the pilot districts named at least one computer-based program; three named only teacher-led interventions.

Supporting Intervention

In addition to the programs and strategies used, districts also reflected on whether they were at a point where they feel their schools have the right reading intervention supports in place to meet students' needs. Five out of seven interviewees felt their districts did have good intervention resources available. The remaining two said their districts were working toward that goal but were not quite there yet.

> We need more intervention teachers, but one problem is trying to find said individuals and the other one is . . . making sure that we have the funding to support it.

There was some variation in the types of staff who provided intervention support across the pilot districts, but six of the seven districts reported having dedicated interventionists. In two of these districts these interventionists' titles were EIP Teacher, indicating that they were paid using the state's Early Intervention Program funds. Six districts also indicated that general education teachers provide intervention, while five said special education teachers support students in need of extra help in reading. Two districts reported that paraprofessionals are involved in intervention as well. Other staff with intervention responsibilities that were mentioned by one district each include speech language pathologists, MTSS teachers, and teachers who have earned the dyslexia endorsement.

When asked whether their schools had sufficient staff to provide reading intervention, four out of the seven districts reported that they did not. They cited staff turnover, difficulty finding individuals who have the expertise to provide reading intervention, and funding to pay for additional intervention staff. Of the three districts that did say they had sufficient staff, two noted that this was because they had additional funding sources that are not available to all schools—L4GA funds in one district and schoolwide Title I funds in another.

5. Data-Based Decision Making and Progress Monitoring

S.B. 48 requires that pilot districts administer assessments to determine whether intervention services provided to students with characteristics of dyslexia improve those students' language processing and reading skills.

Progress monitoring is the collection of student data and analysis of that data to inform the planning of instruction and intervention. S.B. 48 and best practices according to the MTSS framework hold that educators should regularly assess students receiving intervention to determine whether the intervention is providing the right type and level of support.

Tools for Progress Monitoring

In 2022–23 the pilot districts used a wide variety of progress monitoring tools, the majority of which were purchased from vendors. A total of 15 commercial progress monitoring products were

identified, and two were used by more than one district: Acadience (3 districts) and AimswebPlus (2 districts). On average, each of the pilot districts reported using 2-3 different progress monitoring tools. (For a full list of progress monitoring tools districts used in 2022–23, see Appendix G.)

Timing of Progress Monitoring

There was little commonality across the districts in how often they monitored the progress of students who only required Tier I core instruction. Frequency ranged from every 15 days to as needed, though three out of the seven districts reported conducting progress monitoring three to four times per year.

For students receiving Tier II or Tier III intervention, most of the pilot districts reported conducting progress monitoring at common intervals: every two weeks at Tier II, and weekly at Tier III. The frequency with which the pilot districts progress monitored students at each tier is described in Figure 11.

Figure 11. Progress Monitoring Frequency by Tier in 2022–23

Tier I Frequency	Tier II Frequency	Tier III Frequency
• Every 15 days: 1 district • 3-4 times per year: 3 districts • As needed/on an ongoing basis: 3 districts	• Every 2 weeks: 4 districts • Every 2-4 weeks: 1 district • Every 15 days: 1 district • Monthly: 1 district	• Weekly: 5 districts • Every 2 weeks: 1 district • Every 15 days: 1 district

Staff Involved in Progress Monitoring

Most districts reported that classroom teachers were involved in conducting progress monitoring. Most districts also said that EIP teachers and interventionists assisted with progress monitoring. Other staff frequently involved included special education teachers and school MTSS leads, identified by three districts each. Instructional coaches, paraprofessionals, and the District Administrator for Special Services were also named by one district each.

Use of Progress Monitoring Data

In Year 3 interviews, district leaders reflected on what they had learned about the use of progress monitoring data. Supporting school staff in using student data well had been an area of growth for the pilot districts throughout the pilot, especially during Year 2. It remained an area of growth as the pilot districts ended the final year of the pilot and looked toward the coming school years.

> If you don't have [data], then you don't know where you're going and you don't know where you've been.

The pilot districts shared a general mindset that student data should guide decisions about instruction and intervention. To do that effectively, they collectively pointed to a few important insights:

- Ensuring that schools are using the same progress monitoring tools is important for the district to be able to monitor student progress and support schools in using data. One district pilot

leader noted, "[Using] the same tools, speaking the same language, using the same metrics is going to be key."

- Student data needs to be shared with all pertinent staff in a school, including general and special education teachers and instructional coaches. "The data belongs to everyone," said one district.
- Teachers need support with understanding different types of data—for example, skills-based progress monitoring data versus norm-referenced benchmark measures—and learning how to choose the right data for their purposes.

