



READING FOR BERKELEY
FAMILY GUIDE

Actions for Reading Success: A Toolkit for K-8 Families

This guide explains key educational rights and offers helpful questions to ask Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD) school or district leaders. We hope this guide helps you partner with your school to support reading success for your child.



Your Rights in BUSD

How do you know if your student is on track with reading?

You have a right to know how your student is doing and to check on their progress

- Get school records: Collect a history of test scores
- Visit the classroom: See what your student is learning and how
- Understand curriculum and standards: Ask educators for help

How do you know your student is getting what they need?

You have a right to have your student screened for reading problems

- Ask the teacher/principal to look into reasons for reading trouble

You have a right to meet with school staff

- Ask for a “Student Success Team” meeting

You have a right to early intervention

- Get reading help early, so that it takes less time to catch up

What should intervention look like?

You have a right to reading goals that are clear, specific and measurable. They should be:

- Written in a way that you can understand
- Based on scientific data
- Ambitious, measurable, observable
- Progress-monitored at least every 3 weeks

You have a right to interventions and other supports that work

- Consistent, effective, research-based interventions
- Other supports (speech or occupational therapy, accommodations, modifications)

How do you know if your student is improving?

You have a right to appropriate progress monitoring

- Monitoring is frequent, consistent, and shared with families

Please share this with family, friends, neighbors, and organizations you belong to and/or work with!

THIS GUIDE ALSO INCLUDES

Glossary of Education Words

Sometimes, you’ll hear educators use a word that has a specific meaning in schools. This guide includes a glossary section and side bars that define common education words and abbreviations used in this guide. Understanding these terms will help you speak the same language used by educators.

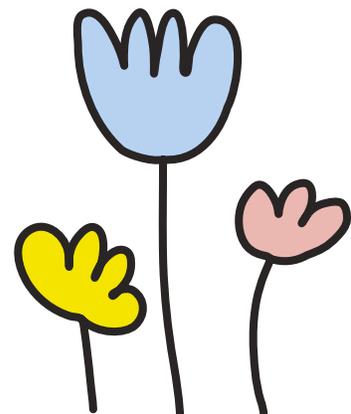
Other Resources

We’ve chosen a few internet resources that provide more information.

Worksheet for Parents

At the back of the guide, there is a worksheet to help you plan for any next steps in advocating for your student.

Please note that while this toolkit is geared toward families who have students in Kindergarten through Grade 8 in Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD), much of this resource applies to any school in California. This guide is not to be construed as legal advice.



Early reading is key. Here are some facts.



BUT >50%
OF CALIFORNIA
KIDS DON'T READ
AT GRADE-LEVEL²



can be taught
to read by the
end of 1st grade¹

Outcomes are worse for low-income students, students of color, English language learners, and those with learning differences.

EDUCATION WORDS:

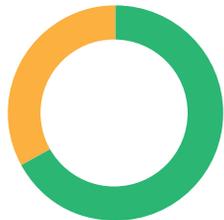
Grade level reading:

The level of difficulty in a reading passage based on what most students within a grade can understand.

Intervention:

Special teaching or instruction that targets each student's specific needs.

Reading is crucial for success in school. Once kids learn how to read, they're expected to keep learning mainly by reading. Without this skill, they may miss out on future learning opportunities and feel depressed, angry, anxious, insecure, or alone³ during their time in school.



67% of Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD) students are reading at grade level²

This 57 point gap between racial groups in BUSD is the **one of the state's largest.**



READING AT GRADE-LEVEL:

| | | | | | | |
|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| 26% | 53% | 70% | 83% | 16% | 28% | 40% |
| Black | Latino | Asian | White | EL | SWD | SED |

While 83% of white students in BUSD read well, only 26% of Black students in BUSD met or exceeded the state standard in English Language Arts (ELA).

EL = English Learner, SWD = Students With Disability, SED= Socio-Economic Disadvantage

Early help is essential: 75% of students who are behind in reading in 3rd grade never catch up.⁴

However, BUSD has the power to make a positive difference in the lives of all students by providing help early on and by building strong relationships between families and schools.

1. Louisa C. Moats, *What Expert Teachers of Reading Should Know and Be Able to Do*. AFT American Educator, Summer 2020. <https://www.aft.org/ae/summer2020/moats> 2. 2023 Test Results for California Assessment for Student Performance and Progress <https://caaspp-elpac.ets.org/caaspp/> 3. Morgan PL, Farkas G, Wu Q. *Do Poor Readers Feel Angry, Sad, and Unpopular?* Sci Stud Read. 2012;16(4):360-381. doi: 10.1080/10888438.2011.570397. PMID: 26180489; PMCID: PMC4500191. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4500191/> 4. EAB. *Narrowing the Third-Grade Reading Gap: Embracing the Science of Reading* https://www.idaontario.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/EAB-2019-Narrowing-the-Third-Grade-Reading-Gap_research-briefing.pdf

SECTION ONE

How do you know if your student is on track with reading?

