

Dear Vermont Senators and Representatives,

Recent discussion on the use of screeners for the markers of dyslexia warrant a response from the New Hampshire International Dyslexia Association. Most importantly, **a screener does not diagnose dyslexia** (specific reading disability).

Screeners provide information on each student's key reading skills: phonological and phonemic awareness, alphabets, phonics, word recognition, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Screeners determine the starting point of instruction and for planning instructional groups.

The [International Dyslexia Association supports the universal screening of reading in K-2](#). **Universal screening is critical in catching students before they fail and providing them with necessary evidence-based instruction. We know it takes four times as long to intervene in fourth grade as it does in late kindergarten.** Regular progress monitoring provides specific data for determining if instruction and interventions are working.

Evidence-based screening identifies students at risk for reading failure. If the screener “over-identifies” children with markers of reading failure, these “false-positive” children would be provided with evidence-based instruction that targets their area of weakness. A screener is not intended to diagnose dyslexia (specific reading disability). Only children who have a full special-education evaluation would be determined as having dyslexia (specific reading disability) or not.

When over 60% of 4th and 8th grade children in Vermont fail to read at the proficient level, **worrying about possible false positives is not the problem.** What is the danger of students receiving more instruction and becoming better readers and writers?

Caution: Universal screeners must be chosen with care. Not all on the market are evidence-based. [The Four Pillars of Reading Success](#), from the National Council on Teacher Quality, has a comprehensive list of valid, reliable screeners.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. We are available to speak with you or the Education Committee to expand on the importance of universal screeners and other literacy topics.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Gardner-Morse, M.Ed., Literacy Tutor
tutoringgm@gmail.com
802-223-5738

Brenda Peters, M.Ed., ICALP
President, New Hampshire International Dyslexia Association
nhida.bpeters@gmail.com

Dorinne Dorfman, Ed. D.
Board Member, New Hampshire International Dyslexia Association
dorinnedorfman@gmail.com