> The focus is now on progress monitoring, because that's really the only tool that's telling you if what you're doing is making an impact and improving skills or not.

- Having a staff member who is dedicated to overseeing MTSS implementation and data in each school building is very helpful for ensuring that data is gathered and documented appropriately, as well as for supporting teachers with data analysis and data-based decision making.

Data analysis and decision making can be structured in a number of different ways. Aspects of these structures include the staff involved, how frequently they meet to review data, and any decision rules they use to make data-based decisions. The pilot districts shared details about their approaches, as summarized in Figure 12.

Figure 12. Data Analysis and Data-Based Decision Making in 2022–23

Staff Involved

- Classroom teachers: 7 districts
- MTSS/RTI/SST leaders: 6 districts
- Interventionists: 5 districts
- Special education staff: 3 districts
- Instructional/academic coaches: 2 districts
- Administrators: 2 districts

Frequency of Data Analysis

Tier I	Tier II	Tier III
• Weekly in PLCs: 1 district	• Weekly in PLCs: 1 district	• Weekly: 2 districts
• Every 15 days: 1 district	• Every 2 weeks: 1 district	• Every 2 weeks: 1 district
• Monthly: 1 district	• Monthly: 2 districts	• Every 4-6 weeks: 1 district
• 3 times per year: 2 districts	• Every 6-8 weeks: 1 district	• Every 6-8 weeks: 2 districts
• Quarterly: 1 district	• Every 6-16 weeks: 1 district	• Quarterly or more frequently: 1 district
• As needed: 1 district	• Quarterly or more frequently: 1 district	

Decision Rules

- Every district had specific processes guiding the use of progress monitoring data.
- All seven districts' processes included examining a student's rate of improvement and looking for adequate progress, as measured by a trend line or the gap between their achievement and grade-level expectations.

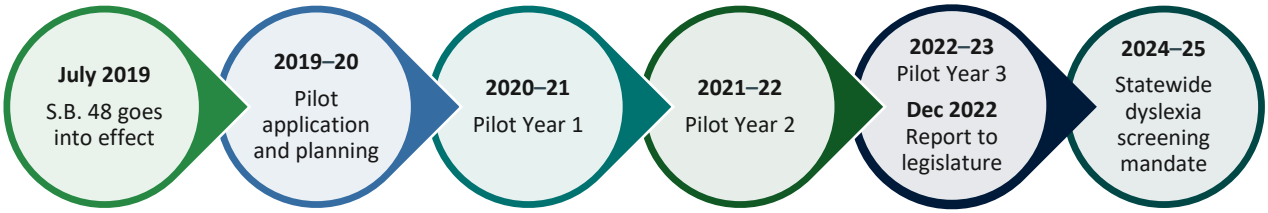
Appendix A: History of the Georgia Dyslexia Pilot

Senate Bill 48

In 2019, the Georgia Assembly passed Senate Bill 48 (Georgia Code §20-2-159.6 or S.B. 48) into law. Beginning in the 2024–25 school year, the bill requires local school systems to begin screening all kindergarten students and students in grades 1–3 who have been identified through the Response to Intervention (RTI) process for characteristics of dyslexia.

To prepare for this statewide mandate in the 2024–25 school year, the bill also requires that the GaDOE conduct a three-year Dyslexia Pilot Program (2020–23). Seven districts were selected by the GaDOE to be part of the pilot. The requirements of the pilot districts, as outlined in S.B. 48, are identified at the beginning of the sections that follow in Part II of this report.

Figure 13. Timeline of the Georgia Dyslexia Pilot



State Infrastructure and Support for Pilot Districts

After the passage of S.B. 48 in 2019, the GaDOE began its work to support implementation of the bill's requirements and the pilot. These efforts went well beyond the requirements of S.B. 48. In the 2019–20 through 2022–23 school years, the GaDOE did the following:

- established a lead team at the agency;
- contracted with a dyslexia pilot consultant to provide direct support to districts;
- developed the *Georgia Dyslexia Informational Handbook*;
- provided various resources on Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS);
- initiated a partnership with the RC6 to analyze pilot implementation;
- reviewed pilot program progress at monthly cross-division meetings of GaDOE staff from various divisions, including English Language Arts (ELA), MTSS, and Special Education; and
- established a Dyslexia Task Force to assist with developing guidance related to S.B. 48.

S.B. 48 required the GaDOE to create a dyslexia informational handbook that includes guidance, technical assistance, and training to assist all local school systems in the implementation of evidence-based practices for instructing students with characteristics of dyslexia.