Sometimes schools don't tell families early enough that their child may be having trouble with reading. Some families might only find out that their child is behind after they've fallen far behind — this is called the “wait to fail” approach. Even though it may be uncomfortable, it's important to ask questions so you can understand what your child needs.

First, make sure you have the history of assessment scores: Star, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and/or Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) tests.. These are tests that check if your child is reading at their grade level. You can find out how to get these scores and what they mean by reading our guide called *How to get your child's BUSD test scores at*

<https://bit.ly/BUSD-test-scores>. If your child scored in the “on watch” (yellow) or “intervention needed” (red) zones, it's time to investigate more. Some students might feel stressed during tests or have an off day, but if your child has a pattern of red/yellow zone scores, it's important to ask questions about how they're learning.

| WHAT TO ASK | ENCOURAGING SIGNS | PROBLEMATIC SIGNS |
|--|--|--|
| “I'd like to come and visit the classroom to see how my student is responding to instruction. When could I come and observe?” | You are offered a few times to visit that work for the teacher. | You are told that it is too distracting to have observers in the classroom during instruction. |
| “Is my child doing better, about the same, or worse than what's expected for their grade level?” | The teacher offered to show you some examples of what students are expected to know and also provided some examples of your child's work. | The teacher mentioned that reading is evaluated “holistically” and given a level between ‘A-Z’, but didn't provide an assessment of your child's specific strengths and areas for improvement. |
| “I've noticed that my child's scores are in the yellow/red zones. Besides DIBELS, Star, and NWEA, what other assessments are you using to track my student's reading skills?” | <ul style="list-style-type: none">— You are offered info on other diagnostic tests that can be given to see which skills need more work.— You are given suggestions of what to practice at home to reinforce what is done in class. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">— You are told that DIBELS, Star, and NWEA are the only tests available to track skills.— You are told that reading needs are mainly tracked by teacher observations during guided reading rather than objective measures of specific skills. |

Note: If your student has an Individual Education Program (IEP) and does not take the Star or NWEA, ask your case manager for the results of the California State Alternative Assessment (grades 3-8 and 11) or the quarterly monitoring report of your student's reading intervention program.

SECTION ONE

1 You have a right to information about your student.

You have a right to know how your student is doing and to check on their progress.

Request school records

One way to know how your student is doing in school is to ask for school records in writing. By state law, the school has 5 working days after your request to get this to you.

You can ask your teacher or principal for:

- *Universal screener data*: These are tests used to identify struggling readers — DIBELS scores for grades K-2, Star Reading and Star Math for grades 3-8, or NWEA scores for grade 8 — ask for current and past reports.
- *Samples of classroom work* — For example, student writing or spelling work.

If your student is already receiving intervention, you may also ask for:

- *Supplemental test data*: The Literacy Settlement (<https://bit.ly/BUSD-settle>) allows for more tests to identify needs and these tests can be available upon request. Examples of needs to be tested can include: oral reading fluency, letter-sound correspondence, print knowledge, phoneme awareness, phonics, word reading, spelling, comprehension, and written expression.

It is good to have all the information the school has on your student, including *Reading Recovery running records*. These ongoing measures of reading level are no longer being used because of their inaccuracy. But you have a right to request these records for students who received this reading intervention. (See “You have a right to early intervention” on page 9 for more on RTI.)

Visit the classroom

Visiting your student’s classroom can be a great way to understand how your child learns and engages with their education. It’s important to remember that you need to schedule an appointment with the teacher before coming in.

When you visit, here are some things to look out for:

- *Direct instruction*: Teachers are explicitly teaching skills like identifying letter sounds or using specific spelling patterns (K-3) or teaching meaning of words (4-8).
- *Ways to show understanding*: Students have many chances to practice and show what they’ve learned.
- *Differentiated instruction*: Students who need extra support receive it within the classroom, such as small group instruction or visual aids.
- *Grade-level work*: Students are helped to read texts at or above their grade level.
- *Safety*: Your student has the right to a safe and supportive school environment.

Get help to understand curriculum and standards

It is not always easy for families to figure out what students should know and be able to do by the end of each grade, but there are many state and federal laws that help families to know more.

You have the right to:

- Review your student’s class materials, such as what is taught and in what order (scope and sequence).
- Be notified of your student’s progress and who to talk to if there are any issues.
- Get information about academic standards (such as at <https://seekcommonground.org/family-guides>.)
- Get information in your family’s primary language.

SECTION TWO

How do you know your student is getting what they need?

Research shows that effective reading instruction should include teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension strategies. Teachers may use different methods, but it's important to make sure your student is getting the support they need.

If your student is struggling with reading, you have the right to ask for more information and help. Don't hesitate to talk to your child's teacher or school staff about your concerns.

