

# **LITERACY SPOTLIGHT: UNDERSTANDING READING DIFFICULTIES**

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JUNE 16, 2025

# AGENDA & MEETING PURPOSE

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- ❖ Connect with trustees from across the state
- ❖ Learn about the latest research on dyslexia
- ❖ Understand new policies for screening for reading difficulty
- ❖ Receive state legislation and budget update

# ACCBE KEY GOALS

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**Advocate & Amplify:** ACCBE is solely dedicated to develop and advocate on legislative and policy issues for county boards of education, ensuring a unified and strong voice representing the unique interest of County Boards on issues impacting County Offices of Education.



**Partnerships for Success:** ACCBE is committed to building a strong partnership with the California Superintendent's Association, and coalitions with other allied groups to leverage resources and expertise in support of student success.



**Engage, Elevate, & Empower:** ACCBE builds leadership capacity within County Boards, fostering collaboration and peer support.



**Forward-Looking:** ACCBE focuses on innovation solutions to address the evolving challenges/changes in education.

# ICEBREAKER - RESEARCH AND CURRENT EVENTS

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1. Name and County, Years of Services
2. Respond to the question below in the chat or off mute:
  - ❖ **What was the common practice for teaching reading when you were younger? How did you learn to read?**

# SPEAKERS

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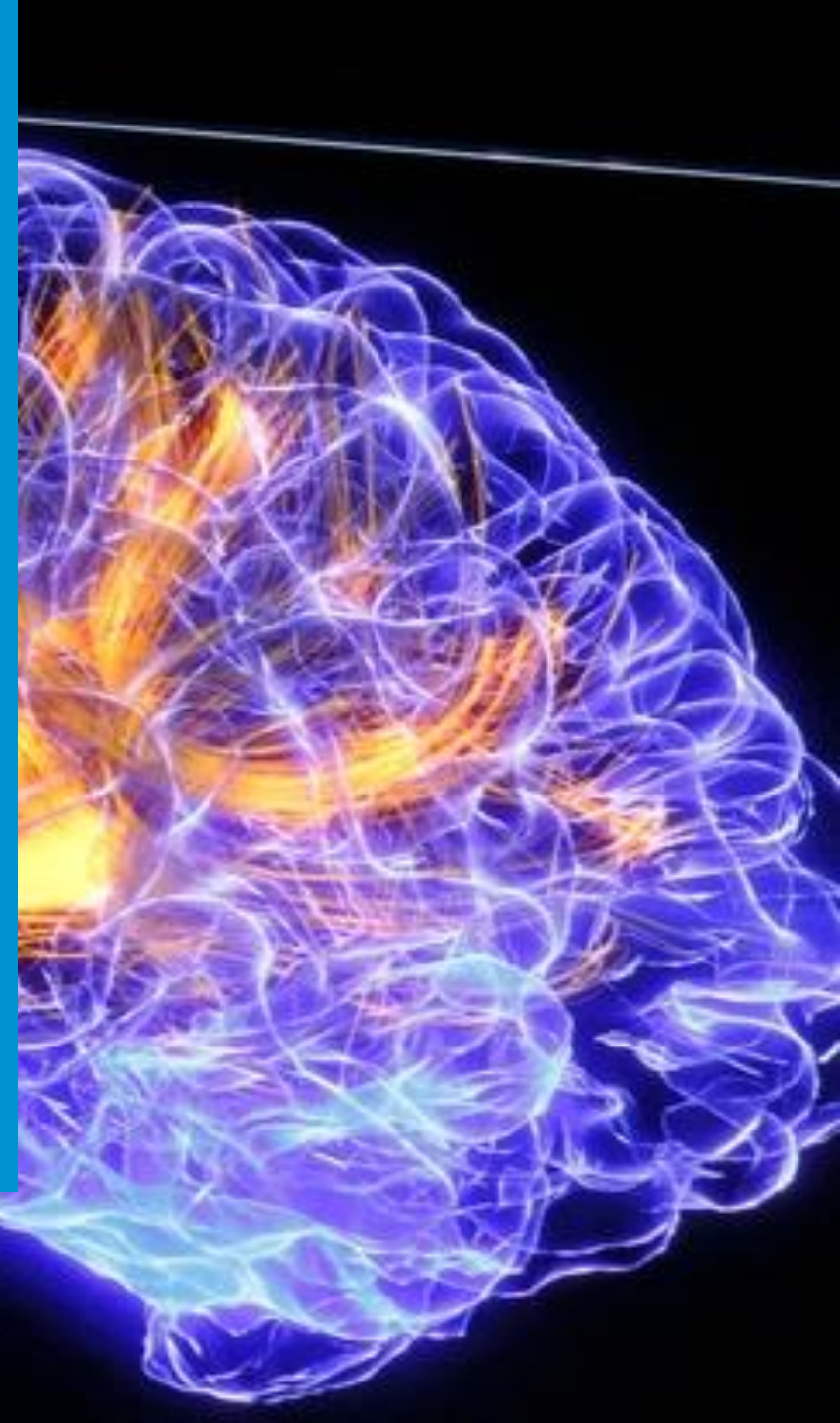
**Dr. Maria Luisa Gorno Tempini**  
**University of California San Francisco**  
**Director, UCSF Dyslexia Center**



# Translational Neuroscience: Understanding Reading Difficulties

Maria Luisa GornoTempini, MD, PhD

Charles Schwab Distinguished Professor in Dyslexia and Neurodevelopment  
UCSF School of Medicine



# UCSF Neuroscience for Impact: Multidisciplinary and Collaborative

## BASIC RESEARCH



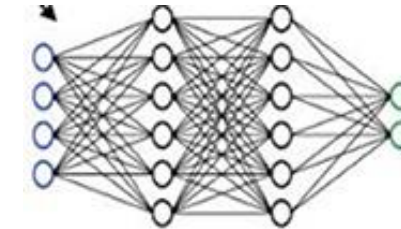
## CLINICAL CARE



## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



## TECHNOLOGY



## POLICY/JUSTICE



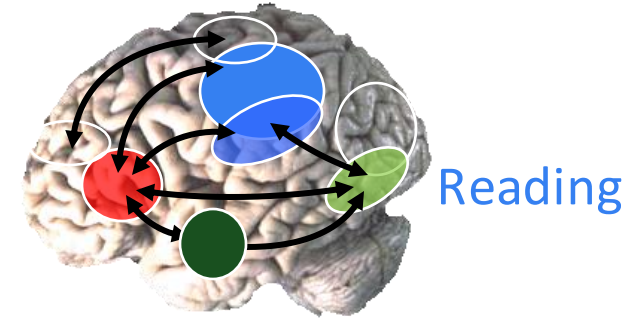
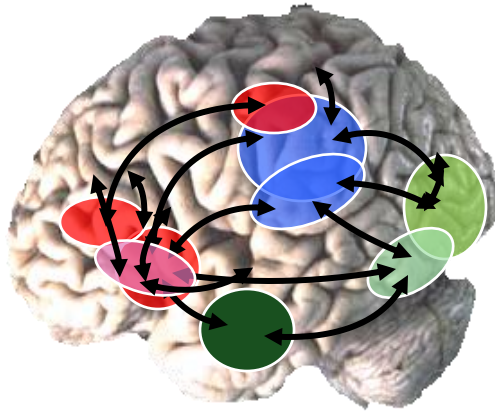
Neurology, psychiatry, psychology, basic neuroscience, education, engineering, policy