Dyslexia Task Force

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) Dyslexia Task Force was formed in November 2022. It is comprised of subject-matter experts and education stakeholders. Representatives of Georgia P-12 schools, colleges and universities, Regional Educational Service Agencies (RESAs), professional associations, and other state agencies serve on the GaDOE Dyslexia Task Force. These stakeholders provide valuable input from diverse perspectives, helping ensure that guidance and resources are fair and focused on improving educational outcomes for students, as well as supporting educators.

The Dyslexia Task Force met four times between November 2022 and April 2023 to address critical issues related to S.B. 48 in Georgia. The Task Force played a pivotal role in the development of the Georgia Reading and Dyslexia Screening Process and Characteristics of Dyslexia Rubric, both published in August 2023; as well as updates to sections of the Georgia Dyslexia Informational Handbook (under revision as of September 2023).

Qualified Dyslexia Screening Tools

In May 2023, the State Board of Education approved State School Superintendent Richard Woods' recommendation to adopt the proposed list of Qualified Dyslexia Screening Tools. The Qualified Dyslexia Screening Tools are to be used by school districts for the identification and referral of students with characteristics of dyslexia. The Georgia General Assembly provided funds in the FY24 budget to assist with the costs of this screening requirement. Grant funds are allocated to each LEA based on the number of students in kindergarten and grades one through three in the system.

Appendix B: Professional Learning Opportunities Provided by the GaDOE in 2022–23

The GaDOE expanded its direct supports for the pilot districts beginning in 2020–21 and continued these and other pilot-related supports through 2022–23. Supports and professional learning opportunities offered by the GaDOE in 2022–23 that reinforce the work of the pilot are described below.

Professional Learning Resources

In 2022–23, the GaDOE provided the following supports for educators:

- Professional learning, including the following:
  - a four-part Dyslexia Video Series about dyslexia, reading development, structured literacy, and the IDEA, as well as a 4-part companion webinar series, Unraveling Dyslexia: A Closer Look at the GaDOE Dyslexia Video Series;
  - a two-part Dyslexia Pilot District Panel webinar series that provided an opportunity for teachers and administrators to learn from representatives from the Dyslexia Pilot Districts;
  - more than 40 informational and technical assistance sessions presented to state organizations, school districts, and teacher preparation programs offering the Dyslexia Endorsement;
- monthly virtual GaDOE-facilitated Pilot Implementation Chats to provide an informal setting for the pilot districts to discuss any questions or needs with the GaDOE and with each other;
- a Microsoft Teams Collaboration site to enable districts to easily communicate with the GaDOE and each other; and
- monthly communications about upcoming Dyslexia Professional Learning Opportunities related to dyslexia, MTSS, and literacy instruction on the GaDOE Dyslexia web page.

The Science of Reading: A Yearlong Professional Development Journey

From July 2021 through May 2022 the GaDOE partnered with the Cox Campus for Language & Literacy to offer a comprehensive sequence of courses covering all aspects of early literacy. The GaDOE facilitated 10 sessions and Cox Campus offered 13 "Deep Dive into Practice" sessions to explore the topics further. Click here for a list of the sessions offered. Recordings of all sessions are available here.

Georgia's Tiered System of Supports for Students

In 2022-23, the GaDOE offered more than a dozen professional learning sessions and coaching clinics on elements of MTSS, including overviews of the essential components of MTSS, "deeper dives" in areas frequently requested by Georgia educators, and a new series focused on MTSS implementation in high school settings. Click here for a complete list of MTSS professional learning sessions offered in 2022-23.

Rural Education and Innovation (REI) Literacy Initiative

The Georgia Department of Education's Office of Rural Education and Innovation (REI) supports RESAs across the state with instructional supports and teacher training for literacy. This initiative provides three opportunities for literacy professional learning:

- LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling),
- Orton Gillingham – Beginning Course Level 1, and
- Wilson Reading System – Introductory Course.

REI partners with RESAs to provide the professional learning opportunities and provides additional support through a literacy specialist who supports the facilitation and implementation of the professional learning. REI has existing contracts with every RESA that serves rural districts (all RESAs except Metro RESA). Supports provided by REI include the following:

- 40 seats in LETRS training;
- 40 seats in LETRS for Administrators training;
- 15 seats in Orton Gillingham training;
- 15 seats in Wilson Reading Systems training;
- stipends for teachers;
- reimbursement for substitute teachers; and
- part-time literacy specialist for the RESA to assist with facilitation and implementation of the professional learning.

