



The CSDE-Approved Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire



CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Revised January 2026

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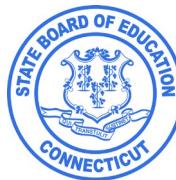
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STATE OF CONNECTICUT

Department of Education



TO: Superintendents and Charter School Directors

FROM: Dr. Charles E. Hewes, Deputy Commissioner for Academics and Innovation
Sinthia Sone-Moyano, Deputy Commissioner for Educational Supports and Wellness
Ajit Gopalakrishnan, Chief Performance Officer

DATE: December 2025

SUBJECT: The Connecticut State Department of Education Approved Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire

Pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) Section (Sec.) 10-14ee, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has approved the abbreviated Adult Reading History Questionnaire (ARHQ-brief) as the required voluntary family reading history questionnaire to assist districts in the identification of students in grades kindergarten through third (K-3) who are at risk for reading proficiency challenges.

The ARHQ-brief is derived from the original 23-item Adult Reading History Questionnaire (ARHQ), developed as a dyslexia screener for adults and published by the International Dyslexia Association. The CSDE selected the ARHQ-brief based on preliminary research that demonstrates its reliability, validity, and accuracy. The brief format balances strong predictive value with ease of administration, making it a practical and effective tool for supporting early identification and intervention.

Parental History of Reading Difficulty

There is strong scientific evidence that reading difficulties, including dyslexia, often run in families. Research shows that children with a parent who has dyslexia are much more likely to face similar challenges—some studies estimate this risk to be between 25 and 50 percent, while more recent research suggests it could be as high as 70 percent. Having a family history of reading difficulties is one of the strongest predictors of whether a young child will struggle with reading, even more so than some direct reading assessments (Lesnick, Feng, Quirion, Hart, & Hoeft, 2022; Erbeli, Rice, & Paracchini, 2021).

Dyslexia, one common reading difficulty, involves problems with accurate and fluent word reading. Early and effective intervention can, however, greatly reduce or even prevent these challenges. Early screening is an important way to make sure students get the support they need. When schools know a child has a family history of reading difficulties, that information—along with results from approved K-3 literacy universal screening assessments—can help them decide which students should be provided with support. It is important to note that the Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire is just a screening tool that should be used in combination with other screening tools to identify students who may require further diagnostic testing. The Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire does not provide a formal diagnosis or identify a reading disability.

Dissemination of the Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire

In accordance with C.G.S. Sec. 10-14ee, districts shall begin using the Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire to assist in the identification, in whole or in part, of students who are at risk of reading proficiency challenges. It is recommended that schools provide this short questionnaire to families of K-3 students either during the winter universal screening process or parent-teacher conferences. Information collected from the questionnaire can be triangulated with data from screenings and other sources to determine if further diagnostic testing is warranted. Beginning in the 2026-27 school year and beyond, schools shall give the Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire to families when they register kindergarteners or when new students join the district.

Filling out the questionnaire is completely voluntary for families. If families choose to complete it, it becomes part of the student's educational record and is protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The CSDE will not collect these data.

Questions regarding the Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire should be directed to associate education consultants Kristin Allen at Kristin.Allen@ct.gov, Candice LaConti at Candice.LaConti@ct.gov, or Caroline Messenger at Caroline.Messenger@ct.gov.

cc: Charlene M. Russell-Tucker, Commissioner of Education

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Dr. Shuana Tucker, Chief Talent Officer

Dr. Melissa K. Wlodarczyk Hickey, Director of the Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success

Enclosures: (3)

The Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire

This document is also available in [Spanish](#) and [Portuguese](#).

Name of child:

Questionnaire completed by:

Date of birth:

Relationship to student:

Child's grade:

Cell phone number:

School attending:

Email:

This reading history questionnaire applies to **you**, the biological parent, and **not** your child. Please select the button [●] next to or in between the number of the response that most closely describes your attitude or experience for each of the following questions or statements. The completed questionnaire will be kept confidential and becomes part of your child's school record. Your family's privacy is protected under the **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**.

1. How much difficulty did you have learning to read in elementary school?

None		A great deal		
0	1	2	3	4

2. Did you ever reverse the order of letters or numbers when you were a child?

No		A great deal		
0	1	2	3	4

3. Did you have difficulty learning letter and/or color names when you were a child?

No		A great deal		
0	1	2	3	4

4. All students struggle from time to time in school. In comparison to others in your class, how much did you struggle to complete your work?