EDUCATION WORDS:

Phonemic awareness:

Recognizing individual sounds within words

Phonics:

The connection between sounds and written letters

| WHAT TO ASK | ENCOURAGING SIGNS | PROBLEMATIC SIGNS |
|--|--|--|
| “What has been tried in the classroom to help my student learn to read?” | You are told which lesson or which "scope and sequence" your student has mastered and given examples of additional instruction to target your student's skills. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">— You are told there is not enough information or data to know how to help your student.— You are told to wait and see or that they will improve next year. |
| “My student’s DIBELS/Star/NWEA scores show that they need intervention. How will this data inform instruction?” | <ul style="list-style-type: none">— Your student gets more help in the classroom.— Your student is selected for small group instruction by a reading specialist.— Your student is referred for further evaluation for special education eligibility. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">— You are told to disregard the DIBELS/Star/NWEA scores or that the report card is more important.— Your teacher does not offer any meaningful changes to instruction to target your student’s needs. |

SECTION TWO

1 You have a right to have your student screened for reading problems.

Because of the BUSD Literacy Settlement, K-8 students in BUSD must be tested at least three times a year to see if their early reading progress is on track or if they are at risk for reading difficulty, such as dyslexia. Check out our guide *How to get your child's BUSD test scores* at <https://bit.ly/BUSD-test-scores> to find out how to access these scores and what they mean.

Even if your student is older, you can still use your “Child Find” rights under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) law to ask the school to evaluate why your student might be struggling to read at grade level.

□ Before a full evaluation, you can ask for tests like:

- Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) for grades K-8
 - DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency-Words Correct (ORF-WCPM)
 - DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency-Accuracy (ORF-A)
 - DIBELS Maze (comprehension)
- [Consortium on Reading Excellence](#) (CORE) Phonics Surveys
- CORE Vocabulary Screening Tests
- BUSD High Frequency Words Assessments
- Wilson Assessment of Decoding and Encoding (WADE) for grades 2-12
- Word Identification and Spelling Test (WIST) for ages 7 through 18

Note: The Literacy Settlement requires screening and baseline measurements to be taken through DIBELS, Star or other reading assessment tools aligned with the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) standards (<https://bit.ly/IDA-KPS>).

EDUCATION WORDS:

Child Find: A rule under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) law says schools must find and test all students who may have a disability that makes it harder for them to learn.

Special Education (SPED):

The federal IDEA law protects students with learning differences and needs that affect their learning. If you suspect your student may have problems learning because of dyslexia or other learning differences, even if they are not below grade-level,⁵ you can start the special education process. The first step is to [request an evaluation](#).⁶ Learn more with this [guide from Disability Rights CA](#).⁷

Note: Because of the Literacy Settlement, BUSD must use the Patterns of Strengths and Weaknesses (PSW) model to determine eligibility for special education services under specific learning disability.

5. IDEA regulations (Sec 300.301) state: “FAPE (free appropriate public education) is available to any individual child with a disability who needs special education and related services even though the child has not failed or been retained in a course or grade and is advancing from grade to grade.”

6. <https://serr.disabilityrightsca.org/serr-manual/appendix/a-sample-letter-referral-for-assessment/> 7. <https://serr.disabilityrightsca.org/>

SECTION TWO

2 You have a right to meet with school staff.

By state and federal law, you have a right to parent-teacher conferences and parent-principal conferences.

You can ask for a type of meeting called a Student Success Team (SST) meeting.

At this meeting, you, the principal, your student's teacher, and other school staff (like the Response to Intervention, or RTI, teacher or the literacy coach) will discuss how to best help your student learn.

You should expect:

- A chance to give input on your student's strengths and weaknesses.
- A plan to be made to support your student in the general classroom, and if needed, within a small student group in a separate classroom led by the RTI teacher.
- A follow-up meeting to be scheduled to make sure the plan to support learning is working.

If not enough progress is being made, or if you do not feel like your concerns were heard, you can:

- Request further testing. See the "You have a right to have your student screened" section on page 7.
- Request evaluation for special education. See "Special Education" sidebar on page 7.

EDUCATION WORDS:

RTI/RTI² (Response to Intervention, or Response to Instruction and Intervention):

A way to help students who are having trouble with reading or math. It's part of a bigger plan called MTSS that tries to help all students do well in school.

Literacy coach: Helps teachers with reading instruction and helps the school have a good reading program. Sometimes they also teach students directly.

EXAMPLE EMAIL:

Dear Principal,

I am concerned about my student's progress in reading.
(Add an example of what you see at home. If applicable, list things that have been tried.)

I would like to request a Student Success Team meeting where we can discuss the current progress of my student and determine interventions and supports which may be helpful in the immediate future.

I look forward to hearing from you and working with you and your staff.

Sincerely, Your name

SECTION TWO

3 You have a right to early intervention.

The sooner your student gets extra help, the easier it is for your student to catch up in school. This is called, “early intervention.” It should be offered to all struggling readers. Early intervention is key for people with specific learning disabilities (SLD). If problems are identified early, intervention can be more effective, and students can avoid going through extended problems with schoolwork and related low self-esteem.

