Aligning State Literacy Policies & Practices

Connecting the Georgia Early Literacy Act (HB 538), Georgia's K-12 English Language Arts Standards, Georgia's Early Intervention Program (EIP) and Georgia's Dyslexia Efforts (SB 48)



Georgia Department of Education

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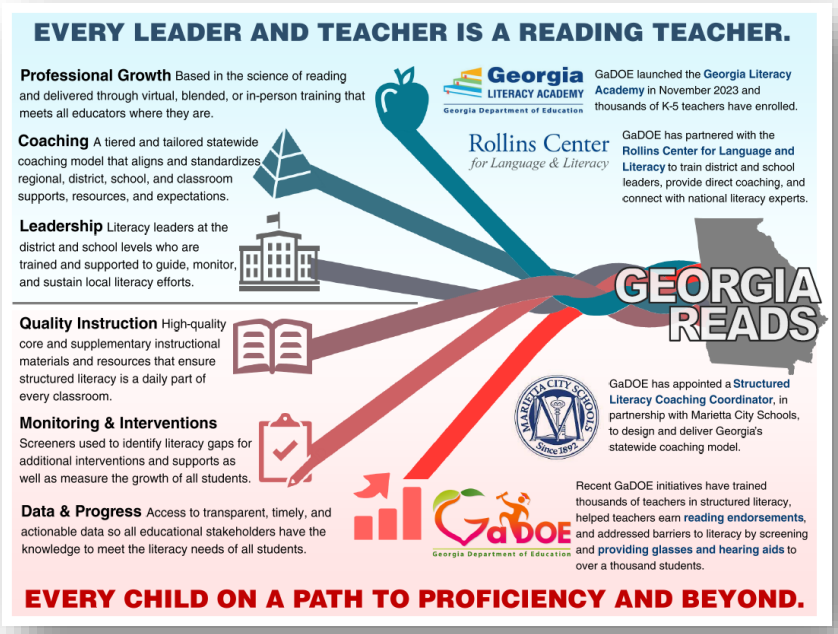


Updates to this Guidance

May 23, 2023	Released initial guidance document
June 27, 2023	Added 'Screening' and 'Instructional Materials' sections; table of contents; updated timelines based on SBOE and GaDOE actions
July 25, 2023	Added "Streamlining State Assessment Requirements" and "Providing Grades 1-2 Screening Tools" sections; added Dyslexia grant information; updated timelines based on SBOE/GaDOE actions
October 24, 2023	Updated EIP section; updated SBOE Testing Rule timeline; added professional learning section; updated Literacy Metric timeline
November 7, 2023	Updated Testing Rule timeline; added Professional Learning details; updated Instructional Materials decision; added review of screeners; updated Literacy Metric decision
January 16, 2024	Added HQIM certifying process; added rubric for supplemental instructional materials; added Testing Rule adoption and added implementation timeline for free K-2 formatives and screener
February 27, 2024	Added Georgia's Literacy Plan and Literacy Update slide deck; added updated list of approved universal screeners and HQIM
June 18, 2024	Added funding info. for dyslexia screening, added SB 464's five screener cap; added support plans for tiered reading and dyslexia; added literacy coaching information; added reading dashboard
September 16, 2024	Updated the Literacy Updates slide deck; added updated dyslexia screening list; added information regarding universally screening students with significant cognitive disabilities and low-incidence disabilities; added reporting requirements and guide for reporting in the GaDOE portal.
December 18, 2024	Updated Literacy Screening list approved by State Board of Education for the 2025-2026 school year

Purpose

Georgia has undergone several recent developments that have impacted literacy policy and practice statewide. This guidance document provides key connections and information to support school districts in effectively and efficiently implementing these new expectations with the ultimate goal of increasing literacy outcomes for Georgia's students.



Click here for a high-level view of **Georgia's Literacy Plan**.



Click here for the most recent update on the **Georgia Department of Education's literacy efforts**.

Understanding the Georgia Early Literacy Act (HB 538)

In state legislatures across the nation, there has been a recent trend of adopting state policies to address early literacy. In the 2023 legislative session, state legislators passed the *Georgia Early Literacy Act* (House Bill 538) which addresses kindergarten through third grade reading in five parts: (1) high-quality instructional materials, (2) screeners, (3) interventions, (4) professional learning, and (5) teacher preparation.

Georgia Early Literacy Act (HB 538) Components	
Key Components	*Key Highlights*
Instructional Materials	• Aligned to the science of reading; instruct students in foundational literacy skills and State Board of Education (SBOE)-approved English Language Arts (ELA) standards; approved by SBOE for grades K-3.
Screeners	• Administered three times per year to K-3 students; measure foundational literacy skills; identify characteristics of dyslexia; used for progress monitoring.
Interventions	• Tiered reading intervention plans for K-3 students who exhibit significant reading deficiency; use of evidence-based strategies.
Professional Learning	• Training for all K-3 teachers on the science of reading, structured literacy, and foundational literacy skills.
Teacher Preparation	• Georgia Assessments for the Certification of Educators (GACE) aligned with developmentally appropriate evidence-based literacy instruction; creation of standards to ensure students completing teacher certification programs graduate with the knowledge and skills to teach reading.

On January 11, 2024, the State Board of Education (SBOE) adopted a new State Board Rule 160-4-2-.40 Georgia Early Literacy Act Requirements that codifies the requirements of HB 538 into SBOE policy.

Can LEAs waive the requirements of the *Georgia Early Literacy Act*?

