

Lyons & Rogers, LLC

School Law Insider – Fall 2018

What does the new dyslexia screening law mean for Massachusetts school districts?

On October 19, 2018, An Act Relative to Students with Dyslexia¹ amended M.G.L. c.71. The new law requires the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) in collaboration with the Department of Early Education and Childcare to issue guidelines for school districts to develop screening procedures for students at risk for developing dyslexia.²

The purpose of the new law is to assist teachers and school districts in the early detection of students with dyslexia, provide training for teachers, and ensure that evidence-based dyslexia remediation programming is implemented.

While school districts should anticipate that DESE will soon require schools to screen students at risk for developing dyslexia, districts need not wait for DESE's guidelines to act.

What can schools do now?

- **Develop and implement screening procedures³** for students who demonstrate one (1) or more potential indicators of a neurological disorder, including dyslexia.
- **Conduct training** for teachers regarding early indicators of dyslexia including deficits in phonemic awareness, rapid automatized naming, letter sound knowledge, as well as the implementation of evidence-based instructional practices.
- **Develop professional relationships** with experts in the field who can provide consultation services and professional development for your district.
- **Accentuate school and family partnerships** throughout the process.

Lyons & Rogers, LLC represents school districts, educational collaboratives, and charter schools exclusively in general education and special education matters.

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This information is not intended to be legal advice. If you need legal advice, contact your school's attorney.

¹ <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2018/Chapter272>.

² Note that this requirement is "subject to appropriation." No additional state funding has been allocated to date.

³ According to the IDEA, the screening of a student to determine appropriate instructional strategies for curriculum instruction shall not be considered an evaluation for special education eligibility. 20 U.S.C. §1414(a)(1)(E).