# Different aspect of Behavior depend on Brain Networks: Specialization depends on early exposure to “data”

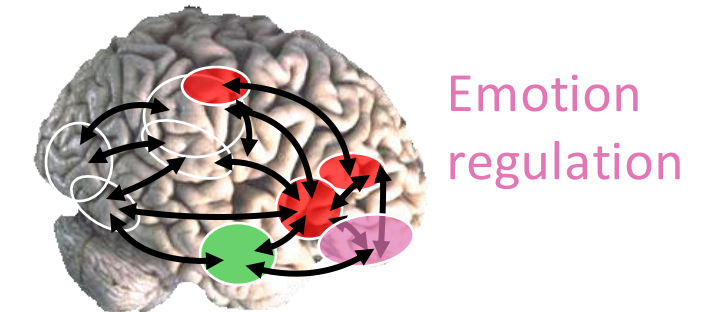
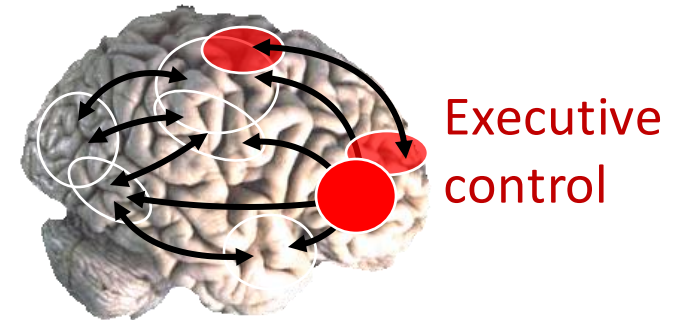
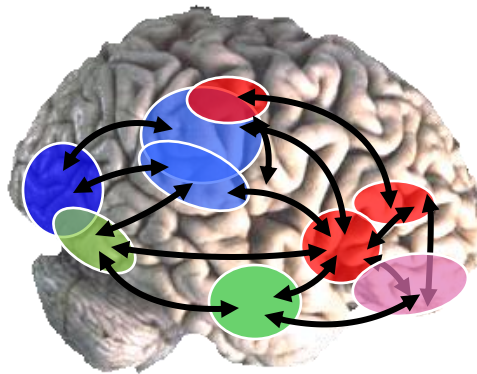
## Left hemisphere: Language

Phonology/orthography  
Verbal Executive/attention  
Visual words  
Vocabulary  
Arithmetic facts



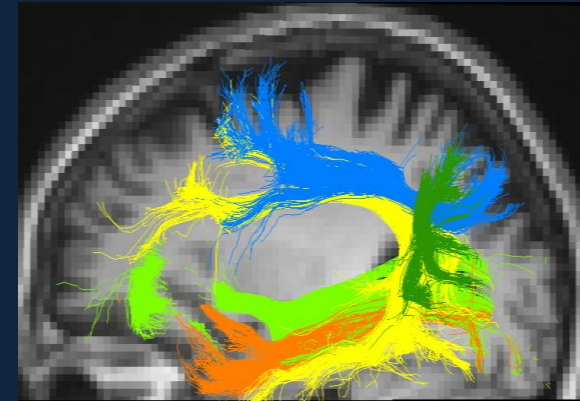
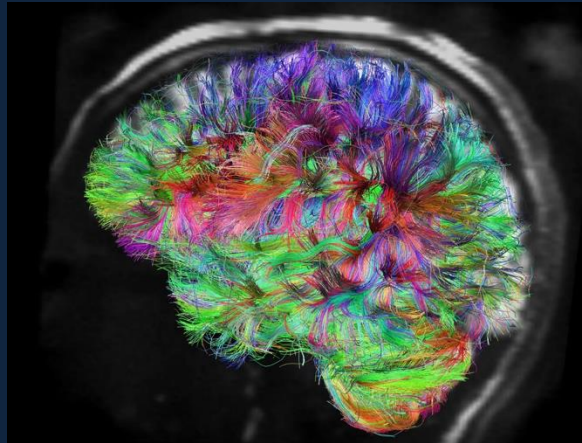
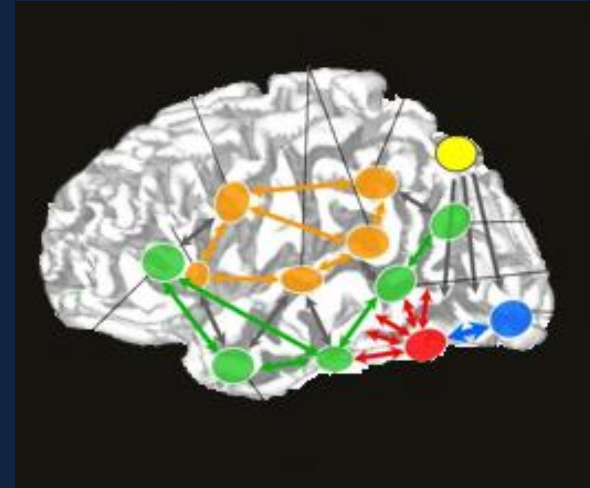
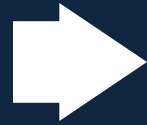
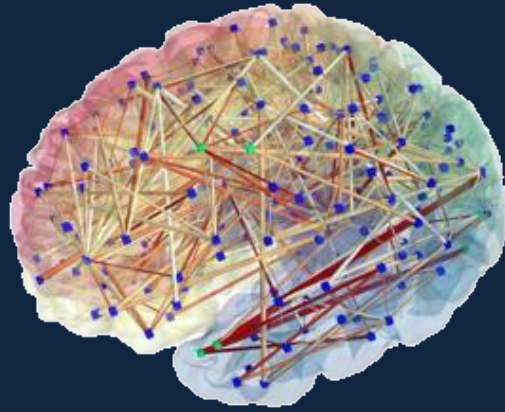
## Right hemisphere:

Visuo-spatial  
Visual Executive/attention  
Socio-emotional  
Visual math





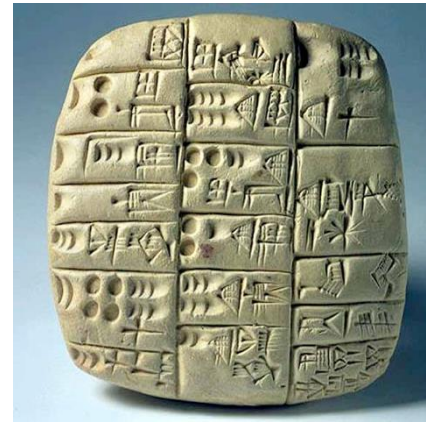
# Neural Network Development: Dynamic Specialization influenced by environment with critical periods



