Dyslexia Working Group

2026 Annual Report

Submitted to:
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By:
Dyslexia Working Group

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Executive Summary

House Bill 19-1134, enacted during the 2019 legislative session, mandated the establishment of the Dyslexia Working Group (DWG) as outlined in Section 22-20.5-103, C.R.S. The legislation directs the Commissioner of Education to assemble this group with the goal of enhancing educational outcomes for students with dyslexia. As part of its charge, the DWG is expected to review and, where appropriate, incorporate the efforts and recommendations from existing and prior state initiatives aimed at improving the identification and support of students with dyslexia. This statutory authorization for the DWG remains in effect through September 1, 2029.

The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) continues to advance prior Dyslexia Working Group (DWG) recommendations by supporting local education agencies through the READ Act Data Team, collaborating with assessment vendors to strengthen screening and use of evidence-based resources, and enhancing the accessibility and quality of dyslexia information on its website. It is also reviewing pre-service teacher preparation programs to ensure alignment with the science of reading and increased focus on dyslexia awareness and instruction. CDE's READ Act training includes guidance on identifying and addressing dyslexia, with a new five-hour intervention-focused training for teachers expected in fall 2026. Additionally, the Exceptional Student Services Unit (ESSU) continues to provide guidance on specialized instruction, standards, and accommodations for students who qualify for IEPs.

During the 2025-26 school year, the DWG identified four key recommendations that aim to strengthen how schools identify and support students with dyslexia by providing clear tools, high-quality training, flexible certification pathways, and specialized expertise among educators:

- Develop a comprehensive dyslexia implementation toolkit with standard procedures, screening guidance, parent FAQs, communication strategies, data interpretation support, READ Plan guidance, and Tier 1 resources.
- Provide coordinated professional development and training - especially for rural districts - through flexible formats and a three-part series covering dyslexia basics, screening, and instructional supports.
- Replace the 24-credit endorsement requirement with a flexible, competency-based pathway recognizing rigorous training, certifications, and demonstrated expertise in structured literacy and dyslexia intervention.
- Establish a Dyslexia Specialist designation for highly qualified educators with recognized credentials, creating clearer hiring standards and a pathway toward formal endorsement and dedicated specialist roles.

Collectively, these recommendations seek to improve dyslexia support systems in schools by strengthening educator capacity, standardizing practices, and expanding access to specialized knowledge and resources.

For the 2026-27 school year, the DWG will focus on advancing and refining its prior recommendations by further developing key components of the proposed toolkit, including more detailed guidance on evidence-based Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions. The group will also prioritize supporting the successful rollout of the dyslexia screener and work to strengthen alignment and collaboration with other dyslexia-focused organizations, particularly parent advocacy groups.

Introduction

House Bill 19-1134 (HB 19-1134) which passed during the 2019 legislative session, called for the creation of a Dyslexia Working Group (DWG). See section 22-20.5-103, C.R.S. According to the statute, the Commissioner of Education is required to convene a working group to improve the educational outcomes for students with dyslexia. The DWG is statutorily authorized through September 1, 2029. The DWG has seven tasks outlined in statute:

- Analyze current national and statewide data related to students identified as having dyslexia, including but not limited to identification rates and achievement rates.
- Analyze the implementation and demonstrated effectiveness in other states of statewide legislation for dyslexia screening, educator training, and other dyslexia related laws.
- Identify and recommend appropriate dyslexia screening tools and processes as well as comprehensive assessments that address the recognized challenges of dyslexia, including phonological processing, phonemic awareness, and decoding and encoding skills.
- Identify and recommend a statewide plan for supporting students who are identified as having dyslexia, including specific intervention structures and their components, which must include evidence-based interventions, progress-monitoring systems, and data collection systems.
- Identify and recommend components of dyslexia awareness training for Colorado educators, including the content, target audience, time frame for training, and projected cost.
- Identify and recommend educator training for in-state approved programs of preparation for teacher and alternative teacher programs and recommended training for current educators, based on effective practice in other states, as well as recommendation from state and national organizations focusing on literacy. The recommendations concerning educator training may include the content, target audience, time frame for training, and projected cost.
- Provide recommendations to the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) concerning the design and implementation of the pilot program.

