



— — — 2026 EDUCATOR SURVEY REPORT

The State of Dyslexia

What educators told us about screening,
intervention, and the gap between them

Compiled from a nationwide survey of teachers, interventionists, psychologists, and administrators from January–July 2026.

Districts can find struggling readers. Keeping them served is where the system breaks down.

Screening has largely arrived. The capacity to act on it has not. Among the educators we surveyed, the bottleneck sits between the flag and the child: identification happens, and then a shortage of certified specialists, protected minutes, and stable funding decides how many of those students get served.

54%

of respondents say screening is required where they work

60%

say access to certified dyslexia specialists is insufficient

3.1/5

average confidence that interventions close the gap by third grade

27%

say fewer than half of flagged students are served

Among 52 educators surveyed across 22+ states. Descriptive, not a representative sample.

WHAT WE FOUND

- 1** Screening is widespread, but uneven. 54% of respondents say it is required where they work; 37% say it is not.
- 2** A flag does not guarantee intervention. 27% say fewer than half of the students they identify are actually served.
- 3** Specialist capacity is the binding constraint. 60% say access to certified specialists is insufficient for the need in their building.
- 4** Confidence is low, but not alarmed. Average confidence that interventions close the gap by third grade is 3.1 out of 5; only 2% chose the top of the scale.
- 5** The asks are about capacity, not curriculum. Interventionists, protected time, training for general-education teachers, and funding that does not expire on schedule.

Screening tools are in place in most of the buildings represented here. The findings that follow trace what happens after the flag: who gets served, who delivers the instruction, and whether educators believe it is working by third grade.

A patchwork that mostly *finds* students but struggles to serve them

Over the first half of 2026, we asked educators one question at a time: not what dyslexia policy says on paper, but what actually happens in their building. Fifty-two of them answered, from a kindergarten teacher in North Carolina piecing together interventions with a general-education aide, to a school psychologist in California managing a caseload that outpaces her hours.

Few of them described neglect. Most described a system that has gotten fairly good at the first half of its job, noticing which children are struggling to read, and much less reliable at the second half: getting those children structured, sustained help before the window for early intervention closes at the end of third grade.

Screening tools like iReady, DIBELS, and FastBridge run in most of the buildings represented here. But requirements vary by district and by state, the tools disagree at the margins, and a flag does not reliably mean a student gets served. Respondents describe waitlists, understaffed intervention blocks, specialists spread across too many schools, and funding for small-group support that arrived with pandemic relief dollars and left with them.

What follows is organized around four moments in a struggling reader's path: getting screened, getting served, getting taught by someone trained for it, and becoming a stronger reader. We close with what respondents said they need, in their own words.

Who answered: classroom and special education teachers, reading interventionists, instructional coaches, school psychologists, and administrators across 22+ states.

A mandate is not an implementation

As of 2026, all 50 states have enacted legislation specific to or inclusive of dyslexia, 194 dyslexia-focused laws nationwide, and universal K–3 screening is the hallmark provision of most of them.¹ Our respondents describe something narrower: only 54% say screening is required where they work, and 37% say it is not.

Part of the gap is timing. Michigan's screening mandate does not take effect until the 2027–28 school year, and Colorado's annual K–3 dyslexia screening begins the same year. Much of it is not timing. Arizona requires universal dyslexia screening in kindergarten and grade one, plus a trained Dyslexia Training Designee in every K–3 school; Arizona respondents still describe identification landing in second or third grade. Georgia created a Dyslexia Endorsement and made it one of four pathways for K–3 teachers; a Georgia respondent still reports that not all staff running pull-out intervention are certified.

WHAT THE STATUTES SAY

50 states with dyslexia legislation. 194 enacted dyslexia-focused laws. Most mandate universal screening in K–3, evidence-based intervention, caregiver notification, and educator training.

WHAT EDUCATORS REPORT

54% say screening is required. 60% say specialist access is insufficient. 27% say fewer than half of flagged students are served at all.

