



Legislative Report

Reporting on Nebraska Revised Statute
§ 79-11,157.01

September 2025

Introduction

Pursuant to Nebraska Revised Statute §79 -11,157.01, on or before July 1 of each year, each school district shall provide to the State Department of Education, information relating to dyslexia. Such information shall include, but not be limited to, the number of students in each public school in such district:

- (a) Tested¹ for a specific learning disability in the area of reading, including tests that identify characteristics of dyslexia and the results of such tests;
- (b) Identified as having a reading issue, including dyslexia, pursuant to the assessment administered under the Nebraska Reading Improvement Act; and
- (c) Identified as described in subdivision (b) of this subsection that have shown growth on the measure used to identify the reading issue.

To further inform reading improvement in Nebraska, districts are required to submit the following additional data elements related to the Nebraska Reading Improvement Act (NRIA):

- the NRIA assessment(s) used for grades K, 1, 2, and 3;
- the number of K-3 students:
 - who met or exceeded the spring NRIA Approved Reading Assessment threshold and do not require an Individualized Reading Improvement Plan (IRIP);
 - who were assessed in the spring using a NRIA Approved Reading Assessment;
 - who did not receive the spring NRIA Approved Reading Assessment;
 - who were enrolled at the time of spring NRIA Approved Reading Assessment;
 - who exited an IRIP during the school year by meeting the NRIA Approved Reading Assessment thresholds in the winter and/or spring assessment period.

This year's data reflects the July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025 reporting period. School building level data was collected regarding kindergarten through third grade students screened per the NRIA and students ages three to 21 who were evaluated (tested) for a specific learning disability (SLD) in reading, since the law requires such reporting.

Key Findings

Key findings from the second reporting cycle highlight improved accuracy and reliability in NRIA data. During the 2024-2025 school year, 24,869 K-3 students were identified as needing additional reading support through an IRIP at some point during the school year, while 67,078 students met or exceeded the spring proficiency threshold. Among those receiving support, many demonstrated measurable growth. Growth was evident across all grades, highlighting that students continue to make meaningful progress even if they have not yet reached grade-level benchmarks. Data was reported for students who exited their IRIPs by reaching benchmarks during the winter and/or spring window. Kindergarten had the highest number of IRIP exits, reinforcing the importance of early identification and support. Students in every grade level successfully exited IRIPs, demonstrating that the NRIA process is helping support reading improvement. Enhanced data validation methods also contributed to greater reporting accuracy compared to last year.

¹The word "tested" is used in the state statute; however, in terms of determining eligibility for special education, students are evaluated using multidisciplinary tools and not tested.

Nebraska Reading Improvement Act Data Results

| Statewide Data | | | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|---|--|---|
| The number of students identified as having a reading deficiency and placed on an IRIP (K-3) | | | | | Total Number of Students: 24,869 | |
| | Number of students who met or exceed the spring threshold and do not require an IRIP | Number of students assessed in the spring | Number of students who did not receive the spring assessment | Total enrollment at the time of spring assessment | Number of students that made growth on the NRIA ² | Number of students who exited an IRIP during the 24-25 school year by meeting the NRIA threshold in the winter and/or spring assessment period ³ |
| Kindergarten | 16,580 | 20,645 | 983 | 21,628 | 5,985 | 3,759 |
| First | 16,556 | 21,517 | 926 | 22,443 | 5,160 | 2,411 |
| Second | 16,703 | 22,567 | 670 | 23,237 | 5,888 | 2,233 |
| Third | 17,239 | 23,256 | 599 | 23,855 | 5,349 | 1,971 |
| TOTAL | 67,078 | 87,985 | 3,178 | 91,163 | 22,382 | 10,374 |

² Note: Applied only to students who had been placed on an IRIP at any point during the 24-25 SY.

³ Note: Did not count students who exited and were placed back on an IRIP during the 24-25 SY.

Nebraska Reading Improvement Act Data Interpretation and Discussion

Similar to the 2023-2024 data, the 2024-2025 data collection provided insights but has revealed some limitations. Because student growth was measured across a variety of assessments with differing scales and scoring processes, the Approved Reading Assessments are not perfectly comparable. As a result, growth data should be interpreted with caution. With ongoing efforts to narrow the list of Approved Reading Assessments, we anticipate being able to provide greater clarity and consistency around measuring growth in the coming years. This shift will allow teachers and administrators to better monitor significant gains, set school-level goals, and work toward reducing the number of students requiring an IRIP.