In addition to these activities, the Dyslexia Working Group must, “analyze and integrate, as appropriate, the work and recommendations of other previous and ongoing state initiatives related to improving the identification and support of students who have dyslexia” 22-20.5-103(3), C.R.S.

Membership and Facilitation

Members of the Dyslexia Working Group

The authorizing legislation for the DWG required the group to include the following members:

- A parent of a child identified with dyslexia.
- A parent of a child identified with dyslexia and a disability.
- A school district literacy specialist.
- A school district director of special education.
- A state or national literacy expert.
- A state or national dyslexia expert.

- Two elementary grade teachers, one of whom teaches in a rural or small rural school district.
- A principal of an elementary school in a rural school district or an employee of a BOCES who has expertise as a literacy specialist.
- A faculty member of an IHE who teaches in an approved educator preparation program for elementary grade teachers.
- A member of the local chapter of the international dyslexia association.

The CDE solicits nominations and applications for service on the DWG to determine appointment recommendations for the Commissioner of Education. Each member's determination is taken into consideration from the quality of application packet, how the applicant meets the statutorily defined role, and the applicant's ability to serve through the duration of the working group. In addition, the CDE makes it a priority that members are representative from across the state, including small rural and rural districts, urban and suburban districts. Table 1 below is a list of the current membership of the DWG during the year 2025-26.

At the end of the 2025-26 school year, the following members completed their service in the DWG, for which the department extends its gratitude:

- Cindy Kanuch, A member of a local chapter of an international dyslexia association

Table 1: Dyslexia Working Group Membership by Region and Role

Member	Region	Role
Marcie Eichmann	Pikes Peak	Elementary teacher
April Gerakos-Rooker	North Central	A parent of a child who is identified as having dyslexia
Sarah Huffman	Southeast	Elementary teacher who is employed at an elementary school in a rural or small rural school district
Jennifer Imel	Southwest	A principal who is employed at an elementary school in a rural school district or an employee of a board of cooperative services who has expertise as a literacy specialist
Cindy Kanuch	Metro Area	A member of the local chapter of an international dyslexia association
Patrick McGinty	Northwest	A school district director of special education
Mary Beth O'Hagan, Ph.D.	Metro Area	A state or national dyslexia expert
Sissy Peters	Metro Area	A state or national literacy expert

Member	Region	Role
Brian Rose, Ph.D.	**North Central**	**A faculty member of an institution of higher education who teaches in an approved educator preparation program for elementary grade teachers**
Janine Rufola	**Metro Area**	**A parent of a child who is identified as having dyslexia and a disability**
Breann Smith	**Pikes Peak**	**A parent of a child who is identified as having dyslexia and a disability**
Laura Swanson	**North Central**	**A school district literacy specialist**

Facilitation of the Dyslexia Working Group

For the 2025-26 school year, the department scheduled the DWG meetings for the following dates:

- Friday, September 12, 2025
- Friday, November 14, 2025
- Friday, January 23, 2026
- Friday, March 13, 2026
- Friday, May 8, 2026

The DWG conducted their work through hybrid (in-person and virtual) meetings, except for two virtual meetings. All meetings of the DWG were open to the public; however, only working group members had an active role in the meeting. The CDE has a DWG webpage (https://ed.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/dyslexia) where all the meeting dates, locations, materials, and summaries are posted for transparency.

During the initial DWG session in September of 2025, the DWG identified priority topics focused on the different components of the DWG's charge. With broad emphasis on training and resources, as well as successful models and systems shifts, the DWG used remaining sessions in the 2025-2026 to:

- Revisit prior DWG reports to identify opportunities, challenges, and outcomes related to the priority topic.
- Identify, within the scope of the DWG, some realistic wins that could be achieved in 2026 and key activities to help them achieve those wins.