No, the *Georgia Early Literacy Act* specifically states:

> *"This Code section shall not be subject to waivers pursuant to Code Section 20-2-82 for a strategic waivers school system, Code Section 20-2-244 for a local board of education, Code Section 20-2-2063.2 for a charter system, or Code Section 20-2-2065 for a charter school established pursuant to Article 31 or Article 31A of this chapter, a charter system, or schools within a charter system, or any state special school."*

Aligning Quality Instruction to the Georgia Early Literacy Act: Georgia's New K-12 English Language Arts Standards

On May 11, 2023, at the recommendation of State School Superintendent Richard Woods, the State Board of Education (SBOE) adopted the new K-12 English Language Arts (ELA) standards.

Drafted by Georgia ELA teachers with input from educational leaders, parents, students, business and industry leaders, and community members, the standards are designed to be clear, understandable, and prepare students to meet future challenges and become world-class learners.

The standards feature built-in learning progressions across grade bands and within grade-level concepts, allowing teachers to remediate or accelerate learning as needed.

These standards will be fully implemented in the 2025-2026 school year, providing time for professional learning, resource development, and assessment updates.

Georgia's K-12 English Language Arts Standards: Implementation Timeline		
2023-2024	*2024-2025*	*2025-2026*
• Resource development, instructional supports, professional learning, and assessment updates.	• Resource development, instructional supports, professional learning, and assessment updates.	• **Full Implementation** – Georgia students tested on updated ELA assessments.

Note: Per the Georgia Early Literacy Act, the SBOE will approve a list of high-quality instructional materials for K-3 reading by January 1, 2024. School districts should consider this and other timeframes when making adoption and purchasing decisions.

The standards are intentionally designed to provide a strong literacy foundation beginning in the early grades. During the development of the new K-12 ELA standards, GaDOE ensured full alignment with the requirements of HB 538. Specifically, the K-5 standards contain an additional domain, *Foundations*, with big ideas that include: (1) Phonological Awareness, (2) Concepts of Print, (3) Phonics, (4) Fluency, and (5) Handwriting.

- *Foundations*: Kindergarten | 1st Grade | 2nd Grade | 3rd Grade | 4th Grade | 5th Grade

Aligning Reading Interventions to the Georgia Early Literacy Act: Georgia's Early Intervention Program (EIP)

The *Georgia Early Literacy Act* requires that the State Board of Education (SBOE) adopt a list of high-quality **core** instructional materials for K-3 reading by January 1, 2024. All school districts will be required to use instructional programs and interventions aligned to foundational literacy skills and the science of reading by the 2024-2025 school year. School districts that use a core instructional program must ensure the core program is on the list approved by the SBOE.

Local education agencies must review and vet supplemental and intervention materials for quality and alignment to foundational literacy skills and the science of reading. The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) has provided a rubric to assist local education agencies in their review processes. School districts must meet this requirement to receive EIP funding.

The Innovative Model will continue to be an option for school districts. School districts will be required to continue assurances, including alignment with the requirements of the *Georgia Early Literacy Act*.

Making the Connection to Dyslexia Efforts (SB 48)

Senate Bill 48 (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-159.6) was passed in the 2019 legislative session. This legislation established the creation of a dyslexia informational handbook, implementation of a dyslexia pilot, and dyslexia screening and intervention processes and procedures.

Below are key requirements from O.C.G.A. §20-2-159.6 (SB 48) related to screening:

SB 48: Dyslexia Screening Requirements		
O.C.G.A. § 20-2-159.6 (SB 48)	*Topic*	*Language*
§(a)(8)	**Qualified Screening Tool**	'Qualified dyslexia screening tool' means an assessment that measures a student's ability to demonstrate phonological awareness skills, phonemic decoding efficiency skills, sight word reading efficiency skills, rapid automatic naming skills, and accuracy of word reading on grade-level text."
§(f)(1)	**Grades Tested & Frequency**	Students in kindergarten and grades one through three for annual screening
§(b)(2)	**Qualities of a Screener Tool**	A list of approved qualified dyslexia screening tools that address the following components: (A) Phonological awareness and phonemic awareness; (B) Sound symbol recognition; (C) Alphabet knowledge; (D) Decoding skills; (E) Rapid naming/fluency and (F) Encoding skills.

On May 11, 2023, the State Board of Education (SBOE), at the recommendation of State School Superintendent Richard Woods, adopted the list of Qualified Dyslexia Screening Tools.

All school districts are required to adhere to SB 48's screening requirements by the 2024-2025 school year using screeners from the state-approved list:

> *"Beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, local school systems shall screen all kindergarten students for characteristics of dyslexia...Further, local school systems shall screen students grade one through three for characteristics of dyslexia…"* (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-159.6(f)(1))

- Characteristics of Dyslexia: Screening, Progress Monitoring, and MTSS

At its December 2024 meeting, the State Board of Education (SBOE) approved five screeners for statewide use (see State Board Votes to Approve Five Screeners). These approved screeners satisfy both dyslexia and universal screening state requirements.

Providing Funding for Dyslexia Screeners

The approved FY25 budget includes $5,022,090 million to support dyslexia screening to assist with the costs of a screener that meets this screening requirement ***pursuant to SB 48 (2019 Session) and universal screening pursuant to HB 538 (2023 Session)***. The Georgia Department of Education allocated this funding by school district based on K-3 FTE counts.

On May 9, 2024, at the recommendation of State School Superintendent Richard Woods, the State Board of Education approved funding for school districts to support dyslexia screening. All school districts accepting funding must use those funds to pay for and administer screeners on the state-approved Qualified Dyslexia Screening Tools list.

The grant period is July 1, 2024 - August 31, 2025. Funding codes for the grant are provided below, and the grant completion report must be submitted by September 30, 2025.

- Fund – 100

- Program Code – 1613
- Revenue Source Code - 3800

The grant funds will be paid via ACH (direct deposit) utilizing the Grants Drawdown (GAORS) system on July 25, 2024. Each receiving LEA will not be required to enter a budget in the Consolidated Application to receive the state funds, and a cash drawdown will not be entered by the LEA. The cash draw will be entered by the GaDOE Grants Accounting team, like our process for the Math and Science supplement. A completion report will be due 30 days after the grant period ends on August 31, 2025. If you have any questions about the Dyslexia Grant, please contact Statewide Dyslexia Coordinator, Dr. Jennifer Lindstrom (Jennifer.Lindstrom@doe.k12.ga.us).