Not at all	Less than most	About the same	More than most	Much more than most
0	1	2	3	4

5. Did you experience difficulty in high school or college classes?

No; enjoyed and did well		Some		A great deal; did poorly	
0	1	2	3	4	

6. How would you compare your current spelling to that of others of the same age and education?

Above average		Average		Below average	
0	1	2	3	4	

Sample Letter for Families

Below is a sample letter that can be used to inform families about the Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire. This letter may be customized to fit the needs of your school or district.

This document is also available in [Spanish](#) and [Portuguese](#).

(School Letterhead)

(Date)

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Learning to read is one of the most important steps in a student's education. It opens the door to all other learning — helping students to grow their knowledge, think critically, and fully engage in school and life.

Dyslexia is a reading challenge that makes it hard to read words accurately and fluently. One of the strongest predictors of a student's risk of a reading disability is a family history of reading struggles. If a student's biological parent(s) had difficulty learning to read, the student may also face similar challenges. The good news is with early support and proven teaching strategies, many barriers to learning to read can be reduced—or even prevented. Not every student with a family history of reading difficulties will struggle, but knowing more about a student's background assists us in providing the right support at the right time.

To help us better understand your student's needs, we invite you to complete the **Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire** that asks about the reading experiences of your student's biological parent(s). This questionnaire does **not** diagnose dyslexia or any reading issue on its own. Instead, it gives us helpful background information that, along with results from a state-approved literacy universal screening assessment, can guide how we support your student's reading development.

Please complete and return the attached **Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire** to your student's classroom teacher by **[INSERT DATE]**. The completed questionnaire will be kept confidential and become part of your student's school record. Your family's privacy is protected under the **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**.

If you have any questions about the Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire, please contact **[INSERT CONTACT]**. For questions about your student's reading progress, please reach out to their classroom teacher.

Together, we can ensure every student has the support they need to become a confident, successful reader.

Sincerely,
(Administrator)

Attachment: (1)

This resource supports districts in responding to each question on the Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire. For each question, there is relevant background information, research, and family-friendly language provided that can be shared with families to build understanding and support communication.

Additionally, districts can use this document to build staff understanding of the purpose behind each question and to prepare clear, supportive messaging for families. Sharing the “why” behind each question may encourage parent engagement and support early identification and intervention for students who may be at risk for reading difficulties such as dyslexia.

1. How much difficulty did you have learning to read in elementary school?

- **Background**

Evidence indicates that dyslexia is genetic and runs in families. Thirty-four to 54 percent of children with a family history of dyslexia present with the reading disorder. Understanding a parent’s experience with learning to read can help identify a student at risk for dyslexia so that early and effective intervention can be administered.

- **Family-Friendly Language**

If parents have dyslexia, then their children could too. Research shows that strong, early support can give students tools to read and write well.

- **Research**

Lasnick, O., Feng, J., Quirion, A., Hart, S., Hoeft, F. The importance of family history in dyslexia. *Reading League Journal*. 2022 May-Jun; 3(2): 35-42.

Neuropsychologist Jack Fletcher from the National Center on Improving Literacy has created this video: <https://www.improvingliteracy.org/resource/why-early-intervention-matters-for-kids-with-dyslexia>

2. Did you ever reverse the order of letters or numbers when you were a child?

- **Background**

Poor readers don’t have a clear recognition of the logic of a given letter sequence because of their limited awareness of the phonemes in spoken words (e.g., poor phonemic awareness). They do not have a well-established memory for those letter sequences. As a result, they often read and spell words in which letters are not in the right order. It is not based upon a visual memory deficit. Rather, it is due to the fact that the written sequence of letters and the spoken sequence of phonemes have not been associated with one another in long-term memory to form an accurate memory of that letter sequence (Kilpatrick, p. 118).

Orthographic mapping is the mental process that allows us to connect the sounds (phonemes) in spoken words to their corresponding letter patterns (graphemes) in written language. It is critical for building a sight word vocabulary and reading fluently.

In dyslexia, orthographic mapping is often inefficient or impaired, making it hard for individuals to:

- » Accurately store word spellings in memory;
- » Recognize familiar letter patterns; or
- » Develop automaticity in reading and spelling.

Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire Question-by-Question Guide: Background, Research, and Family Communication

- **Family-Friendly Language**

When children memorize how to spell words, they may skip some letters or write them in a different order. It is better if they can match the sounds of the word to its letters. Students with dyslexia can have a hard time hearing these sounds and breaking them down. But this can be learned with instruction that is based on research.

- **Research**

Ehri, L. C. (2005). Learning to read words: Theory, findings, and issues. *Scientific Studies of Reading, 9*(2), 167–188. https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532799xssr0902_4

Kilpatrick, D. A. (2015). *Essentials of Assessing, Preventing, and Overcoming Reading Difficulties*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Scarborough, H. S. (2001). Connecting early language and literacy to later reading (dis)abilities: Evidence, theory, and practice. In S. B. Neuman & D. K. Dickinson (Eds.), *Handbook of early literacy research* (Vol. 1, pp. 97–110). Guilford Press.

Shaywitz, S. E. (2003). *Overcoming dyslexia: A new and complete science-based program for reading problems at any level*. Alfred A. Knopf.

3. Did you have difficulty learning letter names and/or color names when you were a child?

- **Background**

Difficulties in learning symbolic labels—like letter names and color names—are early indicators of problems with language processing and memory, which are common in individuals with dyslexia. Additionally, naming letters and colors quickly and accurately is a type of rapid automatized naming (RAN) task. RAN is strongly linked with reading fluency, which is a challenge for individuals with dyslexia.

- **Family-Friendly Language**

There are two reasons why this question is important. First, knowing letter names is an important skill for learning to read. Research shows that when young children find it hard to learn letter names, they may find it hard to learn to read. Second, students with dyslexia can find it hard to name letters and colors quickly and correctly. This means that it may be hard for them to read like they are speaking. The good news is that early support can help.

- **Research**

Scarborough, H. S. (1998). Predicting the future achievement of second graders with reading disabilities: Contributions of phonemic awareness, verbal memory, rapid naming, and IQ. *Annals of Dyslexia, 48*, 115–136. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11881-998-0006-5>

Wagner, R. K., Torgesen, C. A., & Rashotte, J. K. (1994). Development of reading-related phonological processing abilities: New evidence of bidirectional causality from a latent variable longitudinal study. *Developmental Psychology, 30*(1), 73–87. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.30.1.73>

Wolf, M., Gotlieb, R. J. M., Kim, S. A., et al. (2024). Towards a dynamic, comprehensive conceptualization of dyslexia. *Annals of Dyslexia, 74*, 303–324. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11881-023-00297-1>

4. All students struggle from time to time in school. Compared to others in your class, how much did you struggle to complete your work?

- **Background**

This question helps identify relative academic difficulties that might signal underlying learning challenges, including dyslexia, within the family.

- **Family-Friendly Language**

All students find school hard at times. Children with dyslexia can find reading and writing harder than their classmates. Planning, paying attention, and doing homework can also be hard for children with dyslexia. School could have been hard for family members who did not know they had dyslexia. Early support can give your child the tools they need to do well in school.

- **Research**

Lyon, G. R., Fletcher, J. M., & Shaywitz, S. E. (2001). Learning disabilities: From identification to intervention. *Educational Researcher*, 30(1), 3–7. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X030001003>

Miciak, J., Vaughn, S., Francis, D. J., & Fletcher, J. M. (2018). Predicting reading difficulties using family history and early academic struggles. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 51(6), 613–627. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022219417718201>

Pennington, B. F., & Olson, R. K. (2005). Genetics of dyslexia. *Developmental Neuropsychology*, 27(1), 35–64. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15326942dn2701_3

Smith-Spark, J. H., & Fisk, H. C. (2009). Executive function and working memory in adults with developmental dyslexia. *Dyslexia*, 15(4), 304–322. <https://doi.org/10.1002/dys.384>

5. Did you experience difficulty in high school or college English classes?

- **Background**

Dyslexia is hereditary and can run in families. While a parent may not have been identified as dyslexic, their experiences later on in life could be important to understanding and identifying their child's difficulties.

- **Family-Friendly Language**

This question wants to know if you had trouble with reading or reading activities in high school or college. Did you find it hard when you had to read and talk about what you were reading? It will help us to help your child if we know how you felt about reading when you were in school. Early support means that your child could have more positive feelings about reading.