Under the NRIA, there are multiple student subgroups that are not required to be screened. [NRS 79-2603](#): *Each school district shall administer an approved reading assessment three times during the school year to all students in kindergarten through grade three, except for any student receiving specialized instruction for limited English proficiency who has been receiving such instruction for less than two years, any student receiving special education services for whom such assessment would conflict with the individualized education plan, and any student receiving services under a plan pursuant to the requirements of section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. 794, or Title II of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. 12131 to 12165, as such acts and sections existed on January 1, 2021, for whom such assessment would conflict with such section 504 or Title II plan."* Although not required, many districts continue to screen all students.

For 2025–2026, NDE approved eight reading assessments but is working to reduce the list so results are more consistent across districts for upcoming years. When the NRIA first passed in 2018, flexibility was prioritized, but inconsistent reporting and student mobility have since created confusion. To address this, NDE began reviewing current K–3 Approved Reading Assessments and, with support from the National Center on Intensive Intervention, narrowed the list to six Approved Reading Assessments.

NDE is engaging with the [Buros Center for Testing](#) to review available information and technical documentation for the six Approved Reading Assessments, as well as conducting a qualitative study of best practices surrounding IRIPs. This work reflects NDE's deep commitment to ensuring that early reading screening and intervention in Nebraska is both rigorous and meaningful. By carefully reviewing evidence, engaging experts, and prioritizing consistency across districts, we are laying the foundation for more accurate identification of student needs and stronger support for families and educators. The process has required significant time, collaboration, and persistence, but it positions Nebraska to move forward with screening tools that are reliable, comparable, and aligned to the purpose of the NRIA.

Below is a chart of the Approved Reading Assessments used in Nebraska, by grade level. Some districts appear to be counted more than once because they use multiple Approved Reading Assessments across grade levels. During the 2025-2026 school year, one per grade level must be used.

Assessments with an asterisk indicate that it will not be used for NRIA purposes during the 2025-2026 school year.

| Assessment Name | Kindergarten | First | Second | Third |
|--|---------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| Amplify mClass DIBELS 8th | 68 | 67 | 67 | 63 |
| Acadience Reading | 58 | 58 | 58 | 57 |
| FastBridge Suite | 37 | 37 | 35 | 32 |
| MAP Suite (MAP Growth & MAP Reading Fluency) | 32 | 33 | 34 | 29 |
| NSCAS Growth | 0 | 0 | 1 | 12 |
| AimswestPlus | 28 | 27 | 27 | 27 |
| Star Suite | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| Amira | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| i-Ready | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Istation Reading Formative Assessment* | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| DRA 3 ⁴ | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| MAP Growth ⁵ | 8 | 10 | 10 | 15 |
| MAP Reading Fluency ⁶ | 3 | 3 | 2 | 0 |

⁴ The DRA 3 does not provide sufficient evidence of support, which is why it has been removed as an approved screening option for the Nebraska Reading Improvement Act (NRIA). However, it was an approved screener within the reporting timeframe.

⁵ For the 2024-2025 school year, districts using MAP for their Approved Assessment were required to implement the full MAP Suite (MAP Growth and MAP Reading Fluency) to fulfill the NRIA requirements. Some districts had not made that transition as required.

⁶ For the 2024-2025 school year, districts using MAP for their Approved Assessment were required to implement the full MAP Suite (MAP Growth and MAP Reading Fluency) to fulfill the NRIA requirements. Some districts had not made that transition as required. In third grade, MAP Growth/NSCAS Growth is an allowable Approved Assessment as a standalone.

Specific Learning Disability in Reading Data Results

| Statewide Data | |
|---|--|
| The number of students in each public school building tested for a specific learning disability (SLD) in the area of reading, including tests that identify characteristics of dyslexia, ages 3 to 21 | Total Number of Students: 10,733 |
| | The number of students determined eligible: 5,403 |
| | The number of students determined not eligible: 5,330 |

Specific Learning Disability in Reading: Data Interpretation and Discussion

The district-reported data on students evaluated for a SLD in reading underscores ongoing efforts to identify and support students who may exhibit reading disabilities, including characteristics of dyslexia. The 2024-2025 SLD in reading data may reflect improved precision in special education evaluation referrals based on student reading screener outcomes, proactive identification of students needing specially designed instruction in reading, enhanced early assessment of student literacy needs, and reduced misidentification due to non-disability factors (e.g., gaps in instruction). Varying interpretations of the statutory language, a potentially higher number of students with SLDs in reading being due for reevaluation this reporting year, increased familiarity with reporting requirements, and other local district practices could also have influenced the 2024-2025 data.