In alignment with state law, SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.39 *Dyslexia Identification and Support* includes the requirement that by June 2025 and each year after, school districts shall provide the following data to the Georgia Department of Education:

- The number of students in kindergarten through grade three who were identified as having characteristics of dyslexia;
- The number of students in kindergarten through grade three who participate in screening for characteristics of dyslexia in a school year;
- The number of students in kindergarten through grade three who were newly identified as having characteristics of dyslexia in a school year;
- The process or tool used to evaluate student progress;
- The number of students in kindergarten through grade three who participated in interventions; and
- The number of trained LEA personnel or licensed professionals used to administer the Qualified Dyslexia Screening Tool.

GaDOE will request this data from school districts for the 2024-2025 school year with a June 30, 2025, deadline. More information is available in the *Understanding Reporting Requirements* section on page 18.

Understanding Screening Requirements

Georgia Early Literacy Act (HB 538): Screening	
Key Component	*Key Highlights*
Universal Reading Screeners	• Administered three times per year to K-3 students. • Measure foundational literacy skills. • Identify characteristics of dyslexia. • Used for progress monitoring. • School districts must use screeners from a state-approved list.

Note: For dyslexia screening requirements, see the Making the Connection to Dyslexia Efforts (SB 48) section of this guidance document.

State Board of Education Approves Screener List Based on the Recommendation of Superintendent Woods

Per the Georgia Early Literacy Act, the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) "shall establish qualifications, timelines, and submission procedures for providers to submit one or more universal reading screeners to be considered for the SBOE-approved list of approved universal reading screener providers."

In line with the process used to compile the list of qualified screeners for dyslexia, GaDOE initiated a Request for Information (RFI) process for universal reading screener providers through the Georgia Department of Administrative Services. The requirements set forth in the *Georgia Early Literacy Act* formed the framework of Georgia's RFI application to ensure compliance with the law.

On July 19, 2023, the State Board of Education (SBOE), at the recommendation of State School Superintendent Richard Woods, adopted the list of Universal Reading Screener Providers (updated February 22, 2024). Though school districts are not required to implement universal screeners until the 2024-2025 school year, clarity on which screener providers are SBOE-approved supports districts in their purchasing processes and allows districts to pilot implementation a year prior if they so choose.

State Board of Education Pairs Down Screener List Based on Deal Center Report

On November 3, 2023, the *Sandra Dunagan Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy* released their *Psychometric Review of Universal Reading Screeners Approved by the Georgia Department of Education,* which was commissioned by the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) as the administrative arm of the Georgia Literacy Council. The analysis provides a review of screener psychometrics and literacy components as well as rankings. Regarding rankings, the Deal Center report specifically states: "Our rankings of strong, moderate, or weak should be considered within this context and **as relative only to one another** and not an absolute ranking of screener acceptability (Emphasis added by the review authors; pg. 16)."

Though school districts can use the Deal Center review and other information as resources to guide local decision making, local districts are allowed to use any universal screener currently on the state-approved list (updated February 22, 2024), as set by the State Board of Education.

Regarding the Georgia Department of Education's RFI process for universal screeners, the Deal Center report stated: "Our review demonstrates that GaDOE has selected a number of tools with acceptable psychometric properties enabling statewide implementation of meaningful screening of K-3 students as required by HB538 (pg. 16)."

In its first report, the Georgia Literacy Council, administrated by GOSA, recommended that the SBOE reduce the number of state-approved screeners, which would require formal SBOE action.

On February 22, 2024, the SBOE voted to remove screeners rated by the Deal Center as 'Weak' from the list of state-approved Universal Reading Screener Providers.

New State Law Sets Cap to Five Approved Screeners

During the 2024 legislative session, the General Assembly passed Senate Bill (SB) 464, which created changes to screener requirements.

SB 464 requires: "as soon as practicable but not later than May 15, 2025, the [State Board of Education] shall approve the memorandum of agreement between the council and the department, for a list of ***no more than five universal reading screeners, one of which shall be a free universal reading screener***, for use by public schools and local school systems as part of their comprehensive literacy programs."

Districts are still required to begin screening students three times per year with an approved universal screener during the 2024-2025 school year. For the 2024-2025 school year, districts should select a universal screener from the list approved by the State Board of Education.

State Board Votes to Approve Five Screeners

Per state law, the Sandra Dunagan Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy (Deal Center) was charged with conducting a process to identify up to five screeners to recommend to the SBOE for approval and statewide use. At the December 2024 SBOE meeting, the Deal Center presented their full report, Universal Reading Screeners (K-3) Recommendations.

State Superintendent Woods presented a separate recommendation on behalf of GaDOE supporting the top 5 screeners that are currently in use by Georgia school districts, rated in order by the Sandra Dunagan Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy's report.

The State Board of Education approved the following universal reading screeners for use by Georgia systems and schools as part of their comprehensive early literacy programs starting in 2025-26, in accordance with the Georgia Early Literacy Act (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-153.1) and state dyslexia requirements (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-159.6): Amira ISIP, EPS Reading Assistant, Star Universal Reading Suite, mClass with DIBELS 8th Edition, and iReady Universal Screening Suite. At the December 2024 SBOE meeting, the Deal Center stated that Amira ISIP will be the free screener. Additional information will be made available in the future.