Implementation Updates

Following recommendations from the DWG's previous annual reports, along with discussions during the current year:

- The CDE continues to provide LEA support and guidance through the READ Act Data Team in the Elementary and School Readiness Office for accessing current READ Teacher Training designations and READ Act Admin/Principal Training designations.

- The CDE continues to work collaboratively with READ Assessment vendors on providing professional development to the field on how to use available resources and a body of evidence to screen for indicators of reading risk, including dyslexia.
- The CDE continues to improve and update the CDE dyslexia website, structure, and content so that information about dyslexia is both accessible and visible to respective audiences including teachers, families, and the public. Website improvements include several links to resources recommended in DWG's recommendation.
- The CDE continues to review pre-service teacher training programs to ensure that they are informed by the science of reading and include training in awareness of dyslexia and appropriate instruction and intervention.
- The CDE-provided READ Act Trainings continue to include information on the definition of dyslexia, indicators of dyslexia, what to look for, and information on screening and assessing students for reading deficiencies including dyslexia. A new, 5-hr training for teachers focused on providing intervention instruction to students who are identified with or have characteristics of dyslexia will be released in fall 2026.
- The CDE's Exceptional Student Services Unit (ESSU) continues to provide guidance on who provides specially designed instruction, as well as standards, adaptations, and instructional accommodations for students who are evaluated and qualify for an Individualize Educational Program (IEP).

2025-26 DWG Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Implementation Toolkit

The DWG sees a need for instruction for school staff regarding dyslexia and access to resources that encourage them to be receptive and equipped to respond once the screener is introduced. To that end, the DWG recommends that CDE **create a structured, multi-component implementation toolkit that addresses the entire continuum from universal screening through intervention**, with clear standard operating procedures (SOPs) that districts can adapt, or incorporate, into their local contexts. The Toolkit would draw on content from the existing Dyslexia Handbook, as relevant, and include components such as:

- **Universal testing**, with guidelines for testing kindergarten through 5th grade at the beginning of the year, middle of the year, and end of year.
- **FAQs for parents**, with a focus on questions such as: My child screened as having characteristics of dyslexia, what does this mean? How will this affect their schooling? Do they need a READ Plan? Do they need to be evaluated for an IEP? Does this change how my child will receive intervention at school? Are students with dyslexic characteristics going to have different interventions than students without, but who are also on a READ plan? What are some concise, easy to access resources (available in different languages) or ways to learn more?
- **Communication approaches**, for those students identified, what plan is there for how this information is communicated to them - both in terms of what dyslexia means and in terms of why intervention could be a valuable opportunity for them and a good investment in themselves (vs. them feeling "lesser than" for needing the support)
- **How to interpret screening and diagnostic data** to identify patterns consistent with dyslexia characteristics, distinguish students with and without dyslexia indicators, and how to use the data to support instructional grouping and intervention planning.

- **Creating READ Plans** for students with dyslexia characteristics.
- **Tier 1 Dyslexia Tool**, developed by the DWG, that lists specific skills and research-based resources/activities.
- **Information on Professional Development and Training** (see recommendation 3)

Recommendation #2: Professional Development/Training

The DWG recommends that CDE, in collaboration with the DWG, develop and support multiple professional development and/or coaching models focused on literacy data interpretation, progress monitoring, and evidence-based science of reading literacy instruction for intervention, especially for rural districts.

Additionally, the DWG recommends online training, regional or statewide training or training cohort options to promote consistent and sustainable implementation across districts. Training could be provided through district leaders/staff, rural BOCES, individual BOCES, IDEA, ALTA, Ed series, READ Act training, or other appropriate measures. Training could be delivered in a 3-part series (30-60 minutes for each part):

- Part 1: What is dyslexia? Why does it matter?
- Part 2: What is the screening process?
- Part 3: What are the immediate tools to support students? (Including an overview of tier 1/2/3 and the dyslexia toolkit). What options do teachers have for accessing them and obtaining support to execute them?

The DWG recognizes the need for evidence-based Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions for students identified as being at risk for dyslexia. The DWG plans to explore intervention models in 2026-2027 and make appropriate recommendations.