The limitations in collecting and reporting SLD in reading data, as identified during the first reporting cycle, persisted into the 2024-2025 period. These challenges include the requirement to collect data on evaluating students for SLDs in reading not fully aligning with the disability determination process outlined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Nebraska Rule 51. Additional complexities arise from diverse support options for students with characteristics of dyslexia, such as IRIPs in grades K-3, Section 504 plans for accommodations, or Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Further, students with characteristics of dyslexia may be identified under alternative disability categories like Developmental Delay or Speech-Language Impairment, while overlaps with other learning disabilities can make isolating dyslexia within the broader SLD category a challenge. The wider age range of SLD evaluation data, compared to the K-3 focus of the NRIA data, also hinders direct comparisons. Of importance, the reported SLD values represent only students who were initially or reevaluated during this reporting cycle, not the total population of students currently identified with an SLD in reading statewide. Thus, the data provides a snapshot of new or renewed identifications rather than the overall prevalence of SLDs in reading in Nebraska.

Recent outcomes from the Nebraska Student-Centered Assessment System (NSCAS) English Language Arts (ELA) assessment for fourth-grade students offer valuable insights into statewide reading proficiency trends and offer a

broader indicator of student literacy progress to complement the 2024-2025 SLD in reading results in this data collection.

| Disability Category | Percent Proficient NSCAS ELA 2022 | Percent Proficient NSCAS ELA 2023 | Percent Proficient NSCAS ELA 2024 |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Specific Learning Disability | 12% | 13.30% | 14.50% |
| Other Health Impairment | 25% | 24.68% | 28.89% |
| Emotional Disturbance | 27% | 27.92% | 32.37% |
| Autism | 28% | 31.73% | 36.27% |
| Intellectual Disability | 42% | 37.50% | 38.94% |
| Speech Language Impairment | 43% | 42.20% | 53.27% |
| No Disability | 57.79% | 61.68% | 66.0% |

NSCAS ELA proficiency rates for fourth-grade students with a SLD in any area have shown small but modest gains over the past three years, increasing from 12% in 2022 to 13.30% in 2023 and reaching 14.50% in 2024. This upward trajectory indicates that Nebraska districts are making strides in supporting students with SLDs through specialized instruction, early screening under the NRIA, and inclusive literacy initiatives.

While the number of students identified with a SLD in reading is a useful data point, it does not fully capture how effectively a district is supporting literacy development for all students. Identification rates reflect only those students who meet the criteria for special education services under SLD and do not encompass the broader range of interventions and supports that districts provide before, during, and beyond the evaluation process.

A district with a comparatively lower percentage of students identified under SLD in reading may, in fact, be implementing strong multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) and evidence-based literacy practices that reduce the need for special education referrals. Conversely, higher identification rates do not necessarily indicate weaker instruction; they may instead reflect more rigorous screening procedures, a heightened focus on early identification, or shifts in local practices to better capture students with characteristics of dyslexia.

Additionally, student outcomes in literacy are influenced by multiple factors that extend beyond the act of identification, including the quality of core instruction, the availability of targeted interventions, teacher expertise in structured literacy, and the fidelity of implementation of individualized supports. For this reason, examining overall identification numbers in isolation risks misrepresenting district efforts and outcomes.

A more accurate measure of how well districts are supporting students with or at risk for reading difficulties includes reviewing progress-monitoring data, growth in reading proficiency, access to high-quality interventions, and long-term outcomes such as grade-level reading achievement. By triangulating identification data with these broader indicators of instructional quality and student performance, a clearer picture emerges of whether districts are effectively fostering literacy success for all students, including those with disabilities.

Conclusion

Nebraska educators continue to demonstrate strong commitment to early literacy by identifying and supporting students with reading difficulties, including those exhibiting characteristics of dyslexia. The 2024-2025 reporting period shows meaningful progress: 22,382 K-3 students on an IRIP demonstrated growth, and 10,374 students successfully exited their IRIPs after meeting benchmarks during the school year.

The comprehensive analysis of the literacy data collection highlights critical areas for continued focus and improvement in our educational system. The data underscores the importance of early intervention, consistent assessment, improved data quality and collection, and targeted support to ensure that all students, regardless of background or ability, achieve literacy proficiency.

Early Intervention

Early intervention is crucial in supporting students with reading difficulties, especially those students who exhibit characteristics of dyslexia for several reasons. Dyslexia primarily affects reading, writing, and spelling. By identifying and addressing these challenges early, students can receive targeted instruction that helps them develop foundational literacy skills before they fall behind their peers. Without early support, the gap between dyslexic students and their peers can widen, making it harder to catch up later. The use of appropriate Approved Reading Assessments is a core component of the NRIA. The data collected will assist the NDE in identifying districts who are experiencing higher percentages of students on an IRIP and target supports both individually to districts and through a regional approach.

Consistent Assessment

For the 2025-2026 school year, NDE approved eight reading assessments but is working towards selecting a smaller number of reading assessments for NRIA purposes. In collaboration with the Buros Center for Testing to evaluate these assessments and IRIP practices, NDE is committed to developing reliable, comparable screening tools that better identify student needs and support educators and families. Consistent assessment is equally critical for timely, individualized support for students struggling with reading, particularly those exhibiting dyslexia characteristics, ensuring they reach their full potential in and beyond the classroom. This data will also enable NDE to establish enhanced guidance for evaluating students exhibiting reading difficulties, including characteristics of dyslexia, under the IDEA and Nebraska Rule 51.

