

**Updated 10/6/2023**

**Sample Parent/Caregiver Letter**

**Schools Can Send to Share with Families about Tier II Dyslexia Screener Results**

**(and if dyslexia signs are identified, next steps)**

**Details about this Sample Letter**

To support their child’s learning, families want clear, accurate, and understandable information about what their child is learning in school and how they can support their child at home. The following letter is not required for schools to use, but provides an example for schools to adapt and tailor for the families of their students. Each district should work with staff and families of young children to determine the most appropriate and understandable messaging. The example letter below can serve as a Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plan (RIMP) letter to families.

In accordance with Ohio Law, the letter should provide families with:

* a clear explanation of screener results, and if the letter is serving as the RIMP communication, whether their child is reading “on grade level” or not,
* information about dyslexia, and options for the family if their child is identified as having signs of dyslexia on the screener,
* a jargon-free definition of structured literacy instruction,
* a description of the specific services the school will provide for the instruction the child needs based on the screener results and the structured literacy program guidelines,
* how, and how frequently the school will be communicating about the child’s progress with the family,
* ideas for what the family can do to support their child’s early literacy at home,
* if the letter is serving as the RIMP letter, an explanation of the 3rd grade retention policy, and a statement that connects the child’s proficiency level in reading to long-term outcomes of success related to proficiency in reading.

This sample letter was written by the Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center at The Ohio State University in collaboration with the Ohio Department of Education and Ohio parents/caregivers of children with dyslexia. If you would like to submit feedback on this sample letter, questions, or your own sample letters/phrases to explain results, please contact OhioSFEC@osu.edu.

**Letter Template (Includes RIMP information):**

Dear \_\_[*parent/caregiver name(s)*]\_,

*[Insert personal greeting, like* “I hope you are well.”] I am writing to share with you how I will be working with \_[*child’s name*]\_\_ this year on reading skills. This is our Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plan for \_[*child’s name*]\_\_.

\_\_[*Child’s name*]\_ [*is/is not*] currently meeting the grade-level goals for reading at this point in the year.

Based on the results of the \_[*screener name*]\_\_ screenings, which are in the table below, I will be using some specific strategies in class called “structured literacy” (see more info below) to make sure \_\_[*child’s name*]\_\_\_\_\_\_ has all the support they need with \_\_[*describe skills teacher will be working on with child, such as “letter naming and first sounds in words”*]\_\_. [*Refer to* [*Ohio Dyslexia Guidebook*](https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/Literacy/Dyslexia/Dyslexia-Guidebook-update0722.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US) *(pg. 24) to determine which grade-level skills to include in the table below.*]

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Reading Task** | **Goal** | **Your Child’s Result on \_\_[*date*]\_\_\_** | **Your Child’s Result on \_[date]\_\_\_** | **Our Class’s Average Score**  | **Status****(Area of Strength or Area Needing More Support)** |
| Letter Naming |  |  |  |  |  |
| First Sounds in Words |  |  |  |  |  |
| All Sounds in Words |  |  |  |  |  |
| Reading Nonsense Words |  |  |  |  |  |

*If screener does not show signs of dyslexia, consider providing the following information to families in the letter:*

The screener did not show signs of dyslexia for your child. However, if you have any questions or concerns about these results and would like to talk with me, let me know! I value your perspective and ideas about \_[*child’s name*]\_’s education.

*If screener does show signs of dyslexia, consider including the following in the letter:*

As your child’s teacher, I do not provide a formal clinical diagnosis of dyslexia. However, the screener did show some *signs* of dyslexia, as you can see in the table above. Dyslexia can affect students in many ways, and can look very different from one person to the next. To learn more about dyslexia, visit [go.osu.edu/dyslexiaguide](https://go.osu.edu/dyslexiaguide).

I am going to work very closely with \_\_\_[*child’s name*]\_\_ this year, which should be very helpful. [*Optional, if applicable:* There will be another teacher helping out in my classroom who will be working with your child, named \_[*teacher’s name*\_.] I am confident that with this focused attention, \_\_\_[*child’s name*]\_\_ will have the support they need to learn to read. You can read more about the structured literacy supports we will be using in the section below.

**What is structured literacy?**

Structured literacy is a way to teach students to read.