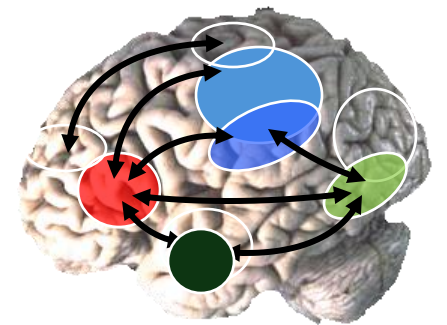
# Language first domain studied by Behavioral Neuroscience

## Written Language is Complicated

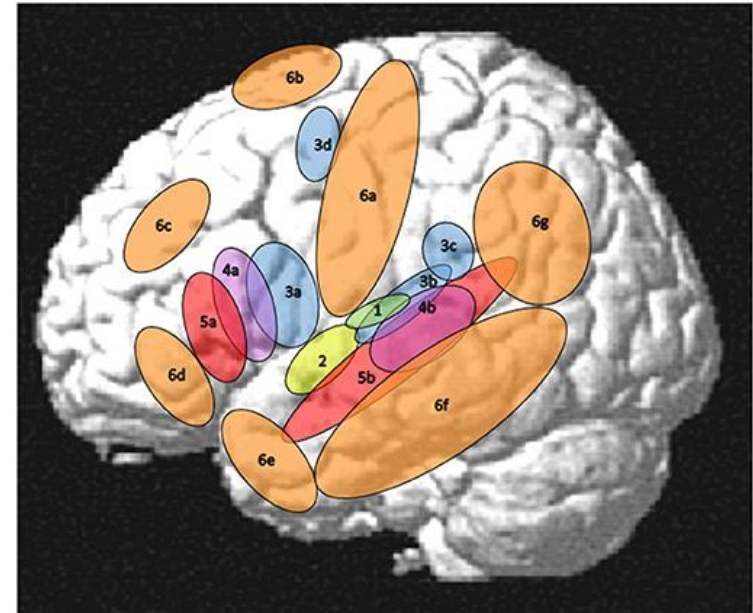
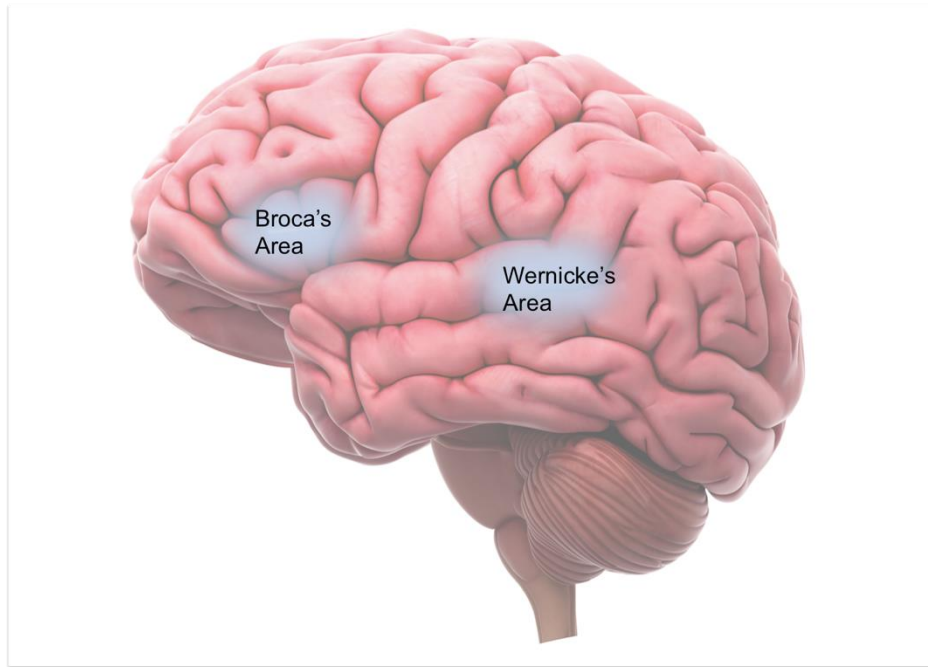
- Skill unique to humans
- Evolutionarily new skill (~6,000 yrs old) with no time for a dedicated brain circuit to have evolved (*Dehaene. Reading in the Brain '09*)
- Decoding print needs to be explicitly taught
- *Heritable* (*Grigorenko. '04*)
- Ubiquitous but heavily influenced by culture and writing system