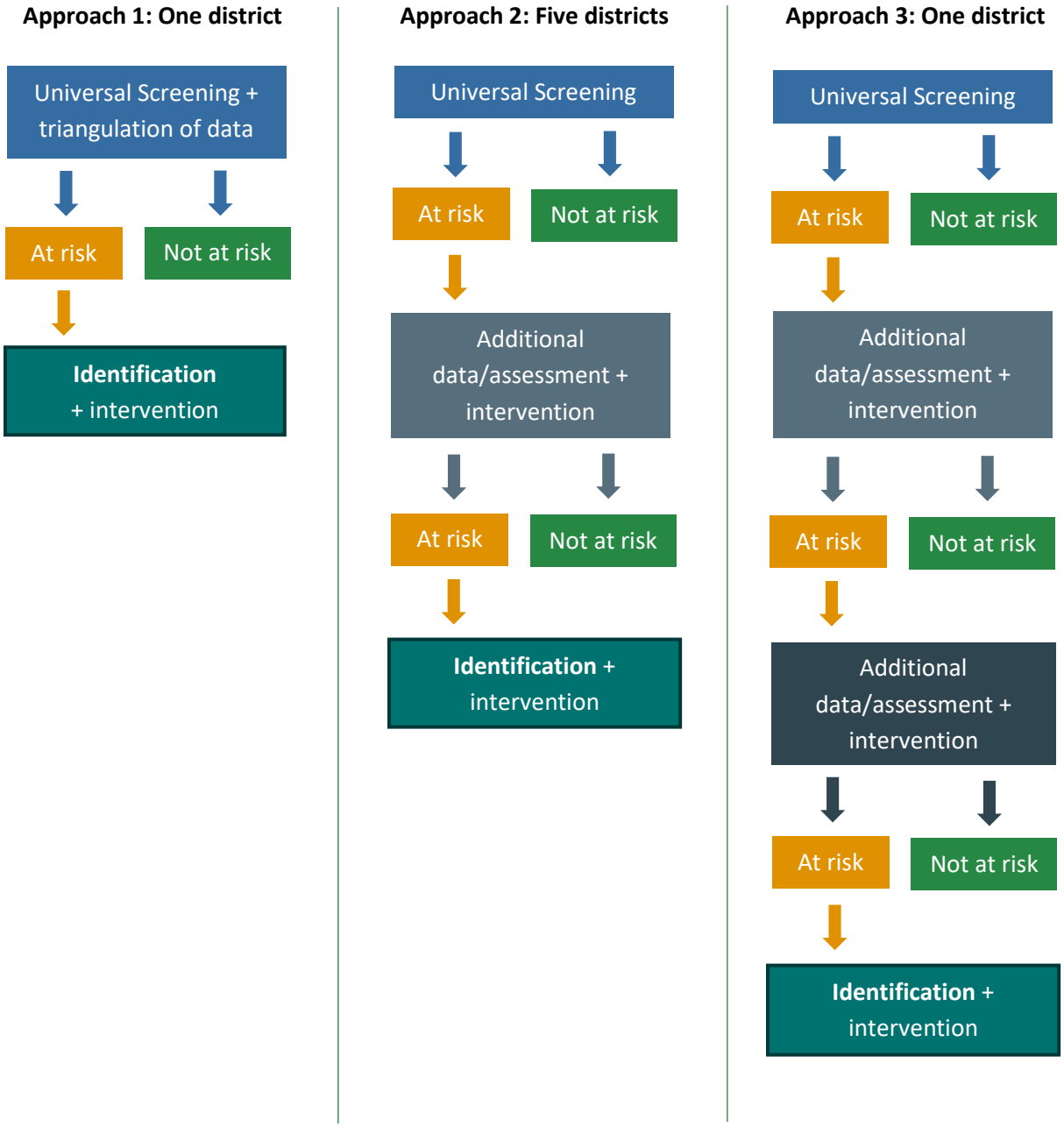
The REI Literacy Initiative was active in four RESA areas in 2022–23.

Appendix C: Screening Processes in 2022–23

Pilot districts' screening processes for identifying characteristics of dyslexia were first visualized in the brief describing pilot implementation in 2021–22. These processes were unchanged in 2022–23 and are represented in Figure 12 below.

Figure 14. District Screening Processes for Identifying Characteristics of Dyslexia in 2022–23

Note: "Identification" means identification as having characteristics of dyslexia



Appendix D: Reading Curricula and Instructional Resources and Strategies

Curricula districts reported using in 2022–23 included the following. "Curricula" as used here includes all named instructional materials used in core reading instruction. Each was used by one district unless otherwise indicated.