Screening Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities and Low-Incidence Disabilities

Universal screeners provide information that can help identify students' areas of strength and improvement. If an IEP team determines that the student cannot meaningfully access the universal screener, then the student should participate in an equivalent screening process that is best suited to the child's individual needs and abilities. This process may include use of observation, interviews, and student performance to pinpoint understanding in the skills required by the Georgia Early Literacy Act (HB 538, 2023). If the student does not participate in standard universal screening, the process by which the student is screened for reading difficulties must be documented in the IEP.

Streamlining State Assessment Requirements

In addition to federal summative assessment requirements, the Georgia General Assembly has adopted formative assessment requirements to support school districts in identifying the academic progress and needs of students.

Grades K-3 Assessment Requirements in Georgia					
Legislation	*Assessment*	*Requirements*	*Grade(s)*	*Frequency*	*Approved Assessments*
O.C.G.A. § 20-2-151(a)(2); 20-2-281(a)	Readiness Assessment	Assesses the first-grade readiness of kindergarten students.	K	Once (1) but administered throughout the year	GKIDS 2.0
O.C.G.A. § 20-2-159.6 (SB 48)	Qualified Screener Tool	Assesses students on phonological awareness skills, phonemic decoding efficiency skills, sight word reading efficiency skills, rapid automatic naming skills, and accuracy of word reading on grade-level text.	K-3	At least once (1) per year	SBOE Approved List – Qualified Screener Tool Providers

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-153.1(d)(3)	Universal Screeners	Assesses students on foundational literacy skills; Identifies students with characteristics of dyslexia; Supports progress monitoring.	K-3	At least three (3) times per year	SBOE Approved List – Universal Reading Screeners
Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)	Summative Assessments	Assesses student performance on Georgia's K-12 English Arts standards.	3rd	Once (1) annually	Georgia Milestones

Under these state and federal requirements, K-3 students would be tested between four (4) to five (5) times annually depending on their grade level.

Old Model – Required Literacy/English Language Arts Assessments							
Gr	*Readiness Assessment*	*Qualified Screener Tool (Dyslexia)*	*Universal Screener – 1st Administration*	*Universal Screener – 2nd Administration*	*Universal Screener – 3rd Administration*	*Federally Required*	**Total Times Tested**
K	GKIDS 2.0	SBOE Approved List	SBOE Approved List	SBOE Approved List	SBOE Approved List	*Not applicable*	**5**
1	*Not applicable*	SBOE Approved List	SBOE Approved List	SBOE Approved List	SBOE Approved List	*Not applicable*	**4**
2	*Not applicable*	SBOE Approved List	SBOE Approved List	SBOE Approved List	SBOE Approved List	*Not applicable*	**4**
3	*Not applicable*	SBOE Approved List	SBOE Approved List	SBOE Approved List	SBOE Approved List	Georgia Milestones	**5**

Note: Additional dyslexia screening may occur based on the results of the initial screening. For universal screening, state law sets a minimum of three administrations annually to be used for progress monitoring.

Superintendent Woods is committed to streamlining assessment requirements to preserve instructional time and ensure valuable feedback for teaching and learning while still adhering to state law. In keeping with this commitment, school districts who utilize a screener or screeners that are on *both* the State Board of Education approved list for Qualified Dyslexia Screening Tools and Universal Reading Screener Providers will satisfy the state requirements in both the dyslexia legislation and *Georgia Early Literacy Act*.

Language in the recently passed Georgia Early Literacy Act supports the spirit of this alignment by explicitly requiring universal reading screeners approved by the board be "capable of identifying students who have a significant reading deficiency, including, but not limited to, *identifying students with characteristics of dyslexia*" (Lines 113-114) and "with the primary objective…to minimize impacts on instructional time" (Lines 116-117).

On January 11, 2024, at the recommendation of State School Superintendent Richard Woods, the State Board of Education (SBOE) adopted the amended SBOE rule 160-3-1-.07 *Testing Programs – Student Assessments* which allows students who take a universal screener and/or dyslexia screener

to be exempted from taking the English Language Arts (ELA) portion of GKIDS 2.0, effective immediately.

New Model – Required Literacy/English Language Arts Assessments							
Gr	*Readiness Assessment (GKIDS 2.0 ELA)*	*Qualified Screener Tool (Dyslexia)*	*Universal Screener – 1st Administration*	*Universal Screener – 2nd Administration*	*Universal Screener – 3rd Administration*	*Federally Required*	**Total Times Tested**
K	*Using assessments that are included on both the State Board of Education approved lists for Qualified Dyslexia Screening Tools and Universal Reading Screener Providers.*					*Not applicable*	Lowered from 5 to 3
1	*Not applicable*	*Using assessments that are included on both the State Board of Education approved lists for Qualified Dyslexia Screening Tools and Universal Reading Screener Providers.*				*Not applicable*	Lowered from 4 to 3
2	*Not applicable*	*Using assessments that are included on both the State Board of Education approved lists for Qualified Dyslexia Screening Tools and Universal Reading Screener Providers.*				*Not applicable*	Lowered from 4 to 3
3	*Not applicable*	*Using assessments that are included on both the State Board of Education approved lists for Qualified Dyslexia Screening Tools and Universal Reading Screener Providers.*				Georgia Milestones	Lowered from 5 to 4

Note: Effective immediately per the approved amendment to 160-3-1-.07 Testing Programs – Student Assessments.

- Screening Process Flowchart to Support Progress Monitoring & Interventions

Providing Grades K-3 Screening Tools: Early Grades Launched for Early Literacy and BEACON Expansion

Since 2020, the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) has provided DRC BEACON for grades 3-8 in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics to districts to help address student instructional needs and measure progress throughout the year.

Based on district feedback, the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) has expanded BEACON to grades K-2 in English Language Arts and Mathematics. DRC Early Grades will satisfy the state requirements in both the dyslexia legislation and *Georgia Early Literacy Act* as well as align with the new K-12 ELA standards.