Sumerian pictographs  
~4,000 BC

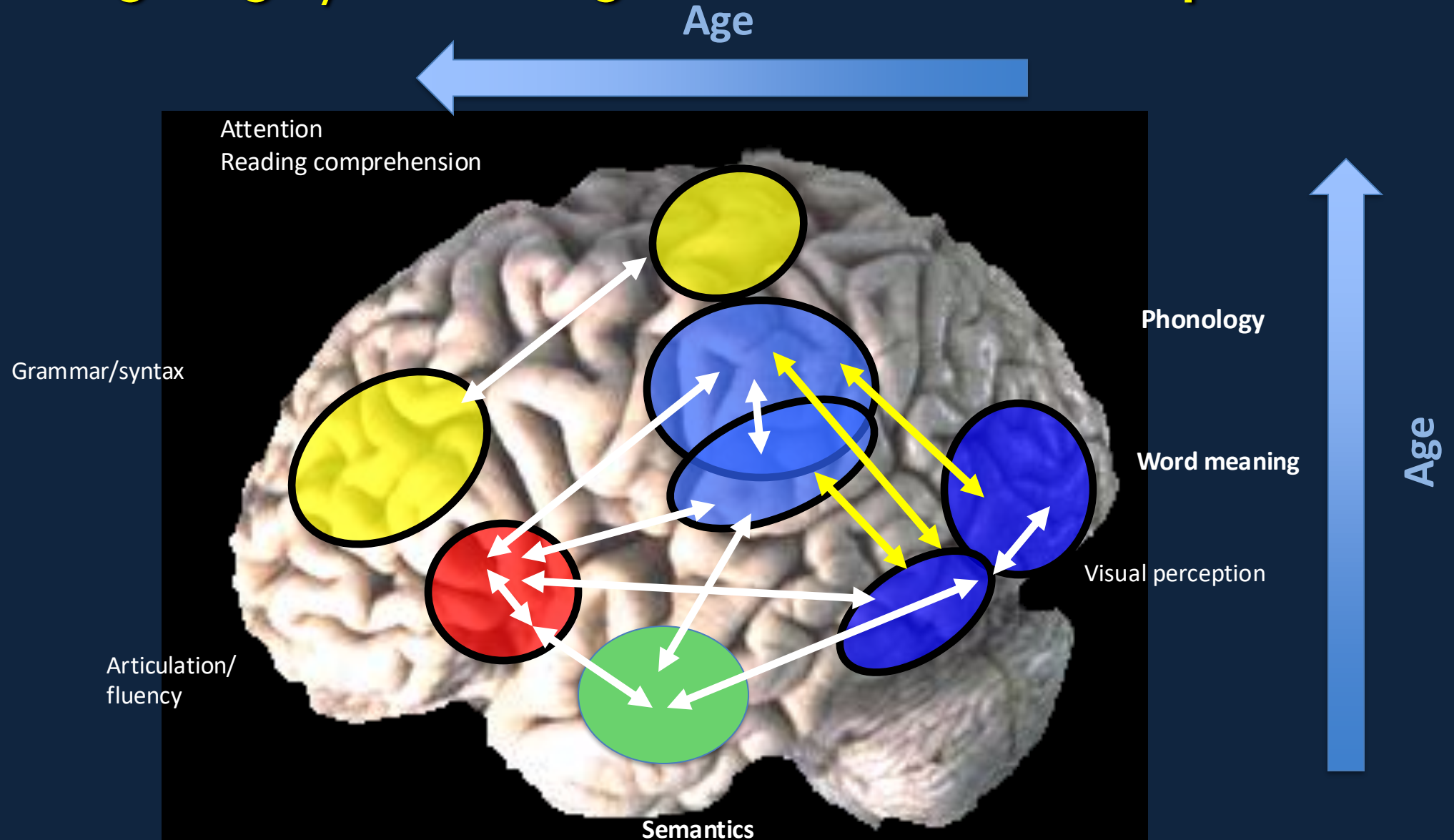


# Scientific progress in cognitive science of language (and reading)





# Language/Reading networks development

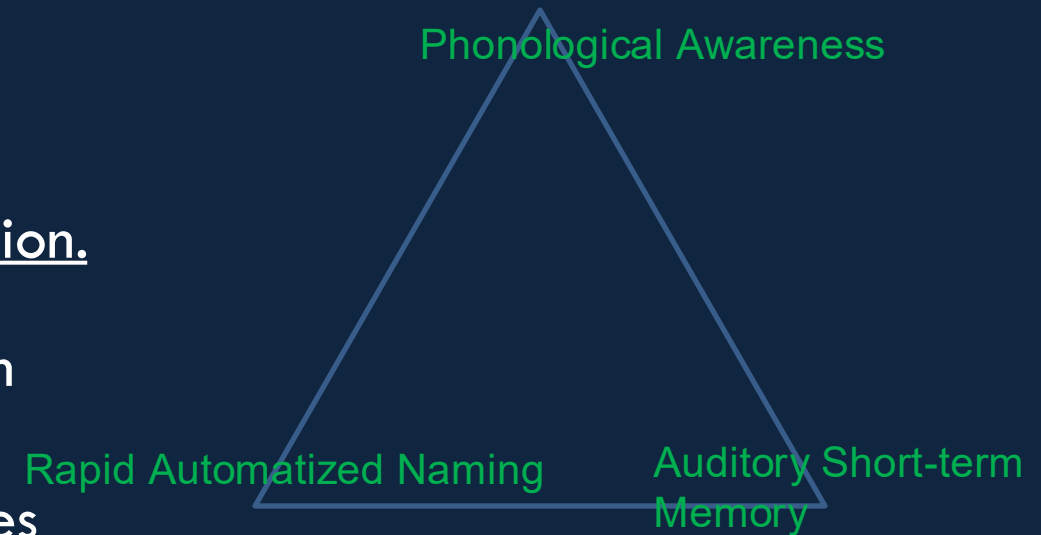




# Developmental Dyslexia

- Specific learning disability of neurobiological origin.
- Difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities.
- Preserved cognitive abilities and adequate instruction.
- Often phonological difficulties with errors in speech and reading/spelling, slow word retrieval (rapid naming), phonological short-term memory difficulties (difficulty learning only by listening)

