

Language-based Disabilities and Dyslexia - District Action Steps and Updates
September 23, 2019

1. District Initiative with Tiffany P. Hogan, PhD, CCC-SLPMGH Institute of Health Professions

WPS has made a commitment to engage in a four year research study agreement with the Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) Institute of Health Professionals. The district will work directly with Dr. Tiffany Hogan, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, who is a professor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders as well as Director of the Speech and Language Literacy Lab to identify kindergarten students at risk to develop specific learning disabilities or dyslexia. The study will provide opportunities for Principals, teachers and specialist to receive an explanation and analysis of the research data as well as ongoing professional development to implement research based targeted intervention strategies. Opportunities to engage parents will also be integrated in this research study. The following are key action steps that the district will take to implement this research study:

- A. All kindergarten students will be screened each year, for the next 4 years, for Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD). It is expected that 2 to 5 children will be identified at each site. Parents of these students will be contacted by MGH and, with parent permission, the children will be followed over the course of the study.
- B. As a result of the study, we will integrate tools to learn how to identify specific learning disabilities in order to provide early intervention for students at risk. MGH has also agreed to provide a dyslexia screener that has been well researched and is currently used in the western part of the U.S. and in Finland. This collaboration will ensure our district commitment with the new Dyslexia legislation.
- C. All kindergarten teachers, kindergarten Instructional assistants, speech and language pathologist, learning disability specialists, and a special education teachers from each elementary school will be offered specialized professional development focused on language based intervention strategies. The topics include: An Overview of the Research Project with an Introduction to the SLD Screener; What is Dyslexia? Stimulating Language in the Classroom; Difference versus Disability.
- D. Participants will work with Dr. Hogan, to identify kindergarten students at risk to develop specific learning disabilities or dyslexia. These trainings will teach kindergarten teachers, Learning Disability Specialists, Speech and Language Pathologists, and Special Education Teachers how to administer the screenings and give opportunities for principals, teachers, and specialists to receive an explanation and analysis of the research data. In addition, participants will receive ongoing professional development on the implementation of research-based, targeted intervention strategies.



2. In the SY 2018-19, the district began a **Language-Based Intervention training** series specific to Developmental Language Disorders (DLD) and Dyslexia for all Kindergarten Teachers, Kindergarten Instructional Assistants, and district Learning Disability Specialists. This training has also included select district Speech and Language Pathologists and Special Education Teachers from each elementary school. This specialized professional development will focus on language-based intervention strategies. Topics include: An Overview of the Massachusetts General Hospital Intervention Research Project with an Introduction to the SLD Screener; what is Dyslexia? Stimulating Language in the Classroom; Difference versus Disability (e.g., second language acquisition versus language disorders); and Case Study Workshops.
 - A. **MGH Language-Based Intervention Training Schedule (2019 -2020)**
June 5, 2019 [Noon – 12:30] North High Auditorium
October 11, 2019 [8:00AM – 2:00PM] TBD
March 16 – 18, 2020 [Times and locations to be determined]
3. Spring of 2019 - Members of the SPED Department visited other public school programs and private schools: (e.g., The Carroll School -Independent day school for elementary and middle school children who have been diagnosed with specific learning disabilities in reading and writing). Other visits also included; Sudbury and Framingham Public Schools to explore service delivery options, and best practices for students who have a language-based disability
4. **FY'20 Budget** allocated funding to add a language-based substantially separate classroom at Norrback School. The foundation of this classroom will focus on intervention strategies to provide targeted interventions to students that have a learning disability and would benefit from a multi-sensory language based program

SY' 2018-19 & 2019 -20 District Professional Training:

Targeted Interventions for Dyslexia & Language-based Disabilities

- ❖ **District-wide Training** for Principals, District Administrators, Teachers and Support Staff
- ❖ **Dyslexia Foundation Conference** at Harvard University – October 19, 2019 Representatives from our district will attend this conference to deepen their understanding of Dyslexia and targeted interventions
- ❖ **Linadmoood Bell RtI Model:** Evaluate the delivery of tiered interventions in the district to promote evidenced based practices and consultation services on resources and programs (e.g., Seeing Stars & Symbol Imagery)
- ❖ **Wilson Reading System Institute:** To accommodate the professional learning needs of our Wilson Certified Teachers, we are offering the Wilson Reading System® (WRS) 4th Edition Institute to provide an in-depth, hands-on professional learning opportunity focused on Steps 1-6 of the new edition.
- ❖ **Framing Your Thoughts Sentence Structure (Project Read):** Is a sequential systematic method of instruction that teachers sentence structure from simple to complex. Using graphic symbols to represent the sentence parts and how they function, students learn to construct compound complex sentences with accuracy and creativity. Teachers will use and understand multisensory structured language techniques utilizing various strategies. Student Impact: Students will develop skills in sentence writing and editing and understanding of syntax, grammar, and punctuation.
- ❖ **Framing Your Thoughts Applied Writing (Project Read): Framing Your Thoughts® Paragraph Writing program** transfers the knowledge of sentence structure to paragraph development for both informational and narrative text.
- ❖ **Framing Your Thoughts Comprehension** (Project Read) Secondary level intervention tool to improve reading comprehension and close achievement gaps in the areas of reading for students with disabilities
- ❖ **Landmark Outreach Services** - Consultation and Program Evaluation of District Language Based Program – Outside consultant to evaluate and improve district programs to enhance services for students with a language-based disability and Dyslexic.
- ❖ **Structured Systematic Math Programs and Intervention Tools** for students with Language-based Disabilities



Lindamood-Bell's RtI Model