□ **By 2025, schools must stop the “wait to fail” model that provides intervention only in or after 3rd grade. Instead, schools will:**

- *Supplement the Tier 1 (general classroom) curriculum with evidence-based academic instruction.* The main curriculum in BUSD elementary schools until 2025 is Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP), also known as Units of Study by Lucy Calkins. The main curriculum in middle schools is Inquiry by Design, also a balanced literacy program.
 - Examples of supplemental curricula [Heggerty Phonemic Awareness](#) (K-1) and [FastTrack Phonics](#) (K-3).
 - BUSD K-3 classrooms must provide appropriately intensive research-based phonics instruction at least 115 minutes a week.
 - Examples of evidence-based instructional strategies draw from [CORE](#). Ask your teacher how they are using their CORE training to supplement the core instruction (K-8).
- *Use universal screening data (such as DIBELS, Star and/or other IDA-aligned tests) to identify students who need help as early as possible.*
 - Based on the data, the general classroom teacher will change their instruction to help struggling students.
 - If that does not work quickly, more data will be gathered and used to place students into appropriately intensive Tier 2 (such as reading groups taught by RTI teachers) or Tier 3 (such as special education) interventions.
 - Examples of intervention programs are [IMSE Orton-Gillingham](#) (IMSE OG) (K-2), [Wilson Reading System](#) (2-8), [Systematic Instruction in Phonological Awareness and Phonics](#) (SIPPS) (4-8), and [REWARDS](#) (4-8).

EDUCATION WORDS:

MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Support):

A way that schools can help students who are struggling. MTSS is an integrated framework that gives different levels of help depending on how much the student needs — identifying struggling students early and intervening quickly.

Tier 1: Universal or main instruction with the whole class or in small groups within the general classroom.

Tier 2: Extra help that is targeted to students who are having some trouble. This might be a small group with an RTI teacher or specialist.

Tier 3: Very specialized help for students who are really struggling. This often involves more frequent small group or one-on-one teaching and may be provided by a special education teacher.

Specific learning disabilities (SLD): A condition where someone has trouble understanding or using spoken or written language.

Systems of support need to improve.

The Literacy Settlement (<https://bit.ly/BUSD-settle>) says that our schools must use programs that experts have tested and proven to work for all students. We also have to follow standards from the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) (<https://bit.ly/IDA-KPS>) for helping students who have trouble reading, such as:

- giving tests to find out how well students read at the start
- finding ways to help students get better at reading (also called intervention)
- keeping track of student progress

SECTION THREE

What should intervention look like?

If your child is struggling to read in their regular classroom, they may need extra help. In BUSD, an MTSS framework is used to help students as soon as they start having problems.

There are three levels of help: Tier 1 is within the regular classroom, Tier 2 is often small-group instruction with a special teacher (like an RTI teacher), and Tier 3 is even more help usually through special education. The higher the tier, the more individualized and focused the instruction becomes.

EDUCATION WORDS:

504 Plan: A plan that a school makes to help a student with a disability. This plan says what the school will do to make sure the student can learn.

IEP (Individualized Education Program): A legal document that lays out the program of special education instruction, supports, and services a student needs to make progress in school.

| WHAT TO ASK | ENCOURAGING SIGNS | PROBLEMATIC SIGNS |
|---|---|---|
| “What program is being used to help my student learn to read?” | They are using a program like Wilson Reading System, Slingerland, SIPPS, or another approach that follows IDA standards, like Orton-Gillingham, Reading Mastery, Corrective Reading, Rewards, Language Live!, or FLEX Literacy. | Your student is offered more “guided reading” attention using the current TCRWP curriculum, or Reading Recovery or Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) is being used without first trying an IDA-aligned program. |
| “Do the frequency and intensity of pullout match the recommendation or best practices of the program used?” | Your child is getting at least 2 full Wilson lessons per week, for a total of 150-180 minutes a week. | — There is no amount of time recommended by the program. — The services are much less than what is recommended. |
| “What class period(s) is my student missing?” | Reading interventions taking place during before or after school, independent reading and/or time when reading skills are taught. | Frequent pullout services scheduled during math, science, music, or other subjects that build knowledge and vocabulary, which are key for reading comprehension. |

SECTION THREE

1 You have a right to reading goals that are clear, specific and measurable.

You have the right to clear, specific, and measurable reading goals. When school staff support students in Tiers 2 and 3, such as through RTI, 504 Plans, and IEPs, they must write goals that will help reduce the reading gap according to the Literacy Settlement. IEPs and 504 Plans have legal protections, but under the settlement, 504 Plans and Student Learning Plans (e.g., for RTI services) must also have goals that work and are measured.

Good goals should be:

- Written in a way that families can understand.** If there is any part of the goals that you do not understand or that seem unclear, ask for changes or offer your own suggestions until they are 100% clear and understandable to you.
- Based on scientific data.** Goals are set based on DIBELS, Star, and/or other data from scientifically-developed assessments of academic skills.
- Ambitious.** Goals are written in a way that helps your student improve their reading achievement to a meaningful or significant degree fitting their ability.
- Measurable.** Progress on the written goals are tracked using counting and percentages in a clear, quantifiable way that will be measured the same way regardless of who is taking the measurement.
- Observable.** Progress on the written goals can be seen through student test scores and work samples. Proof of progress is visible and tangible, not based on opinion.
- Progress-monitored at least every 3 weeks** using DIBELS/Star or other IDA-aligned reading tests to make sure the intervention is working, and not based on anecdotal information, classwork, or report cards.