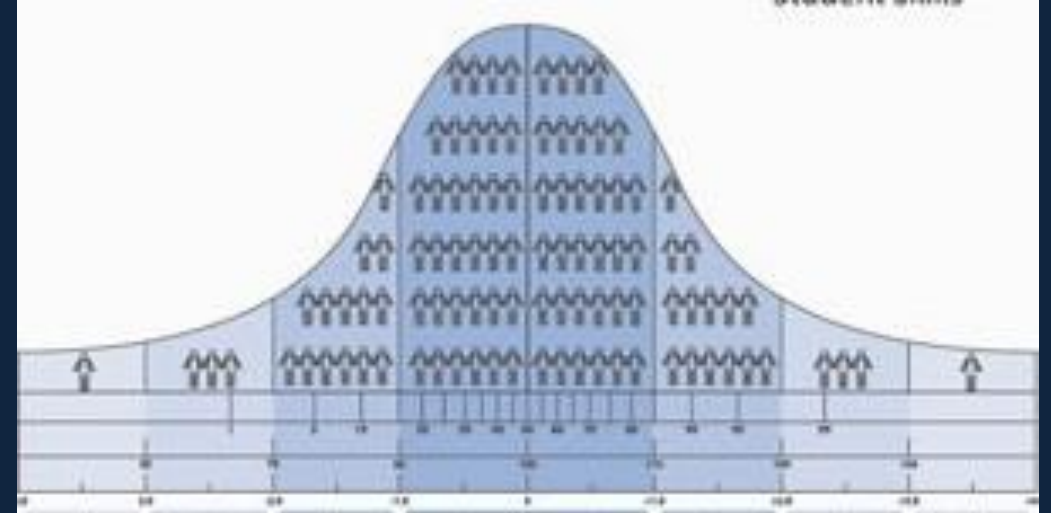
## The classic triad of symptoms



DSM's preferred terminology:  
Specific Learning Disorder,  
Reading Impairment

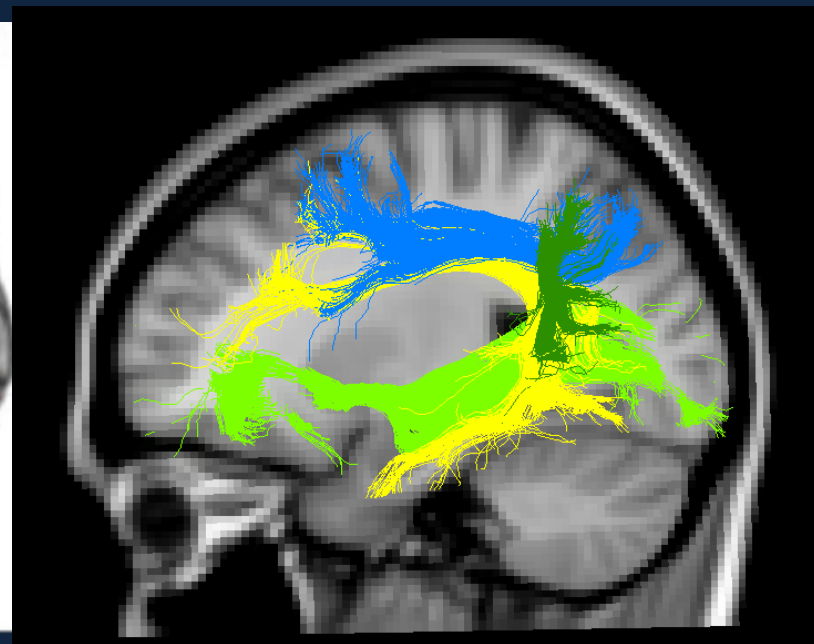
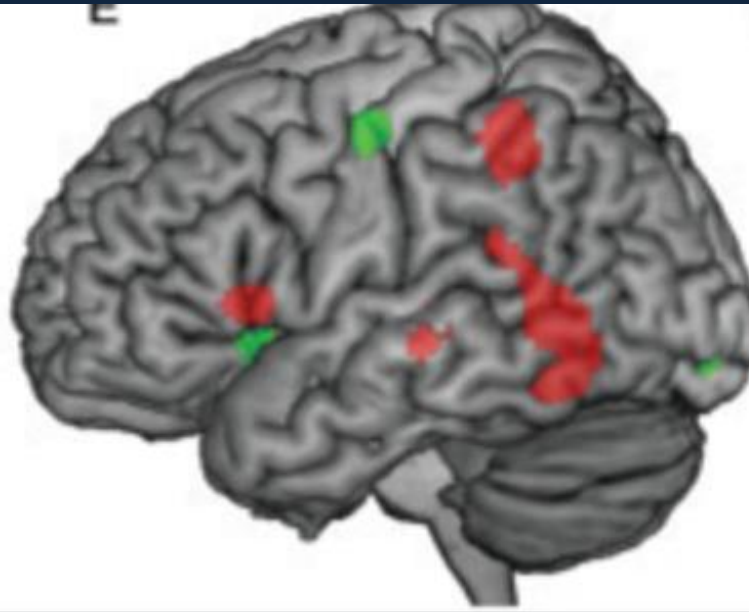
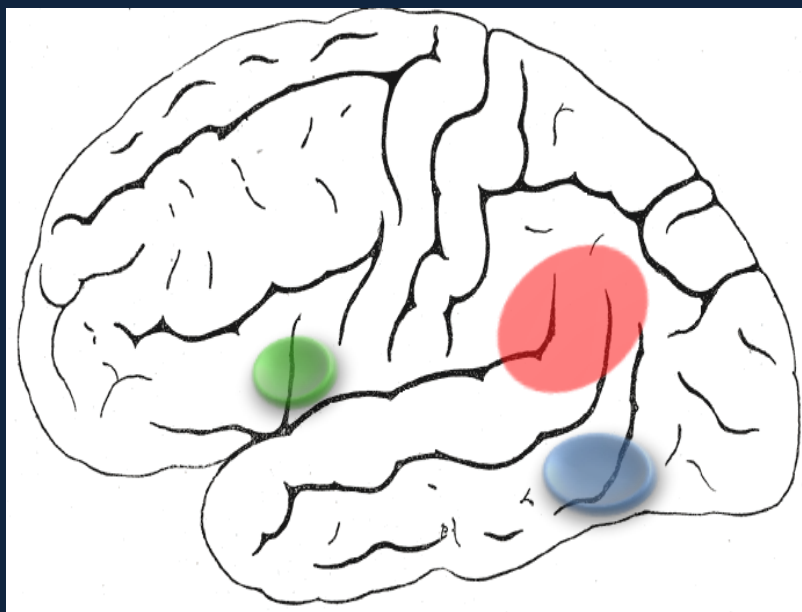
# Prevalence

- Depends on the cut-off criterion used
  - Absolute poor performance: 1.5 SD below the mean on reading measures
  - OR