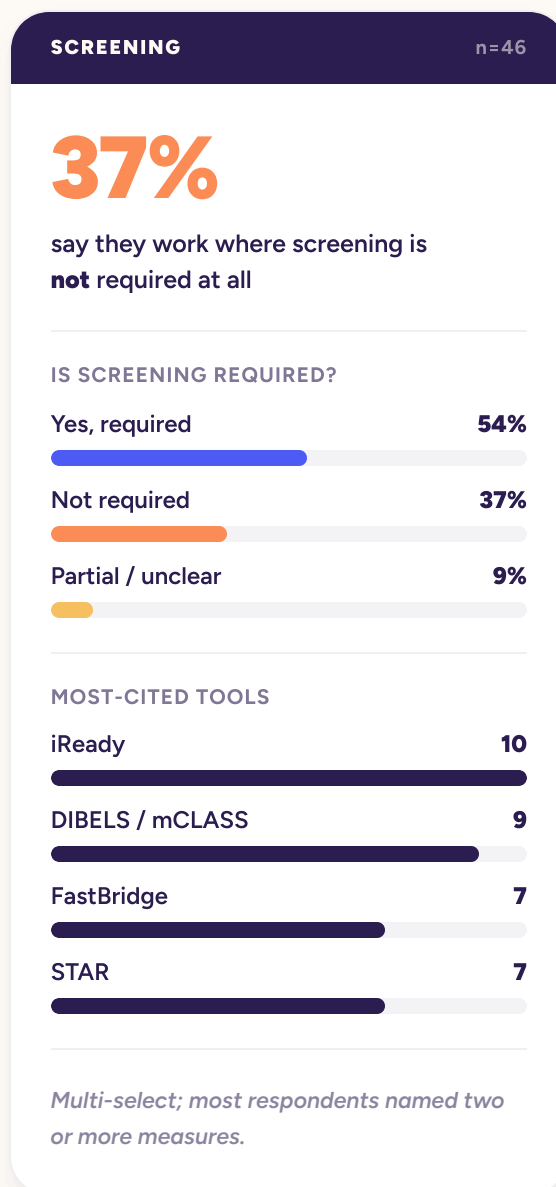
Statutes create screening requirements, training hours, and notification duties. They rarely fund the interventionist who has to act on the flag, which is the thing respondents name most often as what they need.

Screening has spread, but on the district's own terms

Screening is no longer the exception. iReady, DIBELS and its mCLASS variant, FastBridge, and STAR each appear in the practices of roughly one in six respondents, usually layered with a second or third measure: a phonics check, a phonemic-awareness screen like Heggerty, or teacher progress-monitoring data. Several described thorough, multi-point systems.

But "screening happens" and "screening is required" are different claims. Only 54% say their school or district is formally required to screen; 37% say it is not, and the rest described partial mandates, screening in certain grades only, or screening triggered after a concern is raised. One Georgia district screens kindergarten through third grade and stops there. An Arizona instructional coach described a screener that flags reading difficulty broadly but offers teachers no next step: *"It really isn't until around 2nd or 3rd grade, when the child has not made adequate growth, that dyslexia is diagnosed."* Arizona statute requires universal dyslexia screening in kindergarten and grade one.¹

A few respondents raised a problem with the tools themselves. A California interventionist at a bilingual school said her screener over-identifies students who have not yet had enough English instruction, forcing a second round of assessment by hand for every flagged child. She puts the cost at two instructional days per screening cycle.



A flag is not a promise: the intervention gap

Ask respondents what happens after a student is flagged, and the answers split roughly into thirds. Forty percent say 75–100% of identified students go on to receive intervention. Another 29% put the figure at 50–75%, and 27% say fewer than half are served. That last group is more than a quarter of the sample describing buildings where most children identified as at-risk never get the help the screening was meant to trigger.

The obstacles respondents name are structural. Several pointed to staffing math that does not close: too few certified interventionists, or too few minutes that don't collide with the core literacy block a struggling reader also needs. Others described a sequencing problem, where students wait for a full IEP evaluation before formal intervention starts, months after the screener identified the need.

California respondents pointed to a funding cliff. One teacher described a "highly successful" small-group K–3 program funded almost entirely by one-time federal pandemic relief dollars: ***"The shift away from Primary Promise has reduced small-group availability, and many students only receive support after an IEP is in place."*** The money was temporary; so was the coverage.

THE GAP

n=46

27%

say fewer than **half** of flagged students are served

SHARE OF FLAGGED STUDENTS SERVED

75–100% served **40%**

50–75% served **29%**

Under 50% served **27%**

"The best dyslexia intervention program I know of... is a two-year training program for teachers. My district couldn't justify the cost."