Recommendation #3: Dyslexia Specialist Endorsement

The DWG recommends that the State of Colorado move away from the current requirement of 24 semester credit hours from a higher education institution as the sole pathway for obtaining additional endorsements in literacy and dyslexia and instead adopt a more flexible system that recognizes advanced, competency-based coursework and professional training - with appropriate certification from recognized authorizing bodies - in lieu of traditional credit accumulation. The DWG believes this shift is essential to having a sufficient number of well-trained professionals who can provide a strong, more responsive educator pipeline for students with dyslexia in Colorado.

The purpose of this recommendation is to ensure that educators are incentivized to pursue deeper, more specialized knowledge in high-need instructional areas - particularly structured literacy and dyslexia intervention - without requiring experienced teachers to return to a university after many years in the classroom. It would also provide schools and hiring managers with a clearer, more reliable framework for identifying qualified candidates in these areas.

Under the proposed model, advanced professional learning would be accepted as an equivalent pathway to endorsement eligibility when it demonstrates rigorous preparation, applied practice, and verified competency through an examination. This would include:

- Advanced structured literacy and dyslexia intervention training programs

- Nationally recognized certifications (such as CALP, CALT, OGA credentials, KPEERI/Key Assessment, and CERI Certified Structured Literacy credentials)
- University-affiliated or accredited professional institutes that include supervised practicum and demonstrated instructional competency

This shift would better align endorsement requirements with the realities of experienced educators, many of whom seek to deepen their expertise mid-career but are deterred by the time, cost, and redundancy of returning to traditional graduate credit pathways.

By recognizing advanced, competency-based training in place of a fixed credit-hour requirement, Colorado would:

- Increase access to high-level professional expertise within schools
- Encourage teachers to pursue more rigorous, practice-based learning
- Reduce barriers for veteran educators seeking specialization
- Better align endorsement systems with modern, evidence-based professional development models

Furthermore, training pathways to meet these standards already exist within Colorado LEA/district infrastructure - including St. Vrain, D11, D20, and Adams 5-Star School Districts - making implementation feasible without the creation of an unfunded mandate.

Recommendation #4: Dyslexia Specialist Designation

To ensure consistent standards of expertise in dyslexia intervention, it is recommended that individuals meeting the following criteria be eligible for a Dyslexia Specialist designation.

The purpose of this designation is to allow schools and hiring managers to more easily identify qualified individuals with deeper, more specialized knowledge than a general literacy or reading specialist - individuals equipped to support students with profiles of dyslexia; educators who can provide intensive, targeted dyslexia intervention - and to update current endorsement standards that no longer reflect the depth of expertise that this specific field now demands.

The Dyslexia Working Group recommends that, should the pathway to additional literacy and dyslexia endorsements be revised as outlined above, this designation would have a clear pathway to convert into a formal endorsement. The long-term goal is to create dedicated Dyslexia Specialist roles within Colorado schools.

Automatic Eligibility: Individuals who hold any of the following nationally and internationally recognized credentials would automatically qualify for the Dyslexia Specialist designation:

- Orton-Gillingham Academy (OGA) Fellow
- Certified Academic Language Practitioner (CALP) or Certified Academic Language Therapist (CALT)
- Wilson Reading System Certification (Level I or Level II)
- Center for Effective Reading Instruction (CERI) Structured Literacy Dyslexia Interventionist and/or Specialist Certification

- International Dyslexia Association (IDA) and Knowledge and Practice Examination for Effective Reading Instruction (KPEERI) or Key Assessment certification

Next Steps for the Dyslexia Working Group

For the 2026-27 school year, the focus for the DWG will be to:

- Go deeper on some of the proposed 2025-2026 recommendations, which provide a roadmap for additional work. (Specifically, the DWG will provide support in the build-out of components of the toolkit, provide more detailed guidance on evidence-based Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions, etc.)
- Focus on supporting a successful rollout of the screener.
- Work to align the DWG more intentionally with other groups focused on dyslexia, especially other parent advocacy groups.