- **Research**

Rastegari, I. & Shafer, L. (2016). *Fixing the Failure Model: Research indicates that children at risk for dyslexia can be identified before they begin school*. Harvard Graduate School of Education. Retrieved from <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/ideas/usable-knowledge/16/06/fixing-failure-model>

6. How would you compare your current spelling to that of others of the same age and education?

• **Background**

Orthographic mapping can be supported through phonics instruction in both reading and spelling, but spelling is generally the more challenging skill. While reading involves recognizing letters and connecting their associated sounds, spelling requires producing the correct sequence of letters from memory. Some parents may not have learned to link phonemes (sounds) with graphemes (letters), a connection crucial for storing words in long-term memory. Some may have difficulty with phonemic awareness itself – a core issue often seen in individuals with dyslexia. As a result, it is not uncommon for someone to be able to read words they cannot spell. When discussing this topic, it is important to pay attention to how parents respond, as reported struggles with spelling may point to underlying dyslexia.

• **Family-Friendly Language**

This question is asking how well you spell words. We would like to know how you feel about your own spelling. It asks if your spelling ability is like others who are the same age as you and have the same schooling. It is important to know this because difficulty with spelling is an important sign of dyslexia.

• **Research**

Ehri, L. C. (2024). Clarifying the role of orthographic mapping in sight word reading. *Reading League Journal*, 5(1), 4–13.

Galuschka, K., Görgen, R., Kalmar, J., Haberstroh, S., Schmalz, X., & Schulte-Körne, G. (2020). Effectiveness of spelling interventions for learners with dyslexia: A meta-analysis and systematic review. *Educational Psychologist*, 55(1), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2019.1659794>

Moats, L. (2019). Teaching spelling: An opportunity to unveil the logic of language. *Perspectives on Language and Literacy*, 45(3), 17–20.

Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire: Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why are districts required to disseminate the CSDE-Approved Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire?

A: Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.), Section (Sec.) 10-14ee states that the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) shall develop or approve a voluntary family history questionnaire to assist in the identification of students who are at risk of reading proficiency challenges. This questionnaire is to be distributed by districts each school year to families with kindergarten through third grade (K-3) students.

According to research done by Scarborough (1989b) and Shaywitz & Shaywitz (2005), between 25-50 percent of children born to a parent with dyslexia will also have dyslexia. More recently, this genetic link was estimated to be closer to 70 percent (Erbeli, et al., 2021). Thus, obtaining information about students' family history has proven to be a significant predictor of reading outcomes for young children aged 4-8, beyond reading-related measures (Feng, Hancock & Hoeft, 2022, p. 429). This finding has been replicated in multiple studies (e.g., Pennington & Lefly, 2001; Thompson et al., 2015; Wagner et al., 2019; Elbro, Borstrom, & Petersen, 1998; Lefly, 1996; Scarborough, 1989a).

Q: Why has the CSDE approved the ARHQ-brief as the Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire for use by districts?

A: The Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire is extracted from the original 23-item [Adult Reading History Questionnaire \(ARHQ\)](#). Preliminary research supports the reliability, validity, and accuracy of the measure.

Q: Do districts need to administer the Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire and the CT-approved universal screening reading assessments?

A: Yes. Districts shall administer the Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire and one of the CT-approved universal screening reading assessments. When used in conjunction, both measures can help identify students who are at risk for reading difficulties and require intervention and assist in identifying students at risk for dyslexia or other reading-related learning disabilities.

Q: Are all districts required to distribute the Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire?

A: Yes. All districts shall distribute the ARHQ-brief as the legislated voluntary family reading history questionnaire in their district. Districts may choose to distribute this questionnaire to all families; however, the ARHQ and the ARHQ-brief have not been well-researched in nonalphabetic languages.

Q: When shall districts begin using the Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire?

A: Beginning in the 2025-26 school year, districts shall start administering the Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire. It is recommended that districts distribute it to families as part of the winter universal screening process for students in grades K-3 or to families during conferences. It is important to remember that the questionnaire is voluntary; families are not required to complete it if they choose not to.

Q: How shall the Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire be distributed each school year after 2025-26?