Improved Data Quality and Collection

For the reporting cycle, districts were required to submit building-level data. In turn, the NDE has generated state, district, and building-level data (see the appendix section).

The NDE clarified the reporting criteria for SLD in reading to ensure greater clarity and consistency across districts. Clear language was added to the FAQ to specify that districts must report the total number of students evaluated (both initial and reevaluations), addressing questions many districts have about which students should be included in this collection.

We also enhanced data on student progress on an IRIP by collecting information on the number of students meeting Approved Reading Assessment thresholds. This was accomplished by requesting both fall and spring numbers for all kindergarten through third grade students. In addition, NDE gathered data on the number of students who were placed on an IRIP and, by winter and/or spring, had exited and no longer required an IRIP or additional reading support.

To further strengthen data quality and accuracy in the future, the NDE recommends continued refinement of the data collection tool, potential legislative updates, and integrating to schools' student information systems so

data can be at a student level and automatically reported.

Targeted Support

Coupled with this data reporting, the NDE has developed and continues to implement a professional learning system as required in Nebraska Revised Statute §79-2607, to provide sustained professional learning and training regarding evidence-based reading instruction for teachers who teach children from four years of age through third grade at an approved or accredited school and teachers employed by an early childhood education program approved by the State Board of Education (SBOE). The professional learning system also includes information and tips for teachers related to helping children and families work with local family literacy centers. The NDE, as part of the professional learning system, is also working with educational service units (ESUs) to provide regional coaches to approved or accredited elementary schools to provide assistance and job-embedded training relating to evidence-based reading instruction to teachers who teach students in kindergarten through third grade. At the date of this report, thirteen out of seventeen ESUs have a Regional Literacy Coach (RLC) in place to help support this work. The targeted professional learning of educators who teach children from four years of age through third grade will ensure students receive evidence-based reading instruction to effectively instruct students in reading.

The legislation requires RLCs to provide job-embedded training and support for evidence-based reading instruction. RLCs play a vital role in supporting evidence-based literacy instruction in numerous ways. The Department will work with ESUs to ensure that the literacy coaches are experts in evidence-based instructional strategies and practices. They will continue to provide teachers with the knowledge and tools needed to implement these approaches effectively in their classrooms. Their expertise will ensure that instructional methods align with the latest research on literacy development, particularly for students with reading difficulties like dyslexia. The literacy coaches offer ongoing professional development to district leaders and teachers, helping them stay current with new literacy research, instructional strategies, and interventions. This continuous learning process will enable teachers to refine their practice, ensuring they are equipped to meet their students' diverse literacy needs. Even when teachers are trained in evidence-based literacy practices, implementing these strategies can be challenging. The literacy coaches will provide hands-on support, modeling of instructional techniques, and offer feedback. This on-the-ground assistance will help teachers translate theory into effective classroom practice.

The RLCs are helping to create consistency in literacy instruction across schools and districts. By working with multiple schools within a region, they will ensure that evidence-based practices are implemented uniformly, reducing disparities in the quality of literacy instruction that students receive. They will also help coach educators in how to use data from student assessments to inform instruction. By analyzing assessment results together, coaches and teachers can identify students' specific needs and adjust instruction accordingly, ensuring that it is both targeted and effective. Literacy coaches will facilitate teachers' ability to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students, including English learners, students with disabilities, and those with reading difficulties like characteristics of dyslexia. They will provide strategies for reaching these diverse learners, ensuring that every student has access to effective literacy instruction. The NDE, in partnership with ESUs, have and will continue to build out a RLC model in the Nebraska Literacy Project as this, along with the professional learning, is essential for bridging the gap between research and practice, ensuring that evidence-based literacy instruction is consistently and effectively implemented across schools and districts.

Moving forward, policymakers, educators, and stakeholders must collaborate to address the gaps identified in this report. By refining data collection processes, enhancing instructional strategies, and providing adequate resources, we can better support our students and advance literacy outcomes across the state. The recommendations outlined in this report provide a pathway to achieving these goals, fostering an equitable and effective educational environment for every learner.

Appendix A- District Level Data Per District

https://www.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Reading_District_V5.pdf

Appendix B- School Building Level Data Per District

https://www.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Reading_School_V5.pdf

Appendix C-Communicating NRS 79-11.157.01 to Stakeholders

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1IEHplJ90Oj88wCCyKF_2-eQUtTZ2-yHNs0IZdReHDIe/edit?usp=sharing