NOTE: As of 2023, IEP and 504 Plan goals should be written based on student information from curriculum-based assessments (CBA) aligned with the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) standards (<https://bit.ly/IDA-KPS>).

Example of a well-written goal:

Area of Need: Reading Fluency and Accuracy

By [specific date], given an unfamiliar text at a [specific grade level], [student] will increase their oral reading fluency to [#WCPM] and accuracy to [at least 91%] in [at least 2 of 3 trials] as measured by ongoing curriculum-based assessments.

SECTION THREE

2 You have a right to interventions and other supports that work.

Because of the Literacy Settlement, BUSD must provide a range of early, appropriately intensive, research-based general classroom (Tier 1) supports for students at risk for reading disabilities. Based on student need, consistent and effective Tier 2 and 3 reading interventions must be given by trained staff in addition to general classroom instruction.

Intervention supports that meet the requirements of the settlement are:

Effective

Early, high-quality, scientific research-based interventions⁶ are essential to supporting students who struggle in reading. Research has shown that structured literacy works for most students and is essential for students with dyslexia. Because of the Literacy Settlement, Tier 2 and 3 interventions in BUSD must be aligned with the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) standards (<https://bit.ly/IDA-KPS>). BUSD has chosen IMSE Orton-Gillingham (IMSE OG) (K-2), Wilson Reading System (2-8), Systematic Instruction in Phonological Awareness and Phonics (SIPPS) (4-8), and REWARDS (4-8), but students with IEPs may have other IDA-aligned interventions.

Consistent

How long (intensity or duration) and how often (frequency) a program is used can make the difference in how well an intervention works.

- Each program comes with a recommended number of times students should work with a specialist. For example, the Wilson Reading System should be provided for a minimum of 150-180 minutes weekly. Wilson lessons could be given as two 75-minute sessions, three 60-minute sessions, or four 45-minute sessions on a weekly basis.
- Intensive or focused intervention requires that students receive either one-on-one or small-group instruction with other students at a similar level. The settlement requires Tier 2 small groups to be a maximum of 6 students of similar skills; Tier 3 small groups must be a maximum of 5 students of similar skills. Beyond the settlement, IEP teams may decide to make group sizes smaller or one-on-one.
- How long and how often the one-on-one or small group interventions occur should be decided based on level of student need and best practices.

Other Supports

Besides appropriately intensive and early research-based reading intervention, the Literacy Settlement says you have a right to:

- Related services (like speech or occupational therapy).
- Accommodations including, but not limited to, assistive technology and accessible materials.
- Modifications like shorter assignments or instructions in small steps.
- Other supplementary aids or services like training or planning/ teamwork time needed by staff to support your student.

Required teacher and staff training

Because of the Literacy Settlement:

- Anyone who teaches the Wilson Reading System must be trained in it.
- Special education staff must have training to write understandable, meaningful, observable, measurable, and scientifically sound student goals.
- Special education staff, K-5 teachers, and grades 6-8 English Language Arts teachers must have training on using the reading assessments (like DIBELS and Star).
- General classroom teachers must have training on the research and practice of English Language Arts instruction consistent with the California State Board of Education ELA/ELD framework. (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/rl/cf/>)

NOTE: Tier 3 reading intervention (like pull-out SPED services) may be used in place of Tier 1 classroom instruction and Tier 2 intervention if they are proven ineffective.

⁶ Reading Recovery and Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) do not meet the standards of an effective intervention and can only be used after the documented failure of the IDA-aligned programs, per the settlement.

SECTION FOUR

How do you know if your student is improving?

Intervention works best when:

- Progress is checked often to make sure learning is on track.
- Quantitative data are used to modify the intervention or how often extra help is given.
- Families are frequently told what is happening and invited to help make decisions.

| WHAT TO ASK | ENCOURAGING SIGNS | PROBLEMATIC SIGNS |
|--|---|--|
| ”What tool is being used to assess my student’s progress?” | You are shown IDA-aligned Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM) or Curriculum-Based Assessment (CBA) data on your student. | — You are shown results from teacher-made tests, Reading Recovery assessments, or TCRWP assessments. — You are given an alphabet letter, such as “level M.” |
| ”How often is my student being assessed to measure progress? Which skills are being assessed?” | You are given assessment timelines and regular progress reports. | — Your student’s teacher offers to meet only during parent-teacher conference time. — You never or rarely hear from your student’s special education teacher or case manager about progress except at the annual IEP meeting or the scheduled 504 Plan meeting. |

1 You have a right to appropriate progress monitoring.

Tier 2 progress is tracked at least every 3 weeks

Because of the Literacy Settlement, students getting help through Tier 2 (often RTI) interventions will have their progress monitored at least every three weeks.

Tier 3 progress is tracked continuously

Tier 3 interventionists, such as the Special Education teacher, are required to track students (such as those with IEPs or 504 Plans) on an ongoing basis.

All monitoring should be done by repeating DIBELS/Star or other IDA-aligned reading assessment — whatever evidence-based measurement is written in the student’s goal. (See “interventions that work” section on page 12 on efficacy.)