Core Reading Curricula and Instructional Resources and Strategies	
American Reading Company Core	**Heggerty** (4 districts)
Benchmark Phonics	Journeys (2 districts)
Blending boards	**Into Reading**
Decodable readers/texts (4 districts)	Leveled texts
Fiction and non-fiction texts	**Lexia Core5** (2 districts)
District curriculum written by teachers	**myView Literacy**
District knowledge building units	Orton-Gillingham Approach (2 districts)
Expeditionary Learning and International Baccalaureate instructional frameworks	**Saxon Phonics & Spelling** (2 districts)
Fiction and non-fiction texts	Sound walls
Fundations (2 districts)	Structured literacy
*Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System	**Wonders**
**Fountas & Pinnell Word Study	Write Score
Handwriting Without Tears	

*Curricula in **bold** are those that self-identify as being grounded in or aligned with the science of reading.*

** Only used in grades 3-5.*

*** Only used in grades 4-5.*

Appendix E: Screening Tools

Universal screeners districts reported using in 2022–23 included the following. Each was used by one district unless otherwise indicated.

Universal Screening Tools	
Acadience (3 districts)	NWEA MAP Reading Fluency
Acadience RAN	PALS
AimswebPlus Early Literacy	PPVT-4
Benchmark Phonics	Locally-developed spelling inventory
Fluharty-2	Star CBM
Growth Measure	Star Early Literacy
NWEA MAP Growth (3 districts)	Star Reading

Additional assessment tools districts reported using in 2022–23 included the following. Each was used by one district unless otherwise indicated.

Additional Assessment Tools	
AimsWebPlus	MaxScholar Diagnostic
Decoding Power Diagnostic	MindPlay
Fundations nonsense word tool	Phonological Awareness Assessment
KTEA-3 (2 districts)	Scholastic Reading Inventory
Lexia	Star CBM

Appendix F: Intervention Programs and Strategies

Commercial intervention programs districts reported using in 2022–23 included the following. Each was used by one district unless otherwise indicated.

Commercial Intervention Programs	
95 Percent	Reading Assistant Plus
Fountas & Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention (2 districts—comprehension only in one district)	Saxon Phonics & Spelling
Fundations (4 districts)	Sound Partners
Fundations Hub	Stepping Stones
Heggerty (3 districts)	Successmaker
iStation	System 44
Lexia Core5 Lessons and Skill Builders	Wilson Reading System (2 districts)
MindPlay	

Non-commercial intervention strategies districts reported using in 2022–23 included the following. Each was used by one district unless otherwise indicated.

Non-Commercial Intervention Strategies	
Click or Clunk	Main idea maps
Decodable texts	Oral/written retell
District intervention bank	Orton-Gillingham Approach (5 districts)
Elkonin boxes	Paragraph shrinking
Explicit phonemic awareness instruction	*The Reading Strategies Book* by Jennifer Serravallo
Explicit phonics instruction	Repeated reading
Explicit phonological awareness instruction	Story mapping
Fiction and non-fiction texts	Strategies with "visible actionable steps" for using phonics rules while reading
How to Plan Differentiated Reading Instruction by Walpole & McKenna	

Interventions districts reported using in 2022–23 for students with characteristics of dyslexia included the following. Each was used by one district unless otherwise indicated.

Dyslexia-Specific Interventions	
District intervention bank	MindPlay
Elkonin boxes	Orton-Gillingham Approach (5 districts)
Fast ForWord	Read 180
Fountas & Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention	*The Reading Strategies Book* by Jennifer Serravallo
Fundations (2 districts)	Saxon Phonics & Spelling
Fundations Hub	Small group strategy drills
Handwriting Without Tears	Sound Partners
Heggerty (4 districts)	Stepping Stones
How to Plan Differentiated Reading Instruction by Walpole & McKenna (2 districts)	System 44
Just Words	Wilson Reading (2 districts)
Lexia Core5 (2 districts)	

Appendix G: Progress Monitoring Tools

Progress monitoring tools districts reported using in 2022–23 included the following. Each was used by one district unless otherwise indicated.

Progress Monitoring Tools	
Acadience (3 districts)	iStation
AimswebPlus (2 districts)	Lexia
Decoding Power Diagnostic	MindPlay
easyCBM	Phonological Awareness Assessment
Fundations Nonsense Word Fluency	Reading Inventory
Fundations unit tests	Star CBM
Heggerty	Star Reading
Intervention-specific tools	Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests 3rd Ed (WRMT-3) RAN subtest