Below is the implementation timeline for these free assessment tools:



Key features will include:

- Reporting categories (like those currently used in Grades 3-8 DRC BEACON) that provide the information best suited to early elementary educators, students, and parents/guardians.
- Items aligned to learning standards for kindergarten through grade 3 to ensure that information is available for all students, including those students performing both below and above their current grade level.
- A Multi-Staged Computer Adaptive Model which assigns a set of items to a student based on their prior performance on a previous set of items to provide maximum information with minimum student and teacher time investment to expedite student progress.
- An optional readiness pretest containing six to ten Kindergarten items for each content area designed to gauge a student's readiness to participate in a computerized testing administration.
- Shorter testlets that focus on specific reporting categories.

For more information on DRC Beacon Early Years, please view the webinar recording and presentation slides.

BEACON Early Years is currently on the approved screener lists for Qualified Dyslexia Screeners (SB 48) and Universal Reading Screeners (HB 538).

Understanding Tiered Reading Support Plans and Characteristics of Dyslexia Support Plans

The *Georgia Early Literacy Act* states that "public schools and local school systems shall implement tiered reading intervention plans for public school students in kindergarten through third grade who at any time during the school year exhibit a significant reading deficiency, as measured by performance on a universal reading screener approved by the board" (H.B. 538, 2023, lines 199-203). Each publisher of approved screeners uses specific language to designate students who are at risk of a significant reading disability. This table was developed through communication with each screener provider regarding the cut score that best correlates to a significant reading deficiency. The Tiered Reading Support Plan & Characteristics of Dyslexia Support Plan templates are now available to educators and leaders. The plan templates are in Word format to allow LEAs to modify as needed.

Sample parent notification letters are also included. Be sure to check out the Parent Resources: Supporting your Child's Reading Development one-pager that can be used as a supplement to the support plans.

The Georgia Reading and Dyslexia Screening Process Flowchart, the Characteristics of Dyslexia rubric, and Considerations for English Learners for Dyslexia provide additional guidance for the screening and intervention process.

Understanding Instructional Materials Requirements

Georgia Early Literacy Act (HB 538): Instructional Materials	
Key Component	*Key Highlights*
Instructional Materials	• Aligned to the science of reading. • Instruct students in foundational literacy skills and State Board of Education (SBOE)-approved English Language Arts (ELA) standards. • School districts must annually certify their use of high-quality instructional materials from a state-approved list.

To ensure high-quality, standards-aligned teaching and learning, it is essential that educators have access to and are supported to effectively utilize high-quality instructional materials. The *Georgia Early Literacy Act* requires the use of high-quality instructional materials for grades kindergarten through third grade to teach reading in Georgia public schools.

Per the *Georgia Early Literacy Act*, the State Board of Education (SBOE) at the November 2023 meeting approved an initial list of high-quality instructional materials for K-3 reading. On February 22, 2024, the SBOE approved a second list of high-quality instructional materials for K-3 reading. School districts should consider this and other timeframes when making adoption and purchasing decisions. School districts that use a core instructional program must ensure the core program is on the approved list of core instructional programs. School districts that "bundle" supplemental programs to create their "principal course of study" (GA Code § 20-2-1017 (2019)) must review and vet all supplemental materials for quality and alignment to foundational reading skills and the science of reading (see GaDOE's *Rubric for Vetting Supplemental Instructional Materials*). This will be verified during the required certification of instructional materials by local boards of education in December 2024.

As the process approved by the SBOE, each public school and local school system will annually certify to the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) locally approved high-quality instructional materials for K-3 literacy using GaDOE established data collections procedures and verification. More information is available in the Understanding Reporting Requirements section on page 18.

Round three of the high-quality instructional materials review process will take place in the fall of 2024.

NOTE: Deadline for LBOEs to approve HQIM is December 1, 2024, and certification deadline is December 15, 2024.

Defining Instructional Materials

Per state law, high-quality instructional materials are defined as: *"…instructional materials aligned to the science of reading that instruct students in foundational literacy skills and grade-appropriate English Language Arts and reading standards, approved by the State Board of Education."* (HB 538, Lines 65-68)

High-Quality Instructional Materials: Terms and Definitions	
Term	*Definition*
Science of Reading	"…means the body of research that identifies evidence-based approaches of explicitly and systematically teaching students to read, including foundational literacy skills that enable students to develop reading skills required to meet state standards in literacy." (HB 538, Lines 73-76)
High-Quality Instructional Materials: Terms and Definitions	
Term	*Definition*
Foundational Literacy	"…means phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, reading comprehension, spelling, oral language, and the intersection of reading and writing." (HB 538, Lines 62-64)
ELA Standards	Grade-appropriate English Language Arts (ELA) and reading standards approved by the State Board of Education.

Using Supplemental Materials

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) defines "instructional materials" in the *Georgia Early Literacy Act* as instructional materials and content, as defined by the State Board of Education pursuant to Code Section 20-2-1010, which constitute the principal source of study for a state funded course, not including supplementary or ancillary material, which is adopted by a local board of education or used by a local school system. Supplementary or ancillary material includes, but is not limited to, articles, online simulations, worksheets, novels, biographies, speeches, videos, music, and similar resources in any medium, including both physical or digital.

Though not required, creating and aligning supplemental materials for K-3 reading with HB 538's definition of high-quality instructional materials will ensure a more cohesive instructional program at the local and classroom level (see GaDOE's *Rubric for Vetting Supplemental Instructional Materials*).

Understanding the Process

At its November 2, 2023, meeting, the State Board of Education (SBOE) approved an initial list of high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) and a second HQIM list on February 22, 2024 based on the recommendation of State School Superintendent Richard Woods. To form the Superintendent's recommendation, the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) established a partnership with the Georgia Language Arts Supervisors (GLAS) to vet instructional materials. Per state law, ultimately the State Board of Education approves the list of high-quality instructional materials.