NOTE: The Literacy Settlement requires progress to be tracked using DIBELS, Star or other reading assessment aligned with the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) standards (<https://bit.ly/IDA-KPS>). DO NOT include report cards, anecdotal information, Words Their Way spelling inventories, teacher-made tests, Teachers’ College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) on-demand writing assessments, TCRWP independent reading level assessments, Reading Recovery running records, or end-of-year district tests.

Education words

504 Plan: Plan covered under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, designed to remove any barriers limiting a disabled student’s ability to receive an education and provide the necessary support the student needs to learn alongside their peers.

<https://www.understood.org/en/articles/what-is-a-504-plan>

Balanced Literacy (aka “Workshop” model, or “Leveled” reading): A framework for reading instruction that evolved out of the “reading wars” of the 1980-90s in response to more explicit instructional models. Balanced literacy focuses on cultivating a love of reading and writing in students by offering a great deal of choice and independence. Students are identified according to a reading level, usually labeled with letters A-Z, and students are urged to choose books at their “just right” level, which is the level at which they are able to read comfortably and independently. Reading levels are based on the number and length of words and sentences, as well as book topic, rather than on phonics skills required for reading. Lower level texts are often pattern based. In “readers workshop” and “writers workshop,” students work independently on reading and writing tasks, often of their own choosing. Teachers offer “mini-lessons” to guide students’ independent work. Teachers spend time conferencing with students and leading “guided reading” small group instruction at students’ identified reading levels. Balanced literacy instruction also includes “word work,” which can encompass phonics work, sight word practice, and vocabulary learning. Example programs: TCRWP (Lucy Calkins); Fountas and Pinnell, including Leveled Literacy Intervention; Journeys; Reading Recovery; Read 180.

CAASPP: California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress, including Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments, taken by students in grades 3-8 and grade 11 in English language arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics. These assessments are administered online.

CBM/CBA: Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM) or Curriculum-Based Assessment (CBA) is a brief, timed test given in repeated intervals based on what the student is learning in the school curriculum. CBM can help your student’s teacher find the type and amount of instruction your student needs to make enough progress toward meeting academic goals.

Child Find: By federal law, schools must “identify, locate and evaluate” all students with disabilities who may be eligible for special education. If the district has a reason to suspect that your student has a disability, it has an independent, proactive duty to conduct a full evaluation, with parents’ written consent, to determine their eligibility. The threshold for suspected disability to trigger an evaluation is relatively low.

CORE: Consortium on Reading Excellence provides educators with professional training on evidence-based research and practices on the most effective ways to teach children to read and to help them implement instruction that works. CORE was selected by BUSD to provide professional learning for K-8 teachers.

DIBELS: Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills — BUSD’s selected universal screener for reading in grades K-2, given 3 times a year. DIBELS is a short (one minute) fluency measure that can be used regularly to detect risk and monitor the development of early reading skills in kindergarten through eighth grade.

Differentiated Instruction: A teaching approach that tailors instruction to students’ different learning needs. It lets students show what they know in different ways. It does not replace the goals in a student’s IEP or 504 plan. Any tier of instruction may be differentiated.

GLOSSARY

Dyslexia: A term that refers to difficulty in acquiring and processing language that is typically manifested by the lack or proficiency in reading, spelling and writing. People with dyslexia have difficulty connecting letters they see on a page with the sounds they make. As a result, reading becomes slow and takes a lot of effort.

Early Intervention: Getting help for learning problems as soon as possible to increase the chances of success. The mantra of early intervention is always “the sooner, the better,” which is supported across the board by research.

Ed Code: California Education Code is one of 29 Codes that contain state statutes or laws. The Education Code contains 3 Titles. There are also numerous divisions, parts, chapters, and articles containing hundreds of code sections, or individual statutes.

ESEA: Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the main federal education law.

Fluency: The ability to read with speed, accuracy, and proper expression, which strongly correlates with comprehension of what is read.

IDA: The International Dyslexia Association (IDA) is the oldest organization dedicated to the study and treatment of dyslexia. It is also committed to providing complete information and services to address the full scope of dyslexia and related reading and writing challenges.

IDA KPS: Knowledge and Practice Standards (KPS) for Teachers of Reading (<https://bit.ly/IDA-KPS>) is a comprehensive evidence-based resource that outlines what teachers need to know to deliver effective instruction and ensure that all students become proficient readers. Includes the matrix of multisensory programs (<https://bit.ly/IDA-programs>), which are effective reading approaches for individuals with dyslexia.

IDEA: The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal law that establishes a formal process for evaluating individuals with disabilities and providing individualized education programs (IEPs). The purpose of IDEA is to ensure individuals with disabilities receive a free appropriate education. <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/statute-chapter-33/subchapter-i/1401>

IEP: Individualized Education Program — a legal document that describes the student’s present educational performance; annual goals for development; specific services to be delivered; dates and duration of services; service providers and locations; and procedures for evaluating whether those objectives are being met.

