



Palo Alto CAC has long advocated on behalf of students with Dyslexia and Specific Learning Disabilities, the most [common](#) eligibility category for Special Education. The 2/28/23 [Report on Dyslexia and Struggling Readers](#) clearly shows, PAUSD has worked diligently and thoroughly since 2017 to implement the [Guidelines](#) for Dyslexia to scale. PAUSD is an anomaly among public school districts, having implemented all suggestions, including evidence-based instruction, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), and universal screening for all K-3 students. We appreciate that the district is moving onward to tackle Secondary next.

CAC also takes note that the Identification Flowcharts ([Elementary](#) & [Secondary](#)) now state that “at any point during this process, an individual may request an SST meeting to discuss an evaluation to determine a disability”; Important, because students may need a more comprehensive assessment beyond what is part of general education screening and progress monitoring. And while the Guidelines strongly support the use of MTSS for students at risk of dyslexia, it should also not delay identification.

California is 1 of 10 [states](#) without a law for Universal Screening, yet staff has deemed it unnecessary to codify the district’s practice per CSBA. The Senate Bill (which would have legally mandated screening) failed despite bi-partisan support, advocacy from the California State PTA, Decoding Dyslexia, and EdVoice, and 87% favorability among 4,200 surveyed voters. It was opposed by the California Teachers’ [Union](#) and CSBA (the same School Board Association recommending against a policy). We are now watching [SB 691](#), the reauthored Dyslexia screening bill announced last week.

So is **PAUSD to be an outlier, or a leader?** PAUSD has done good things for literacy with positive results **both for students with disabilities and general education students** ([ESRI KPI Checkpoint](#)). The district invested in teacher and principal training, new curriculum, structured itself around MTSS, and is screening students routinely. “[Disproportionality](#) in SLD identification [declined in 2022] for Black and Hispanic students from 8 times greater likelihood to 1.72 times greater likelihood.” But it is fool-hearty not to acknowledge strong opposition from influential decision-makers, recommendations that carry no recourse, and future senior hires who may not believe in doing things as we do now.

- Illiteracy is a general education problem, and California ranks lower than the national average in 4th and 8th grade reading levels. **The common reason to screen in early years is the importance of early detection** to address reading difficulties that may negatively impact achievement and social-emotional development. Delays in remediating a student with Dyslexia takes 4x longer and costs 2x as much.
- “The District [\[SWIFT Plan for equity says PAUSD\]](#) will need to continue targeted efforts to build an MTSS structure with effective intervention to prevent Special Education from becoming the first solution.” Yet, **BP 6164.6 cited by CSBA does not address early screening** for risk of Dyslexia, or markers for reading struggles nor inform teachers how they should instruct. It is a policy for “Identification and Education Under Section 504” (ADA). The word “screen” doesn’t appear once in the BP, although it is a component of [BP 6120](#) (RTI-Response to Intervention and Instruction), a CSBA Policy that PAUSD might well consider.
- While the current staff and Board are fully supportive of universal screening and MTSS, the absence of a Board Policy in our Local Control state, does not guarantee that a future PAUSD

will continue to screen in the absence of law. **This would return PAUSD to the inequitable position of random and delayed identification and instruction of students who are at risk.**

We ask again, is PAUSD an outlier for following guidance, or a leader for committing to do it?

Palo Alto CAC urges the district to codify its practice for Universal Screening and regularly report Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for outcomes in students screened, identified and remediated for Dyslexia or markers for Dyslexia. How is progress to be tracked longitudinally?

We conclude again by commending PAUSD, its staff, all the teachers, and the Board for taking bold, transformative actions to identify, instruct and support students with Dyslexia and Learning Disabilities. Bravo!