  - Relative poor performance: IQ-achievement discrepancy  $> 1.5$
  - OR
  - Response to intervention (RTI)
- Prevalence estimated **~10 %**
  - Depending on severity
  - Estimates vary from 1.5-20%
    - Age
    - Language spoken
    - Definition



Most children need explicit instruction!

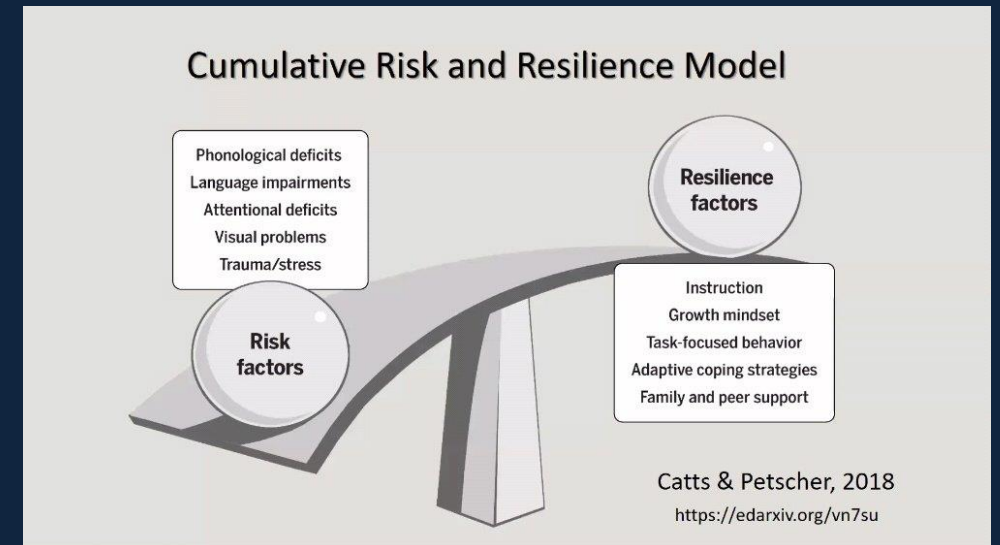
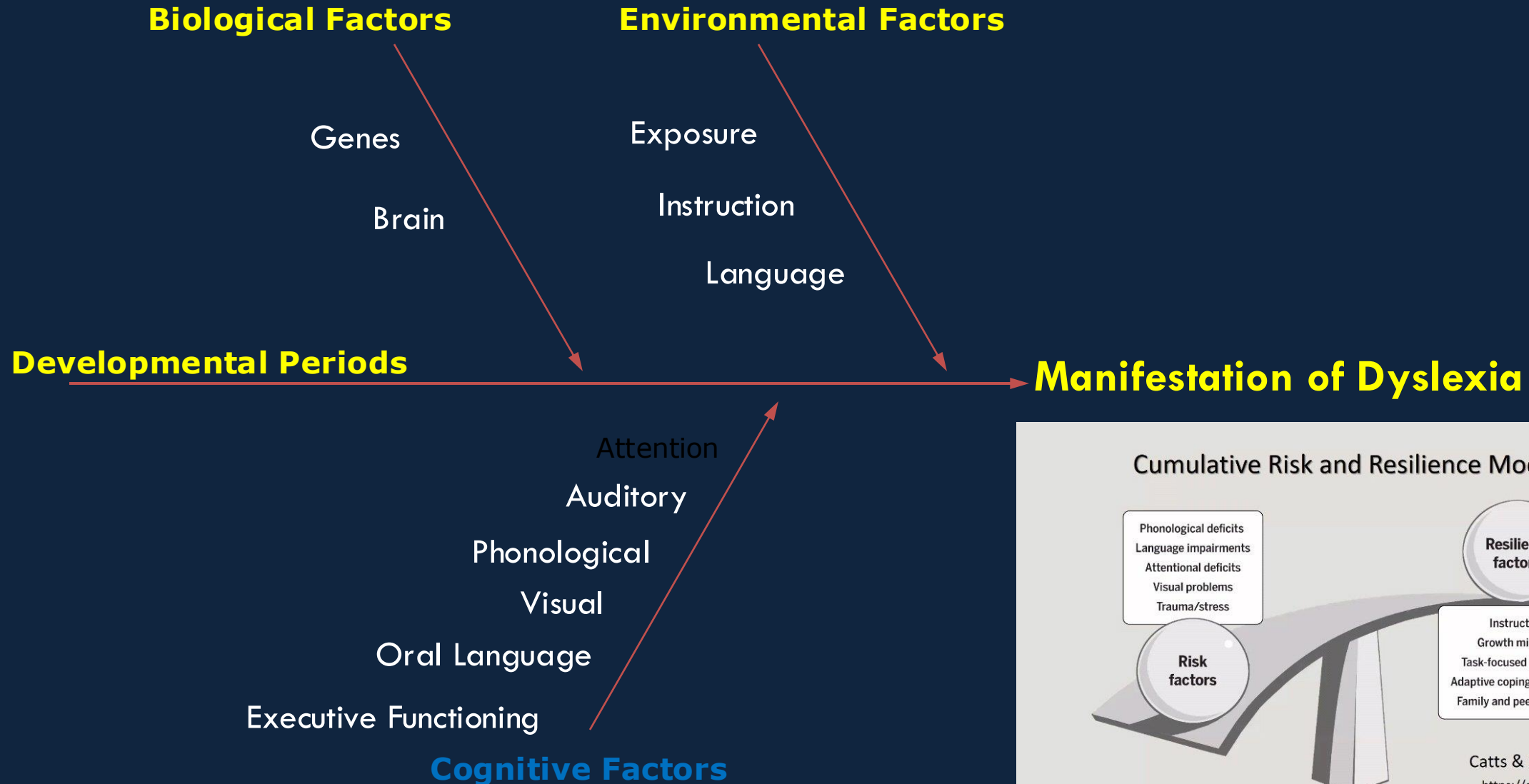
# Brain differences in developmental dyslexia