**What does it look like or sound like?**

Structured literacy follows a specific order to teach reading, from simple to more complex skills, based on how we know people’s brains work. It is also very direct. Teachers focus on the exact skills that students need to know to go from speech to printed words. We teach students the actual structure of language. For example, we talk about which letters are vowels, and how they can go together to make “vowel families” such as “oo” and “ai.” Structured literacy is hands-on learning. Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are often paired with one another to support a student’s learning. Structured literacy teaching can begin in early childhood and continue through high school.

It looks like:

* Teaching letter names and sounds,
* Sounding out letters and how they blend together into words,
* Building words with letter tiles and other objects,
* Tapping or clapping out sounds and syllables in words,
* Using a word mapping chart to show students how each separate sound in a word is made by one or more specific letters, and
* Making sentences with words on cards.

*[Consider including a picture and brief explanation of one of the materials you are currently using in your classroom, such as phoneme graphing mapping boxes.*]

Structured literacy is based on a very large collection of research studies. This is sometimes called the Science of Reading.

*[Include details here about specific supplemental services the child will be receiving (amount of services, when and where they will occur, who will provide them, etc.)*.]

**How is this different than other ways to teach students to read?**

Following a structured literacy curriculum, we do not ask students to “guess” words, or use “context clues” in a book to teach them how to read. We encourage students to get to know the sounds that each letter makes, and how they go together to form words. We introduce new sounds and other skills in a specific order and review those new teachings often, using reading materials that match the specific skills we are teaching. We correct mistakes made during reading time so that students get that immediate feedback they need.

**How will I know if my child is back on track? [include this section if child is not on-track]**

We will check \_*[child’s name’s]*\_\_\_ progress on each of these reading skills again in \_\_*[add number]*\_\_\_ weeks, and will send an update to you in *[add number here]* weeks. Although it might seem like third grade is a long way away right now, it is important for you to know that according to current Ohio law, if children in Ohio do not reach a certain level of reading ability by the end of third grade, they are required to stay in third grade for a longer period of time. This is called Ohio’s “Third Grade Reading Guarantee.” However, parents can tell the school to promote their child to fourth grade. Ideally, the school and family discuss options and come to an agreement about what is best for the child. If a child does not meet the promotion score in third grade, and they do move to fourth grade, they will continue to be on a reading improvement and monitoring plan, will receive high dosage tutoring, and specific support in the classroom.

**Why are schools screening for dyslexia as early as kindergarten?** *[Two wording options below]*

*[Option 1]* Research consistently suggests that children’s reading abilities in the early grades are a strong predictor of reading comprehension in later grades and that students with early reading difficulties may continue to experience increasing difficulties over time, if not addressed. We can reliably identify early signs of dyslexia with our Kindergarten screener.

*[Option 2]* Reading success in the early grades leads to better school success in the later grades, and the opposite is also true. When children struggle with learning to read in their first years in school, without support and the school/family knowing why, it can be a challenge for students to do well in school over time. So, we need to know right away exactly what their strengths and challenges are, and how we can support them on a daily basis. For your child’s school success, mental well-being, and the efficiency of our school system, it is best for us to screen and provide reading support as early as possible. We can reliably identify early signs of dyslexia with our Kindergarten screener.

**How You Can Help At Home**

Over the next few weeks, as we try new things in the classroom, I would really appreciate your help! Here are some ways that you can support \_[*child’s name*]\_’s reading skills:

1) **Stay positive!** Our brains are like a muscle, and the more we work at learning new skills, the more we will learn and grow. Ask your child what they are learning, and how it is going. Talking positively about school and learning, and setting high expectations about learning are some of the best supports that you can provide. I believe in \_[*child’s name*]\_, and together we can help them improve their reading skills.

2) **Try it at home!** If you are interested and it fits into your family’s schedule, you can spend some time each week working on the same skills that we are working on in the classroom. I will be happy to share more about what we do in class, along with some fun family activity ideas. [*Write the best way to learn about activities to try at home, for example:* “I made a short video explaining \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I would be happy to send you the link.” Or “Call \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to schedule a time to come to the school to learn more.” Or, “Here is a great website to learn about the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ activity we’re doing in class.”]

3) **Keep in touch!** You can ask me questions, and share with me how things are going at home. [*Write a way to stay in contact, for example:* “Feel free to send me a message on the school app.” Or, “I am including a small notebook with this letter so that you can tell me what you’re trying at home, how it is going, and any other ideas or thoughts you have.” Or, “Join my virtual office hour on Mondays at 3:30 to ask me any questions that you have.”]

Thank you for partnering with me this year so that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ can grow as a reader.

Sincerely,

Teacher/Staff Name

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_