Intervention: In RTI, intervention involves stepping in with targeted teaching for students who need help besides what they get from general classroom instruction. In special education, intervention includes specialized instruction or services. Interventions use methods or approaches that have been studied and shown to be effective.

LEA: Local Educational Agency — The organization that runs public schools in a city or town. The Berkeley Unified School District Board of Education is the LEA for Berkeley public schools.

Morphology: Structure or parts of words, such as root words, prefixes, and suffixes.

MTSS: Multi-Tiered System of Support — an integrated school framework or approach to identify struggling students early and intervene quickly. MTSS aligns the entire system of school initiatives and resources to address all students’ academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs. MTSS is made up of three levels (Tiers 1, 2, and 3) where RTI² and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) are delivered with increasing intensity and individual focus as the tier number increases.

NWEA: Northwest Evaluation Association is a not-for-profit organization that creates academic assessments for students pre-K-12. BUSD currently uses NWEA to assess grades 8-9.

GLOSSARY

Orton-Gillingham (OG) Approach: A direct, explicit, multisensory, structured, sequential, diagnostic, and prescriptive way to teach literacy. Some BUSD SPED teachers have received OG training through the Institute for Multisensory Education.

Patterns of Strengths and Weaknesses (PSW): One approach for determining specific learning disabilities (SLD). As opposed to the severe discrepancy model, which tells clinicians if a student is performing more poorly than expected based on intelligence, PSW seeks to determine why, not just whether, a student is performing more poorly.

PBIS: Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports — an approach that focuses on the emotional and behavioral learning of students, which leads to an increase in engagement and a decrease in problematic behavior over time. The LEA adopts and organizes evidence-based behavioral interventions that improve social and emotional behavior outcomes for all students.

Phonemic awareness: The ability to identify or manipulate individual sounds in spoken words.

Phonics: Instruction on the sounds made by individual written letters or letter groups.

Reading level: Teachers often determine the grade level at which a student is reading. But sometimes, students are then limited to reading texts at that level (typically a letter or number). This practice is one to be wary of, particularly if students are restricted to texts that are below the grade level goals or texts that aren't decodable and don't match their phonics instruction.

RTI or RTI²: Response to Intervention, or Response to Instruction and Intervention — an approach that focuses on individual students who are struggling academically and pulls together resources from the LEA, school, and community to promote students' success before they fall behind. It is systematic and data-driven with tiered levels of intervention to benefit every student.

Scope and Sequence: Evidence-based curriculum describes what is taught (scope) and when it is taught (sequence). Instruction follows a clear and intentional plan in which skills are taught systematically and cumulatively.

SPED: Special Education — the practice of educating students in a way that meets their individual differences, disabilities, and special needs. Governed by federal law (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, IDEA), special education is defined as: “Specially designed instruction (SDI), at no cost to parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability.” Special education services may be provided across a variety of educational environments to students who have an individualized education program (IEP).

Specific Learning Disability (SLD): Specific learning disability eligibility is one way to qualify for special education services under IDEA. The student must have difficulties in at least one of the following areas for at least six months despite targeted help: reading; understanding the meaning of what is read; spelling; writing; number facts; and/or math reasoning. One of the most common SLDs is dyslexia.

Star: BUSD's selected universal screener for reading and math in grades 3-8, given 3 times a year. These tests are used to gain an understanding of a student's achievement and growth throughout the year. This is a computer-based, adaptive test — the questions that appear on the tests change in difficulty level depending on how a student answers the previous questions.

SST: Student Success Team — the purpose of this team is to provide an effective support system that will create effective interventions for students who are experiencing challenges in learning, behavioral, or social-emotional difficulties at school. The SST process begins with a request from a teacher, counselor, parent, agency representative, or student that a concern has been identified.

GLOSSARY

Structured Literacy (aka the “Science of Reading” approach, or Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction):

Structured literacy is a broad term for an approach to instruction that is grounded in decades of research. Structured Literacy approaches emphasize highly explicit and systematic teaching of all important components of literacy. These components include both foundational skills (e.g., decoding, spelling, handwriting) and higher-level literacy skills (e.g., reading comprehension, written expression). Explicit teaching means that teachers clearly explain and model key skills; they do not expect students to infer these skills only from exposure. Systematic means that there is a well-organized sequence of instruction, with important prerequisite skills taught before more advanced skills. For example, foundational skills are taught to mastery before teaching higher skills. Structured literacy approaches utilize a thorough system of assessment and individual or small group instruction and intervention to ensure that student needs are met. Finally, the International Dyslexia Association says effective instruction for most students learning to read should integrate listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Example curricula: Core Knowledge Language Arts; Wit and Wisdom; Bookworms; Orton-Gillingham inspired programs, such as the Wilson Reading System.

Tier 1: Within MTSS, universal or main instruction with the whole class or in small groups within the general classroom.

Tier 2: Within MTSS, targeted instruction/intervention/supports tailored for a small group of students with similar skills, supplemental to Tier 1 instruction.