By law, each public school and system must annually certify they are using high-quality instructional materials. More information is available in the *Understanding Reporting Requirements* section on page 18.

School districts should consider these timelines and requirements when making adoption and purchasing decisions. At this time, additional state funding has not been allocated for districts to purchase new and/or additional instructional materials. However, Superintendent Woods will continue to advocate for additional dedicated state funding to support this new state requirement, as state revenues allow.

Understanding Professional Learning Requirements

To support effective instructional practices and increase literacy rates, it's important that both leaders and teachers have access to high quality, evidence-based professional learning.

GaDOE is providing districts and educators multiple pathways to satisfy this literacy requirement of the *Georgia Early Literacy Act*:

Legislative Requirement	*Pathways to Meet this Requirement*
Literacy Training *(O.C.G.A. §20-2-153.1)* By July 1, 2025*, all kindergarten through third grade teachers must complete training focused on the science of reading, structured literacy, and foundational literacy skills.	*By July 1, 2025, all kindergarten through third grade teachers must:* Option A: Successfully complete the Georgia Literacy Academy. *---OR---* Option B: Successfully complete one of the Independent Teacher Training Programs, accredited by the International Dyslexia Association. *---OR---* Option C: Earn a Dyslexia Endorsement or Reading Endorsement recognized by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC). *---OR—* Option D: Enter the teaching profession with a proficient GACE score set by the GaPSC after July 1, 2025 (*Georgia Early Literacy Act; Lines 275-277*).

**Districts are encouraged to begin training as soon as possible and are not required to wait until the deadline to meet this requirement.*

Option A: Georgia Literacy Academy

GaDOE, in partnership with the Rollins Center's Cox Campus, will be launching the *Georgia Literacy Academy* in October 2023. These online modules will be free and made available to all districts and educators in Georgia, also satisfying the *Georgia Early Literacy Act* professional learning requirement. The Rollins Center's Cox Campus coursework embedded into the Georgia Literacy Academy has received accreditation by the International Dyslexia Association.

The Georgia Literacy Academy course manual guides educators in accessing the Georgia Literacy Academy courses. District and school leaders who are interested in the ability to assign and monitor Georgia Literacy Academy courses can find instructions here.

For easy access to all of the Georgia Literacy Academy tools and resources, visit the Georgia Literacy Academy repository in GaDOE Inspire.

Option B: Accredited Training Programs

GaDOE is using the list of *Independent Training Programs* accredited by the *International Dyslexia Association (IDA)* as vetted literacy training. This approved list includes evidence-based training such as Orton-Gillingham, AIM Institute, LETRS (Lexia Learning), and Wilson Language Training (WLT).

- For the full list of approved training, go to: Independent Teacher Training Programs Accredited by IDA.

My training program isn't on the approved professional learning list; how do I get added?
Training providers who are not on the list and want to be considered for approval should complete IDA's accreditation process. For more information, contact: accreditation@dyslexiaida.org.

Upon completing the accreditation process, you will be added to IDA's list and automatically recognized by GaDOE.

Option C: Dyslexia or Reading Endorsement
Teachers successfully earning a reading endorsement or dyslexia endorsement by a GaPSC-approved program will satisfy the literacy training requirement.

Past GaPSC rules for the reading endorsement (505-3-.96) require evidence-based foundations of reading and writing, including, "concepts of print, phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, critical thinking, motivation, and writing." Past reading endorsement rules also require that candidates use "varied instructional approaches, including those that develop word recognition, language comprehension, strategic knowledge, and reading-writing connections."

Similarly, the dyslexia endorsement rule (505-3-.96) has been consistent in all iterations to include the foundations of literacy acquisition, including phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics, morphology, orthography, semantics, syntax, reading comprehension and written expression.

Option D: Newly Prepared Teachers
Throughout the implementation of the *Georgia Early Literacy Act*, Superintendent Woods has been committed to streamlining requirements and eliminating duplication while meeting the requirements and expectations of the law.

Once the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC) has fully adopted and implemented an updated Georgia Assessments for Certification of Educators (GACE), which will be aligned with developmentally appropriate evidence-based literacy instruction, all new elementary educators entering the profession and passing the GACE will be considered meeting the *Georgia Early Literacy Act* professional learning requirement.

Literacy Coaching
GaDOE has formally adopted Florida's literacy coaching standards as a guide for coaching efforts.

GaDOE has placed 60 school-based literacy coaches in each of the elementary schools on the Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) list. These coaches will be in place for three years. Their work will be led by GaDOE's Structured Literacy Coaching Coordinator. School coaches will utilize the student-focused coaching model to ensure a strong bridge between professional learning and professional classroom practice. Click here for an overview of GaDOE's coaching initiative.

The Georgia General Assembly provided funding for 2024-2025 for the Regional Education Service Agency (RESA) Network to implement the Georgia Reads Literacy Coaching Model, which provides for at least one regional literacy coach in each RESA district. A comprehensive action plan overview was shared with RESA Boards of Control in July 2024 with detailed plan information presented to building and district leaders by December 2024.

Measuring Literacy Rates & Setting Metrics

Per the Georgia Early Literacy Act, the State Board of Education (SBOE), in consultation with the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) and the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA), shall establish such policies, rules, and regulations as necessary to implement uniform grade-appropriate metrics for measuring literacy.

At its November 2, 2023 meeting, the State Board of Education (SBOE) adopted a state literacy metric that aligns with the MetaMetrics grade-level stretch bands. Therefore, the Georgia Milestones reading status will continue to utilize the entire grade-level stretch band to define grade level or above reading.

In accordance with the state's ESSA plan, amended and approved in 2023, the renamed *At or Above Grade Level Reading* indicator will align with the Georgia Milestones reading status beginning with the 2023 CCRPI as well as the recently adopted state literacy metric.