Functional and structural changes in hubs and connections of the language network

# Reading is complicated!

## Important Concepts to Remember

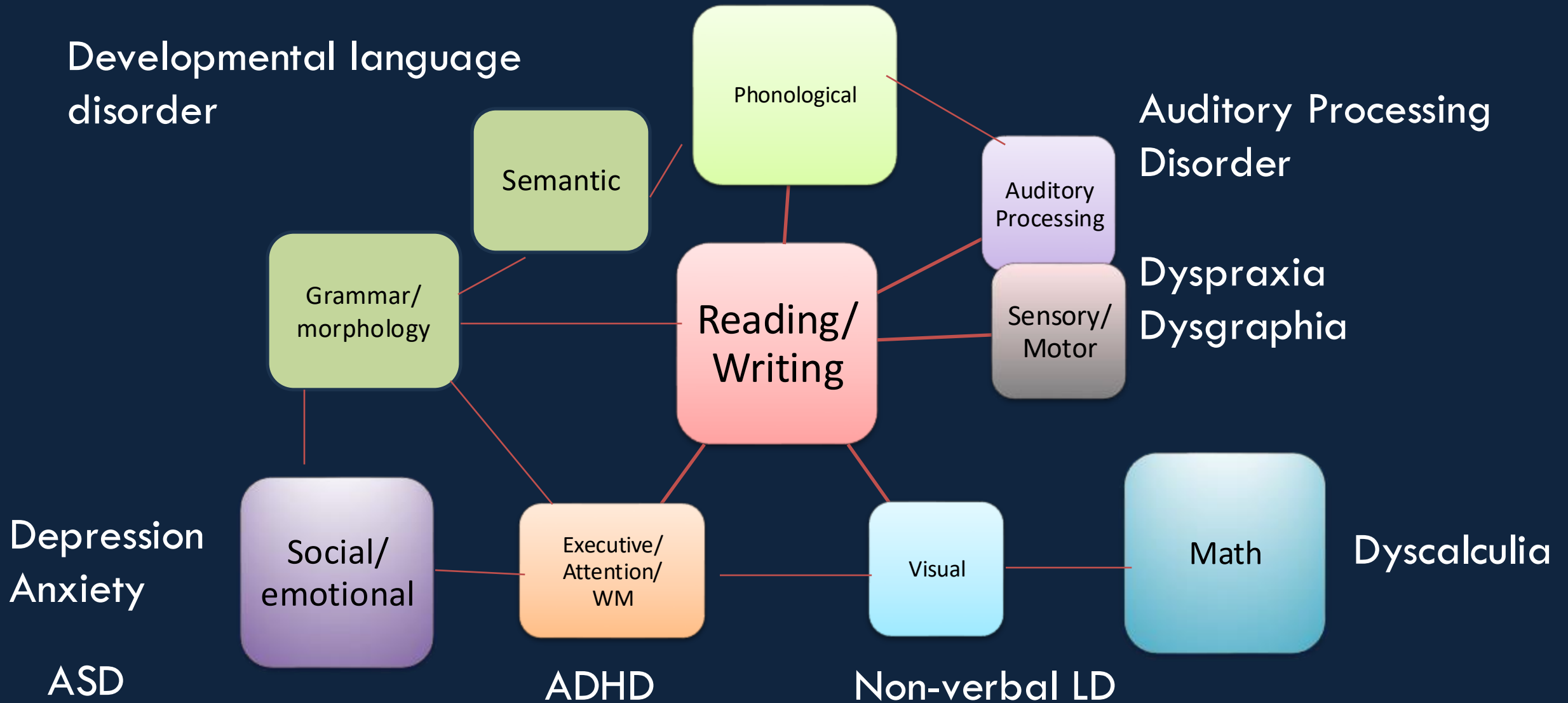




# Risk Factors and Common Signs

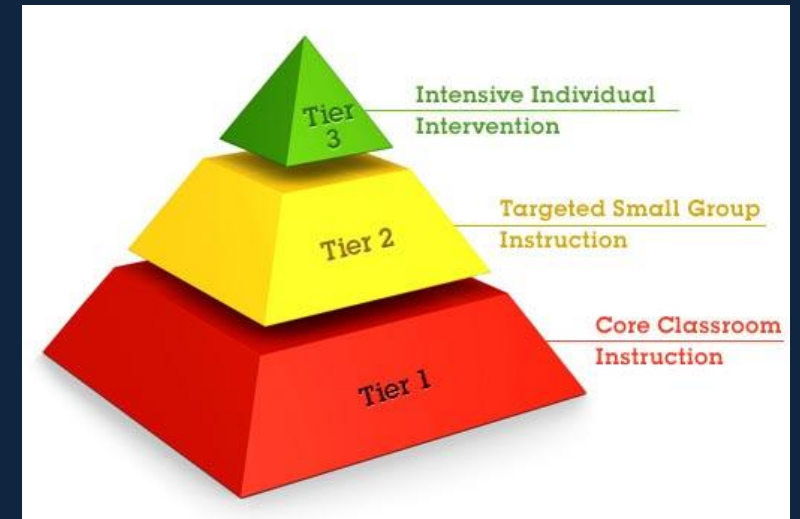
- Delayed language milestones – 2 words together by age 2: “late talkers”
- Early Difficulty with:
  - Learning ABCs, matching sounds with letters, rhyming
  - Learning color names, math facts (arbitrary links between symbols and sounds/words)
  - Following spoken directions
- Later Difficulties:
  - Substituting words or leaving out words while reading/spelling errors
  - Behavioral issues/fidgeting particularly evident in school or homework
  - Reading comprehension challenges
  - Disorganized writing
  - Anxiety and depression
- Consider strengths: Visuo-spatial, long-term memory, OL comprehension
- Family history of learning or school difficulties (e.g., reading, spelling, math), speech/language delay, ADHD

# Heterogeneity in Dyslexia



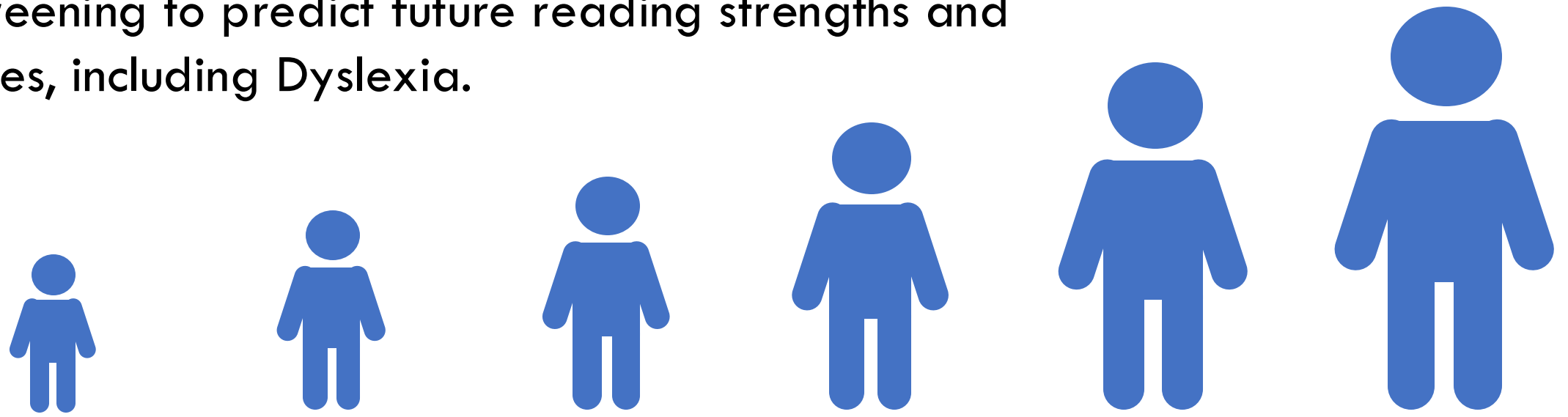
# Interventions: Considerations

- Oral Language/background knowledge/home language
- Early, evidence-based, systematic, explicit instruction is necessary
- All aspects of language: phonology, phonics, morphology, vocabulary, grammar. Consider age
- Multimodal instruction



# Earlier Action for effective Learning:

Early screening to predict future reading strengths and challenges, including Dyslexia.



GRADE TK K 1<sup>ST</sup> 2<sup>ND</sup> 3<sup>RD</sup> 4<sup>TH</sup> 5<sup>TH</sup>

Ideal time to screen  
Intervention most effective

Typical window  
for identification

**Multitudes**



# Importance of Early Screening and Intervention

## EDUCATIONAL



**Timely identification and intervention** help students thrive in academic and non/academic environments

## SOCIAL + EMOTIONAL



**Accurate identification** of learning difficulties combined with support can decrease anxiety, increase resilience, ease frustration + improve self-efficacy

## ECONOMIC



**Low reading proficiency** by 3rd grade results in higher high school drop-out rates, higher risk of system involvement, loss in earnings and productivity

# Early Predictors of reading difficulties

- Phonological awareness
- Rapid naming
- Short-term memory (repetition)
- Expressive vocabulary
- Oral language comprehension
- Letter naming/sounds - reading
- Visuo-spatial processing/attention
- Family history of dyslexia

Clear evidence  
in English monolinguals.

Bilinguals?

Assess in native language,  
appropriately normed,  
culturally affirmative.  
More evidence needed

# California Education Code Section 53008

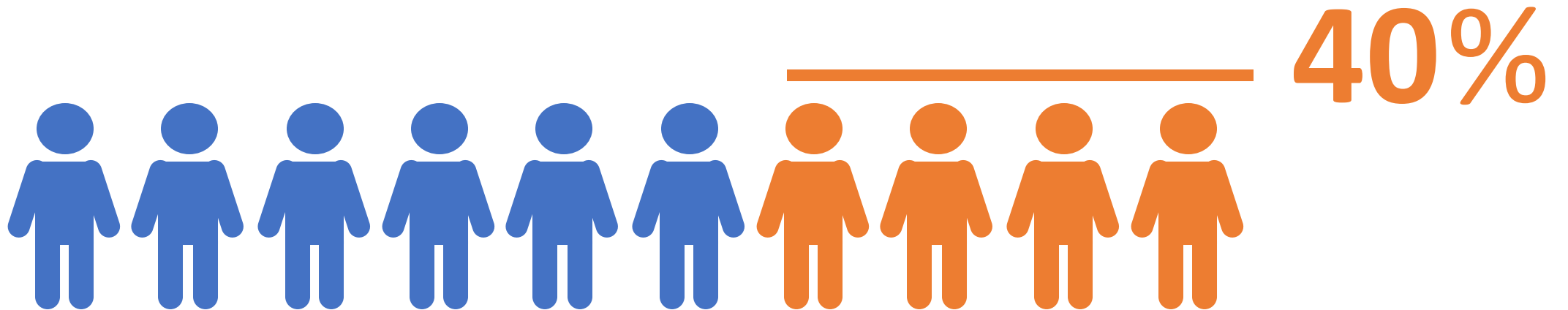


“The bill would require a local educational agency serving pupils in **kindergarten or grades 1 or 2** to, commencing no later than the 2025–26 school year, and annually thereafter, assess each pupil in those grades using the adopted screening instrument, except as provided.”

