



Comments to School Board on [Dyslexic and Struggling Readers](#)

by Kimberly Eng Lee on January 18, 2022

Palo Alto CAC appreciates our work with, and work by the District to commit resources, align General Education programs, and scale practices to serve students who struggle with reading. Addressing issues of curriculum, instruction, equity and inclusion are more important than ever, and PAUSD is retooling on many fronts with few public school models to follow. So thank you.

In 2017, the CDE issued guidance on how to educate the 1 in 5 students who have learning differences like Dyslexia. That prompted the district to examine how it teaches all struggling readers. [LAST YEAR](#)'s annual update noted 4 elements:

1. ASSESSMENT
2. PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
3. MONITORING
4. TIERED INSTRUCTION

Reading is an acquired skill, it is not natural. When children read, their brains must learn to transform the shapes of letters and characters on a page into the sounds and words of the spoken language. Such instruction lays the groundwork for meaning-making when students see written text, to do what we call "reading", and to do so without pictures, without memorizing and without guessing. For 3 years, PAUSD has universally screened K-3rd graders to identify who might be at risk for dyslexia. Early elementary teachers, reading and EL specialists were trained in the specific approach that builds foundational reading skills usually lacking for dyslexic and struggling readers, but are strategies helpful for ALL students.

This professional awareness is translating into good instruction for our youngest kids. The district's [early literacy plan \(ESRI\)](#) was nicely laid out at the May 25th meeting, and anecdotal stories are that the OG-training is well received, and Principals are sharing best-practices across sites. Tonight's presentation reports how many 1st-3rd graders need further attention. We'd still like to hear more about **monitoring for impact**. How ARE those kids who were screened "at risk" in years 1 and 2 doing? How effective were their interventions? How many had or now have IEPs? Are parents aware of their child's abilities and progress? And is it clear that at any time, parents always have the right to request a formal assessment for Dyslexia and Special Education services?

We understand, PAUSD is still researching and piloting how to screen, support and instruct struggling students in secondary schools. Just some questions: How many are using the computer-based reading intervention Lexia PowerUp? Is it sufficient? Each Middle School is piloting a different set of instructional strategies, we look forward to hearing more about those.

Lastly, for students with IEPs. Have we re-examined the interventions, especially since Special Ed teachers also just received OG training? Are the IEP's and 504s specifically written for dyslexic readers? Do the IEPs say Dyslexia? **Essentially, how are our Tier 3 interventions more targeted and intensive than Tiers 1 and 2?**