Tier 3: Within MTSS, individualized instruction/intervention/supports given with increased intensity (more dedicated time, smaller group size or one-on-one) and more individual attention (more targeted focus on a student’s unique need or skill), supplemental to or in place of Tier 1 instruction. Tier 3 is not the same as special education, as Tier 3 supports all students and special education is for

students with an IEP. Tier 3 often involves special education staff, as students within Tier 3 may also receive services through an IEP.

Wilson: Wilson Reading System (WRS) — a structured literacy program using a systematic and cumulative approach to teach total word structure for decoding and encoding. Used to help struggling readers as part of RTI or used in special education.

WADE: Wilson Assessment of Decoding and Encoding — a curriculum-based measure that specifically assesses a student’s decoding and encoding skills correlated to the word structures taught in the Wilson Reading System.

WCPM: Words Correct Per Minute — a reading fluency calculation based on the number of words the student gets correct during the 1st minute of reading a passage out loud minus the number of errors.

WIST: Word Identification and Spelling Test (WIST) is used to identify students who are having difficulty with fundamental literacy skills and to isolate specific areas of weakness for struggling readers for grades 2-12. It includes both norm-referenced and informal assessments and can be helpful in designing intervention plans for students. The WIST is also helpful for assessing progress on Orton-Gillingham and other phonics programs.

TCRWP: Teachers’ College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP), also known as Lucy Calkins or Units of Study, a popular “balanced” literacy curriculum, estimated to be used by 40% of schools in the United States. TCRWP Units of Study has been shown not to be based in scientific understanding of how people learn to read.

Universal screener: An assessment that is brief, easy to administer, and tests students’ critical skills and knowledge. The screener or diagnostic assessment is scientifically proven to be valid (accurately tests what it is supposed to test), predictive (shows a future outcome), and reliable (test and re-test results are generally the same).

Other words: <https://bit.ly/R4B-other-words>

Other resources



More about literacy:

- 7 min video: What is the science of reading?
<https://youtu.be/cnkJ6VvDr2M>
- APM Reports podcast series "Sold a Story"
<https://features.apmreports.org/sold-a-story/>
- Too Many Students Can't Read <https://ed100.org/blog/literacy-crisis>
- 'Just-right' books: Does leveled reading hurt the weakest readers?
<https://edsources.org/2022/just-right-books-does-leveled-reading-hurt-the-weakest-readers/>

Links between reading problems and social/emotional problems:

- Mental wellbeing, reading and writing
<https://literacytrust.org.uk/research-services/research-reports/mental-wellbeing-reading-and-writing/>
- Do Poor Readers Feel Angry, Sad, and Unpopular?
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4500191/>

Links between reading problems, behavior, school completion and involvement with the criminal justice system:

- Are Reading and Behavior Problems Risk Factors for Each Other?
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4422059/>
- Reading Difficulty in Young Children Linked to Later Trouble With the Law <https://jjie.org/2016/07/18/reading-difficulty-in-young-children-linked-to-later-trouble-with-the-law/>

Challenges of connecting scientific research on reading with educational practice and teacher preparation:

AFT: Teaching Reading *is* Rocket Science
<https://www.aft.org/ae/summer2020/moats>

IS YOUR SCHOOL USING BEST PRACTICES?

Families need an answer to this question, because students who don't learn to read well in first and second grade are unlikely to catch up later. And there can be lifelong repercussions.

Route to Reading: Avoid a Lemon (National Center on Improving Literacy)

Learn to spot questionable or ineffective practices. <https://improvingliteracy.org/brief/route-reading-avoid-lemon>

What to Ask. What to Look For (Right to Read Project)

Questions to ask to find out if your student is getting good reading instruction at school. <https://bit.ly/R2R-Project>

California's Reading Dilemma (EdSource)

A non-profit reporting series that explores California's struggle to teach kids to read. <https://edsources.org/2022/californias-reading-dilemma/>

Learn more about the plans BUSD has in place to make sure that all students are able to learn to read:

Literacy Settlement:

A legal agreement that requires BUSD to overhaul how it teaches reading, especially for students with dyslexia. <https://bit.ly/BUSD-settle>

Comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CCEIS) Plan:

State-sanctioned plan to address too many referrals of Black/African American students to Special Education. <https://bit.ly/BUSD-CCEIS>

African American Success Framework (AASF):

Programs and services to realize the full potential and brilliance of Black/African American students. <https://www.berkeleyschools.net/african-american-resources/>

Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP):

A three-year strategic plan required for funding from the state. <https://www.berkeleyschools.net/local-control/>

Worksheet for parents

Areas of strength:

Main areas of concern:

Instruction that is working and not working:

Essential test scores (such as DIBELS/Star):

Things I need more explanation on, from school:

Record of documents and/or requests

| DATE | DOCUMENT REQUESTED | TO/FROM WHOM | RESPONSE DATE |
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About Reading for Berkeley

SIGN UP FOR OUR NEWSLETTER <https://bit.ly/R4B-news>

Reading for Berkeley is a group of educational partners promoting improved literacy instruction within BUSD in collaboration with organizations including Decoding Dyslexia CA, FULCRUM, and the CA Reading Coalition.



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