- Use of Lexile Scores in Georgia's Assessment and Accountability Systems

Additionally, the SBOE defined four categories of grade-level reading, separating the "grade level reading" range into three categories that will be reported to assist students and parents/guardians, educators, and policymakers with measuring, monitoring, and promoting growth in reading.

Grade	*Below Grade Level*	*Grade Level*	*Grade Level -- Plus*	*Above Grade Level*
3	< 520L	520L – 669L	670L – 820L	> 820L
4	< 740L	740L – 839L	840L – 940L	> 940L
5	< 830L	830L – 919L	920L – 1010L	> 1010L
6	< 925L	925L – 996L	997L – 1070L	> 1070L
7	< 970L	970L – 1044L	1045L – 1120L	> 1120L
8	< 1010L	1010L – 1096L	1097L – 1185L	> 1185L
American Literature	< 1185L	1185L – 1284L	1285L – 1385L	> 1385L

SBOE-Defined Reading Categories

- *Below Grade Level*: The student is reading below grade level and will need intervention and remediation, which may include EIP.
- *Grade Level*: The student is reading on grade level but will need additional supports, which should be guided by screening results, formative assessment results, and classwork.
- *Grade Level Plus*: The student is reading at or above the midpoint of the stretch band and is ready for more challenging academic content.
- *Above Grade Level*: The student is reading above grade level and should receive academic enrichment opportunities.

SBOE-Approved Reporting

_____ **% are on grade level or above:**

____% of those students will need additional supports;
____% of those students are ready for more challenging academic content;
____% of those students should receive academic enrichment opportunities.

Georgia's Reading Readiness Dashboard

On April 11, 2024, State Superintendent Richard Woods announced the launch of a Reading Readiness Dashboard to offer unparalleled public access to K-12 reading results

The Georgia Department of Education has created a Reading Readiness Dashboard to allow easy, transparent access to literacy data at the state, district, and school levels.



Click here to view GaDOE's **Reading Readiness Dashboard**.

Through the Reading Readiness Dashboard, Georgians will be able to easily access information on the percentage of students reading below, on, and above grade level for every school, district, and Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) region in the state. The tool, which is designed to be both user-friendly and information-rich, also allows users to sort by student subgroups or directly compare school, district, or regional data with state averages.

Understanding Reporting Requirements

The Georgia Early Literacy Act requires:

- After each administration of a universal screener, each public school or local school system shall report results to GaDOE for analysis.
- By December 15, 2024, and by August 1 each year thereafter, local boards of education and public school governing bodies shall certify to GaDOE that its locally approved instructional materials and content constitute high-quality instructional materials.
- By July 1, 2025, all kindergarten through third grade teachers shall complete a training program focused on the science of reading, structured literacy, and foundational reading skills.

Georgia's dyslexia legislation (SB 48, 2019) requires:

- Beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, by June 30 of each year, LEAs shall provide the following data to the Georgia Department of Education:
    - The number of students in kindergarten through grade 3 who were identified as having characteristics of Dyslexia;
    - The number of students in kindergarten through grade 3 who participate in additional screening for characteristics of Dyslexia in a school year;
    - The number of students in kindergarten through grade 3 who were newly identified as having characteristics of Dyslexia in a school year;
    - The process or tool used to evaluate student progress;

- The number of students in kindergarten through grade 3 who participated in interventions; and
- The number of trained LEA personnel or licensed professionals used to administer the Qualified Dyslexia Screening Tool.

Local Education Agencies are required to report the following items in the GaDOE Portal according to the deadlines provided. Instructions for reporting can be found in this guide.

Universal Screeners	Beginning of the Year - October 1, 2024 Middle of the Year - February 1, 2025 End of the Year - June 1, 2025
High-Quality Instructional Materials	December 15, 2024
Dyslexia Law	June 30, 2025
Professional Learning	June 30, 2025

Looking Ahead

In addition to the deadlines in O.C.G.A. § 20-2-159.6 (SB 48), the Georgia Early Literacy Act (HB 538) includes a series of key requirements and deadlines spanning from January 1, 2024 through April 1, 2026, and beyond. Below are key literacy deadlines through the 2023-2024 school year that school districts should know:

Literacy Implementation Timeline: Present – July 1, 2024			
Date	**Legislation**	**Topic**	**Language**
May 11, 2023	N/A	K-12 ELA Standards	**Completed:** SBOE adopted the new K-12 English Language Arts standards. *Note: These standards will be fully implemented in the 2025-2026 school year.*
May 11, 2023	O.C.G.A. § 20-2-159.6(b)(2) (SB 48)	Dyslexia Screeners	**Completed:** SBOE adopted a list of approved qualified dyslexia screening tools based on the recommendation of Superintendent Woods.
June 15, 2023	HB 19; Line 154.7	Dyslexia Screeners	**Completed:** SBOE approved state-appropriated funding for school districts based on the recommendation of Superintendent Woods.
January 1, 2024	HB 538; Lines 95-101	Instructional Materials	**Completed:** SBOE shall approve high-quality instructional materials K-3 in reading (Round 1 list | Round 2 list). Each public school and system must annually certify they are using high-quality instructional materials.
January 1, 2024	HB 538; Lines 102-106	Universal Screeners	**Completed:** GaDOE shall establish qualifications, timelines, and submission procedures for providers to submit one or more universal reading screeners to be considered for the SBOE-approved list.

May 2024	N/A	Early Intervention Program (EIP)	**Completed:** GaDOE will issue updated EIP guidance to school districts. All school districts will be required to use instructional programs and interventions aligned to foundational literacy skills and the science of reading by the 2024-2025 school year. School districts must meet this requirement to receive EIP funding.
July 1, 2024	HB 538; Lines 107-118	Universal Screeners	**Completed:** SBOE shall approve a list of screeners that can (1) provide teachers with relevant information to target instruction, (2) measure foundational literacy skills, (3) identify students who have a significant reading deficiency, including characteristics of dyslexia, and (4) prescribe parameters on the time required to administer.