A: Beginning in the 2026-27 school year, and for each school year thereafter, it is recommended that the Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire be provided to families as part of the registration process for kindergarteners as well as for students new to the district or school who do not already have this information in their student file.

Q: Who completes the Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire? What if both biological parents are unable to complete the questionnaire? Can other caregivers complete it instead?

A: The Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire is intended to be completed by a student's biological parents. If one or both biological parents are unable to complete it, it may be completed by a caregiver who is well-acquainted with the history of the biological parent(s); however, it should be noted on the questionnaire that it was not completed by the biological parent.

Q: What if families choose not to complete the Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire?

A: Because the questionnaire is a voluntary measure for families, families are not required to complete it. However, districts are required to provide the questionnaire to families.

Q: How is the Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire administered?

A: Districts may decide which administration method is most conducive to serving the needs of their students and families: paper/pencil or electronic. Parents are not required to fill out the questionnaire at school. They can complete it independently and submit it to the district or school by the district's specified deadline.

Q: Who is responsible for scoring the Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire?

A: Districts must designate an individual or group of individuals who will be responsible for scoring the questionnaire. These individuals must familiarize themselves with the scoring procedures before scoring the questionnaires submitted by families.

Q: How is the Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire scored?

A: The questionnaire is scored by totaling the parent's points on the six items within the questionnaire and dividing by 24. This should yield a percentage score for that person. If both parents' scores are available, average the scores to compute the final percentage. The tool below explains scoring.

Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire Scoring Tool

One Biological Parent Completed the Questionnaire:

Calculate the percentage: Add numbers to calculate a total and divide by 24:

$$\underline{\quad} /24 = \underline{\quad} \%$$

Two Biological Parents Completed the Questionnaire:

Calculate the average percentage of both biological parents:

$$\underline{\quad} \% + \underline{\quad} \% /2 = \underline{\quad} \text{ Combined \%}$$

If >32%: The student has a family history of reading disability/dyslexia and is at increased risk.

Feng L, Hancock R, Watson C, Bogley R, Miller ZA, Gorno-Tempini ML, Briggs-Gowan MJ, Hoeft F. Development of an Abbreviated Adult Reading History Questionnaire (ARHQ-Brief) Using a Machine Learning Approach. J Learn Disabil. 2022 Sep-Oct;55(5):427-442.

Q: What do the Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire scores mean?

A: Scores greater than 32 percent indicate the student has a family history of reading disability/dyslexia and is at an increased risk. This information should be shared with the school/district data team to review in conjunction with the student's universal screening data and/or other relevant assessment data.

Q: What should be done with the results of the Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire?

A: After the questionnaire is distributed, collected, and scored, the results should be communicated to families and kept in the student's confidential record. If the results indicate that the student is at an increased risk for reading disability/dyslexia, this information should be shared with the school/district data team to review in conjunction with the student's universal screening data and/or other relevant assessment data.

Q: Should a Referral to Determine Eligibility for Special Education and Related Services be completed if the outcome of the Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire indicates risk for a reading proficiency challenge?

A: Districts have an obligation through Child Find, a mandate under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), to identify, locate, and evaluate students ages birth through 21 who may need special education and related services. When a district suspects a student has a disability that is adversely affecting their educational performance, the school district should promptly refer them for evaluation of a suspected disability. The results of the Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire should be used in conjunction with other relevant information and data to inform decisions regarding referrals for special education.

Q: Are districts required to report the Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire data to the CSDE?

A: No. The CSDE will not collect data from the questionnaire. Furthermore, the information derived from the questionnaire is protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

Q: May districts modify the Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire?

A: No. The CSDE has approved this questionnaire in its original form. Modifying it would have an impact on its validity and reliability, which would in turn influence the inferences that can be made based upon results.

Q: Is there an electronic version of the Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire?

A: No. Districts are welcome to upload the questionnaire into a digital communication platform of their choice.

Q: Is the Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire available in languages other than English?

A: Yes. The questionnaire is available in Spanish and Portuguese.

Q: Who are the CSDE points of contact regarding the Voluntary Family Reading History Questionnaire?

A: Questions about the questionnaire should be directed to the following contacts at CSDE:

Kristin Allen
Associate Education Consultant
Office of Dyslexia and Reading Disabilities
860-713-6826
Kristin.Allen@ct.gov

Candice LaConti
Associate Education Consultant
Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success
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