

Structured Literacy Certification Guidance Document

PLANNING AND AUDITING TOOL FOR DISTRICT LEADERS AND EDUCATORS

Introduction and Purpose

[Ohio's dyslexia support laws](#) require that districts and community schools establish a structured literacy certification process. This document was developed by the Ohio Dyslexia Committee in partnership with the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce to provide support and guidance to schools and districts as they work to establish and implement this process. In so doing, the guidance provided in this document can help schools and districts ensure that students with dyslexia, or characteristics of dyslexia, receive the support they need and deserve.

Why is Structured Literacy Certification Essential?

Structured literacy is evidence-based instruction that is effective for most students. Certified educators can implement structured literacy instruction to reach a more comprehensive range of children, thus ensuring more literacy proficiency K-12.

Although professional development for structured literacy is critical, advancing to certification ensures that educators have the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively support struggling readers and provide them with the structured, systematic instruction they need to succeed. Structured literacy certification is essential because it provides educators with specialized training in evidence-based methods for teaching reading, writing, and spelling to students, particularly those with dyslexia or other language-based learning differences.

Recommended Steps

STEP 1: IDENTIFY CERTIFICATION NEEDS

This tool can be used to support discussions and decisions related to the need for certified educators within the district and the role they might play in supporting student outcomes at the instructional and systems levels. Intensive reading intervention should be provided by educator(s) with structured literacy certification. Additionally, individuals with certification can serve on the district/school multidisciplinary team to provide expertise in the identification, intervention, and remediation of dyslexia.

STEP 2: CONSIDER CERTIFICATION PATHWAYS AND RENEWAL PROCESS

Individuals with certification are specifically prepared to work with those students who are diagnosed with or identified as at risk for dyslexia, as well as students with other, related reading difficulties. This tool can be used to support discussions and decisions related to the certification options recognized by the Ohio Dyslexia Committee. Structured literacy certification requires completion of an [independent training program](#) or [higher education program](#) accredited by the International Dyslexia Association at the Accreditation Plus level. Please note that Programs with Accreditation Plus status include coursework, practicum, and an exam. The list below outlines the certification pathways.

- Structured Literacy Dyslexia Interventionist Certification or Structured Literacy Dyslexia Interventionist Alternate Route Certification from the [Center for Effective Reading Instruction](#)
- Structured Literacy Dyslexia Specialist Certification or Structured Literacy Dyslexia Specialist Alternate Route Certification from the [Center for Effective Reading Instruction](#)
- Certified Academic Language Practitioner from the [Academic Language Therapy Association](#)
- Certified Academic Language Therapist from the [Academic Language Therapy Association](#)
- Completion of an [International Multisensory Structured Language Education Council](#) (IMSLEC) accredited program
- Completion of an [independent training program](#) or [higher education program](#) accredited by the International Dyslexia Association at the Accreditation level, in addition to completing a practicum provided by an accredited provider and passing the [Knowledge and Practice Examination for Effective Reading Instruction \(KPEERI\)](#). For more information about this option, please visit the Department's [Structured Literacy Certification Process webpage](#).

Note: The structured literacy certification renewal process requires 10 CEU hours per year aligned with the Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading (KPS). The Ohio Dyslexia Committee recommends that district and/or school leadership verify their staff's certification status annually.

STEP 3: PRIORITIZE WHO BECOMES CERTIFIED

The Ohio Dyslexia Committee recommends dividing the number of students requiring Tier III intervention and all Special Education teachers servicing literacy-related IEP goals by 24. That should be the minimum number of certified structured literacy staff, because each teacher can serve approximately ten to 24 students daily, depending on the severity of student needs. For further guidance on determining the Tier III intervention numbers, please reference the Multitiered System of Support (MTSS) portion of the [Ohio's Dyslexia Guidebook, pages 15-22](#).

Individuals with structured literacy certification can support a multidisciplinary team by coordinating student access to intervention supports (Tiers 2 and Tier 3 instruction). Multidisciplinary team members should:

1. Use a process to select and use interventions.
2. Engage in data analysis to determine effectiveness of interventions and need for intensification of supports.
3. Communicate with grade level and building leadership teams.

The Ohio Dyslexia Committee recommends creating a plan that prioritizes the certification of staff who directly work with students with the most intense needs. See a recommended progression below.

1. Intervention specialists who provide literacy services directly to striving readers
2. Tier III educators who provide literacy services to striving readers not receiving services via an individualized education program (IEP)
3. Literacy coaches (it would be beneficial for coaches to receive advanced certifications)
4. MTSS Leads (The district or school determines locally who leads the MTSS team. It may be the school principal, instructional coordinator, literacy coach, intervention specialist, etc.)

STEP 4: ESTABLISH CERTIFICATION PROCESS

District leaders may consider using the Certification Process Planning and Auditing Tool, outlined in this guidance document, in *existing multidisciplinary team* meetings ([Ohio's Dyslexia Guidebook, pages 18-19, 50](#)). For each stage of the structured literacy certification process outlined in Ohio's Dyslexia Guidebook, districts can plan and discuss the following related to each key consideration:

- Identify components **currently in place to best meet student needs**.
- Determine **next steps** to consider.
- Identify **person(s) responsible** for next steps.
- Assign **current status** (*not started, in process, complete*).