The Georgia Early Literacy Act contains numerous references to "as soon as practicable but not later than…" when establishing key deadlines in state statute, meaning GaDOE has the flexibility to meet statutory requirements earlier than required, but local school district requirements will not be moved up sooner than the timeframes established in state law. GaDOE is committed to providing clear and consistent guidance to school districts as soon as feasibly possible.

At-a-Glance: Literacy Timeline

2023			
Date	**Legislation**	**Topic**	**Language**
May 11, 2023	N/A	K-12 ELA Standards	**Completed:** SBOE adopted the new K-12 English Language Arts standards.
May 11, 2023	O.C.G.A. § 20-2-159.6(b)(2) (SB 48)	Dyslexia Screeners	**Completed:** SBOE adopted a list of approved qualified dyslexia screening tools.
June 15, 2023	HB 19; Line 154.7	Dyslexia Screeners	**Completed:** SBOE approved state-appropriated funding for school districts based on the recommendation of Superintendent Woods.
2024			
Date	**Legislation**	**Topic**	**Language**
January 1, 2024	HB 538; Lines 95-101	Instructional Materials	**Completed:** SBOE shall approve high-quality instructional materials K-3 in reading. Each public school and system must annually certify they are using high-quality instructional materials.
January 1, 2024	HB 538; Lines 102-106	Universal Screeners	**Completed:** GaDOE shall establish qualifications, timelines, and submission procedures for providers to submit one or more universal reading screeners to be considered for the SBOE-approved list.

May 2024	N/A	Early Intervention Program (EIP)	**Completed:** GaDOE will issue updated EIP guidance to school districts. LEAs will be required to use instructional programs and interventions aligned to foundational literacy skills and the science of reading by the 2024-2025 school year. LEAs must meet this requirement to receive EIP funding.
July 1, 2024	HB 538; Lines 107-118	Universal Screeners	**Completed:** SBOE shall approve a list of screeners that can (1) provide teachers with relevant information to target instruction, (2) measure foundational literacy skills, (3) identify students who have a significant reading deficiency, including characteristics of dyslexia, and (4) prescribe parameters on the time required to administer.
2024 *(cont.)*			
Date	**Legislation**	**Topic**	**Language**
August 2024	N/A	Early Intervention Program (EIP)	**Completed:** LEAs must use instructional programs and interventions aligned to foundational literacy skills and the science of reading to receive EIP funding.
August 1, 2024	HB 538; Lines 119-122	Universal Screeners	**Completed:** GaDOE shall publish a list of approved screeners, including free screener provided by GaDOE.
August 1, 2024	HB 538; Lines 182-188	Universal Screeners	**Completed:** LEAs shall administer screeners three times a year to each student in K-3; with the first administration occurring within 30 days of the beginning of school. For first and second graders, LEAs can substitute one administration of the formative reading assessment.
August 1, 2024	HB 538; Lines 199-209	Intervention Plans	**Completed:** LEAs shall implement tiered reading intervention plans for K-3 students who exhibit a significant reading deficiency on a screener within 30 days of a student being identified; plans shall describe the evidence-based intervention; LEAs can use existing MTSS frameworks and processes.
December 1, 2024	HB 538; Lines 160-161	Instructional Materials	**Completed:** LBOEs shall approve high-quality instructional materials in K-3.
December 12, 2024	HB 538; Lines 182-188 O.C.G.A. § 20-2-159.6(b)(2) (SB 48)	Screeners	**Completed:** The SBOE approved five universal reading screeners for use by Georgia systems and schools as part of their comprehensive early literacy programs starting in 2025-2026, in accordance with the Georgia Early Literacy Act (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-153.1) and state dyslexia requirements (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-159.6.

December 15, 2024	HB 538; Lines 162-165	Instructional Materials	**Completed:** Each LBOE shall certify to GaDOE its instructional materials.
December 15, 2024 – first year; August 1 -- thereafter	HB 538; Lines 166-181	Instructional Materials	**Completed:** LEAs shall provide instructional support for K-3 teachers; if LEA cannot fund these supports then LEA must notify GaDOE in writing and GaDOE will provide the LEA guidance on using federal and other funding sources.
2025			
Date	**Legislation**	**Topic**	**Language**
June 30, 2025	O.C.G.A. § 20-2-159.6 (SB 48)	Annual Dyslexia Reporting	LEAs will submit data to GaDOE for required reporting.
July 1, 2025	HB 538; Lines 275-277	Teacher Preparation	GaPSC will require that the GACE align with developmentally appropriate evidence-based literacy instruction.
July 1, 2025	HB 538; Lines 230-231	Training Programs	LEAs will ensure all K-3 teachers complete a state-approved literacy training program.
August 1, 2025	HB 538; Lines 162-181	Instructional Materials	Each LBOE shall annually certify to GaDOE its instructional materials.
2026			
Date	**Legislation**	**Topic**	**Language**
2025-2026 School Year	N/A	K-12 ELA Standards	LEAs will fully implement the new K-12 ELA standards; Georgia students will be tested on updated ELA assessments.
April 1, 2026	HB 538; Lines 140-158	Annual Georgia Early Literacy Act Reporting	LEAs will submit data to GaDOE for required reporting. GaDOE shall provide annual report to legislature and post on its website: (1) Researched based formative assessments with a summative component that is tied to ELA performance indicators in grades one and two; (2) Comprehensive summative assessment program for third grade, (3) Nationally normed referenced in reading for third grade students; (4) Formative reading assessments for first and second grade students; and (5) Impact of screeners, instructional materials, and science of reading.
August 1, 2026	HB 538; Lines 162-181	Instructional Materials	Each LBOE annually shall certify to GaDOE its instructional materials.

