

**A.R.S §15-704**

A. *Each school district or charter school that provides instruction in kindergarten programs and grades one through three shall select and administer screening, ongoing diagnostic, and classroom-based instructional reading assessment, including motivational assessment, as defined by the state board of education, to monitor student progress. Each school shall use the diagnostic information to plan evidence-based appropriate and effective instruction and intervention.*

Districts should take extra care in reviewing the universal screener data of English Learners (EL). Measures of early reading are valid and reliable in providing information on ELs current skill level, but less reliable in predicting future performance due to additional sociocultural and sociolinguistic factors (Gutiérrez-Clellen & Peña, 2001; Linan-Thompson, 2010). To ensure best practice for accurate determination of reading risk, districts should be aware of special considerations when screening ELs for risk factors of dyslexia. Outlined below are recommendations based on these additional considerations.

**Recommendation:** Additional information including English language proficiency level and the student's literacy background should be collected and considered when interpreting screening results. Additional information can include:

- The student's first exposure to English
- The percentage of time of the native language and English used in the home and community
- Prior instruction in reading/writing the student has received in the native language and in English
- Similarities/differences in alphabetic structure, orthography, vocabulary (i.e., cognates), and syntactic structure between the native language and English
- Data on English oral language ability/skills (i.e., AZELLA Listening and Speaking Domain scores)

**Recommendation:** If the district provides literacy instruction in English, screen students in English.

- More specific literacy tasks such as word reading in English may be a less valid indicator of risk when interpreting results.
- Use the same literacy benchmarks for ELs. Recognize that language may be a contributing factor to lower initial performance. Initial performance on literacy screeners in conjunction with reasonable growth rates should be used to help ELs meet literacy goals. If an EL initially scores low on a screener but makes rapid growth even if still below benchmarks, there is less concern the low performance is due to dyslexia.

**Recommendation:** If the district provides literacy instruction in the student's native language, consider also screening in the student's native language.

- Using results from assessments in a student's native language gives teachers additional data to identify students displaying at-risk reading behaviors if they have received literacy instruction in their native language.
- If assessing in native language is not an option, assessment in underlying cognitive or linguistic processes in English (i.e., phonological awareness and rapid naming) may be used to distinguish ELs at risk for dyslexia from those who are learning to read in a second language. When interpreting the scores from these types of assessments, keep in mind that ELs may underperform due to additional sociocultural and sociolinguistic factors.