Planning and Auditing Tool Template

Districts must establish a structured literacy certification process for teachers providing instruction to students in kindergarten through third grade. This person can serve as part of the district's or school's multidisciplinary team that administers screening and intervention measures. District leaders and educators may consider using the Certification Process Planning and Auditing template below, which includes a checklist of items for auditing and consideration when establishing a structured literacy certification process.

FIRST: IDENTIFY CERTIFICATION NEEDS

Consideration	Currently in Place	Next Steps	Person(s) Responsible	Current Status
Determining Needs – Instructional Support				
A. Who currently provides intensive reading support to students?				
B. How many students in K-3, 4-6, 7-12 require intensive reading supports?				
Determining Needs – Systems Support				
A. How is literacy data collected and analyzed at the building/district levels?				
B. How are educators at the building and district levels supported in identifying assessment, instructional materials, and interventions for children at risk of dyslexia?				

NEXT: CONSIDER CERTIFICATION PATHWAYS TO PRIORITIZE WHO BECOMES CERTIFIED

Consideration	Currently in Place	Next Steps	Person(s) Responsible	Status
A. How many certified staff are needed to support instructional and system needs?				
B. Which certification option(s) fits the needs and resources of the district?				
C. What resources are necessary for candidates to complete certification and renewal?				
D. Who is already certified and who is interested in becoming certificated?				

FINALLY: ESTABLISH STRUCTURED LITERACY CERTIFICATION PROCESS

Consideration	Currently in Place	Next Steps	Person(s) Responsible	Status
Identify and Recruit Certified Educators				
A. How does the district or school survey educators to determine certification status (certified, in progress, interested, not interested)?				
B. How will the district or school support hiring personnel (human resources and administrators) with understanding of the certification process and what to look for in qualified candidates?				

Consideration	Currently in Place	Next Steps	Person(s) Responsible	Status
C. How will the district or school identify employees with certification to serve as instructional leaders?				
D. How will the district or school provide clear messaging that the district or school is committed to the structured literacy approach?				
E. How will the district or school prioritize candidates with certification for certain leadership positions (for example, special education coordinators, elementary principals, literacy coaches)?				
Identify Certification Candidates				
A. How will the district or school use data and observations from teacher training to support the certification process?				
B. How will the district or school communicate the certification process at staff meetings and trainings?				
C. How will the district or school make certification opportunities available to all educators, including preschool, SLP, school psychologists, and teachers of English learners?				
D. How will the district or school target recruitment of K-2 teachers, lead				

Consideration	Currently in Place	Next Steps	Person(s) Responsible	Status
teachers of every grade level, and instructional coaches?				
E. How will the district or school prioritize representation at each grade level for teacher-based teams?				
Train the Trainer or Support External Training				
A. Is the district developing an in-house certification program an option?				
B. How can the district or school partner with neighboring districts or educational service centers to provide shared training opportunities?				
C. How can the district or school expand in-house professional development to bridge from professional development to full certification for identified educators?				
D. What options are available to partner with philanthropic community organizations to support the costs of certification?				
E. Which state or federal funding sources are available to support the costs of certification? (Review the Dyslexia Federal Funding Guidance Document and the state Disadvantaged Pupil Impact Aid Fund Guidance Document .)				

Consideration	Currently in Place	Next Steps	Person(s) Responsible	Status
F. When will the district or school schedule training take place? Will it be during the day/on contract time?				
G. Which local organizations can support the certification process?				
Retaining Certified Educators				
A. What positive incentives will the district or school provide for maintaining certification and continuing employment with the district (for example, perk days or additional planning time)?				
B. How will the district or school provide relevant continuing professional development?				
C. How will the district or school limit competing priorities (for example, waiving districtwide professional development not relevant to a position)?				
D. What opportunities are there to develop a tutor to classroom teacher model whereby the certified tutor has a pathway to move into a full-time teaching position and the district or school does not lose highly qualified personnel?				

Consideration	Currently in Place	Next Steps	Person(s) Responsible	Status
E. What opportunities are there to provide pathways for professionals who obtain certification to enter leadership roles (lead teachers, reading specialists, literacy coaches, literacy coordinators, principals, curriculum staff)?				
F. How will districts clearly articulate the support from leadership?				
G. How will the district or school ensure certified personnel are available to meet the intensity of needs presented each year?				

Additional Resources

- [Institute of Education Sciences Practice Guide: Assisting Students Struggling with Reading: Response to Intervention and Multi-tiered Intervention in the Primary Grades](#)
- [Webinar: Three Ohio Exemplars for Structured Literacy Certification: Urban, Rural, and Suburban Districts Share Their Stories](#)
- [Becoming a Certified Literacy Teacher](#)
- [Structured Literacy Certification Process - Ohio](#)
- [Ohio's Dyslexia Guidebook](#)
- [The Center for Effective Reading Instruction](#)