SPED TEACHER, TEXAS

Who actually delivers the help and whether there are *enough* of them

When intervention does happen, small-group pull-out is the default, cited by roughly three-quarters of respondents describing their delivery model, ahead of one-on-one sessions and in-classroom-only support. That matches the structured-literacy research base. Respondents don't dispute the model; they question who is running it.

Sixty percent of respondents say access to certified dyslexia specialists is not sufficient to meet student need in their building. The shortage shows up as scope creep. A Georgia teacher noted that "not all teachers who conduct pull-out interventions are certified dyslexia specialists" in a state that established a dedicated Dyslexia Endorsement for exactly that role.¹ A Maryland special educator asked for "at least one general education teacher, per grade level, trained in providing dyslexia interventions," conceding that specialist staffing alone will not scale.

Some described workarounds. An Arizona school psychologist said her principal had begun sending art, PE, and music teachers into small groups for students needing lighter support, freeing certified staff for higher-need cases. She called it a stopgap. It also measures how thin intervention staffing has gotten.



Specialist capacity is the constraint most districts cannot hire their way out of this year.

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Confidence in outcomes: not a crisis, but not trust either

Asked how confident they are that current reading interventions are meaningfully improving outcomes by third grade, respondents averaged 3.1 out of 5. The average hides how flat the distribution is: nearly half chose a neutral "3," and 2% chose the top of the scale. Very few respondents think the system is failing outright. Almost none will vouch for it working well.

Two threads recur in the open-ended responses. The first is timing. Several said identification and support routinely arrive after second or third grade, past the window structured-literacy research treats as most valuable. A Michigan classroom teacher described the diagnostic difficulty: *"We've found it difficult to diagnose in early elementary because letter reversals are developmentally appropriate."* Michigan's K–3 screening mandate does not take effect until 2027–28.¹

The second thread is the capacity to sustain what has already started. A North Carolina fifth-grade teacher, describing her district's real investment in LETRS-aligned instruction, named the strain anyway: *"Initiative fatigue' for classroom teachers is real. Balancing the 90-minute literacy block with mandated interventions for Tier 2 and Tier 3 students is a constant logistical challenge."* Good tools still need hands and minutes to run.

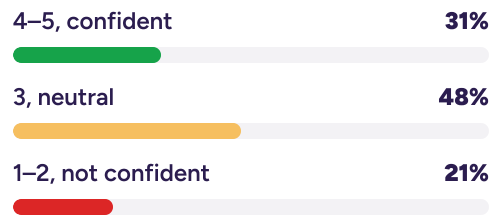
CONFIDENCE

n=46

3.1/5

average confidence that interventions close the gap by 3rd grade

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES



Only 2% of respondents chose the top of the scale.

The asks are specific, consistent, and rarely about curriculum

Asked what would help, respondents returned a short and repetitive list: funding for interventionist positions now that pandemic relief dollars have lapsed; certified staff and protected minutes enough to run intervention at scale; structured-literacy training for general-education teachers, not only specialists; and screening tools that catch risk earlier and hold up for English learners. Mississippi respondents named funding as the single biggest barrier to meeting the state's screening requirement, one of them asking for ***“funding high quality resources, expert technical assistance and strong community and family partnerships.”*** A Virginia third-grade teacher raised family engagement, a question echoed across the sample: ***“What people and resources can we utilize to educate parents and families at Title I schools like mine?”***

Taken together, these responses argue for four shifts:

- 1 Pair universal K–2 screening requirements with a mandated response timeline. A flag without a deadline is just data.
- 2 Fund interventionist positions as a recurring line item rather than a one-time grant.
- 3 Start intervention at the screener flag, not after a full IEP evaluation clears.
- 4 Extend structured-literacy training to general-education teachers, and validate screeners for multilingual learners.

If any of this matches what you are seeing in your own buildings, we would like to hear about it. Poppins works with districts on the staffing side of this problem.

[Get in touch →](#)

Methodology: 52 self-selected respondents across 22+ states, surveyed January–July 2026. Reflects self-reported practice and perception, not an audited or representative sample.

¹ State legislation, teacher-requirement, and prevalence figures throughout: *The State of Dyslexia in the United States, Annual Report 2026*, National Center on Improving Literacy (stateofdyslexia.org).