*Signed into law July 10, 2023, by Governor Newsom*

# Home language counts!

**Forty percent** of California Public School Students report speaking a language other than or in addition to English at home. This includes the eighteen percent of students identified as English learners.



<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/ad/cefelfacts.asp>



# Of those learning English...

**93%** speak one of the top **10** languages



82 % **SPANISH**

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/ad/cefelfacts.asp>

78 other languages

# Skill transfer from Spanish to English: Children with strong oral language in both are better readers

Emerging Bilinguals need to continue building:



Background knowledge

Oral language

Decoding  
(phonics and  
morphology)

Reading Comprehension

Oral language/vocabulary

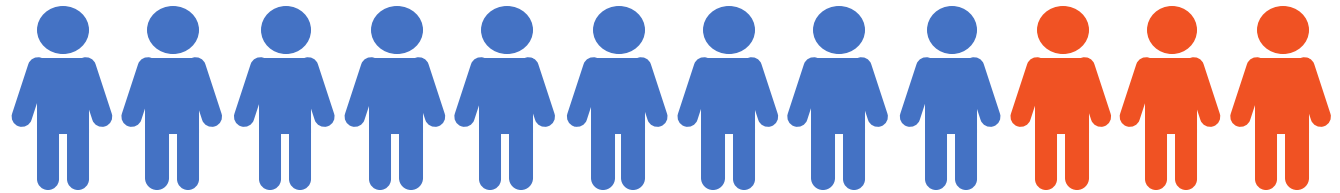
Background knowledge

# Purpose of Universal Screening

Screening assessments are not  
considered diagnostic



They **identify** a subset of the population who should  
have **additional assessment** to determine  
personalized early interventions

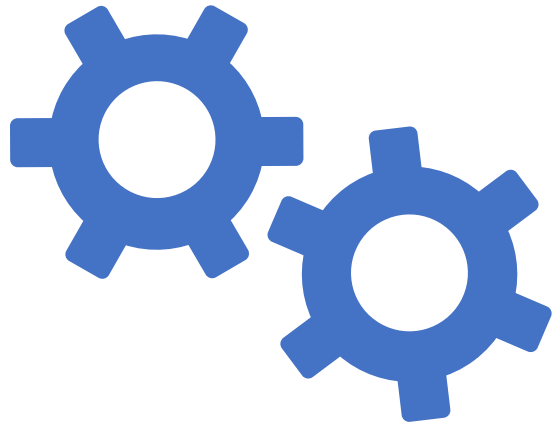


# Need for culturally and linguistically affirming tool

Embracing the diversity of language and culture that enrich our state



## ASSESSMENT TASK DEVELOPMENT



Parallel development of tasks in English + Spanish. Inclusion of oral language tasks. Careful selection and review of test items to avoid bias and ensure cultural relevance.

## DEMOGRAPHIC SAMPLE



Representative sample of 15,000+ students across California, including 25%-40% English Learners.

## WORKFORCE DIVERSITY



Local field research staff reflect and appreciate students' cultural + linguistic diversity. Native speakers represent the diversity of Spanish spoken in California.



Developed with scientists, educators, legislators, and professionals to ensure inclusivity and representation

**grounded in science and collaboration**

**accurate and affirming**

Fair and accurate measurement to support equitable reading outcomes for all

Embraces the many variations in dialect, culture, and region that enrich our state

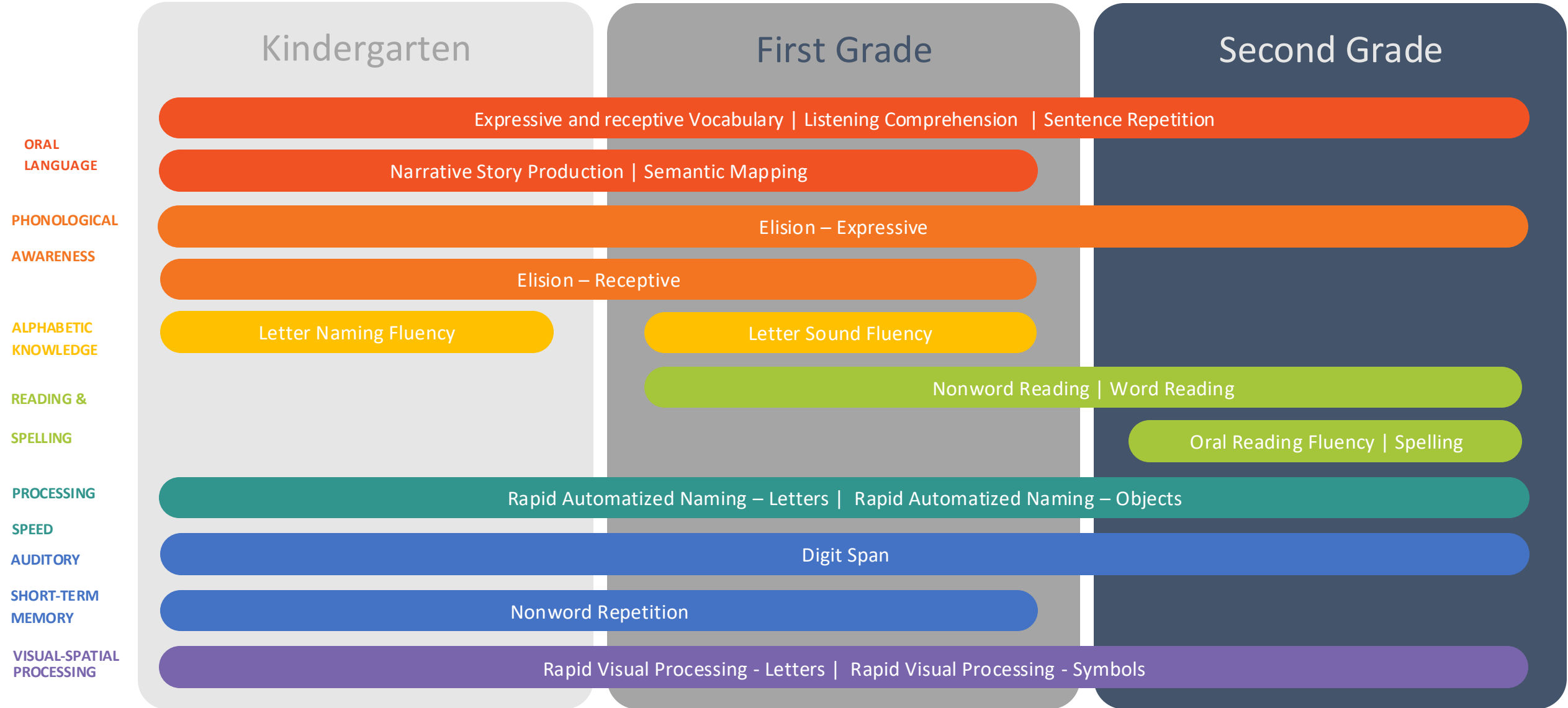
**comprehensive and data-driven**

**CA state-endorsed and cost-free**

Funded by the state of CA and completely free for all CA public schools

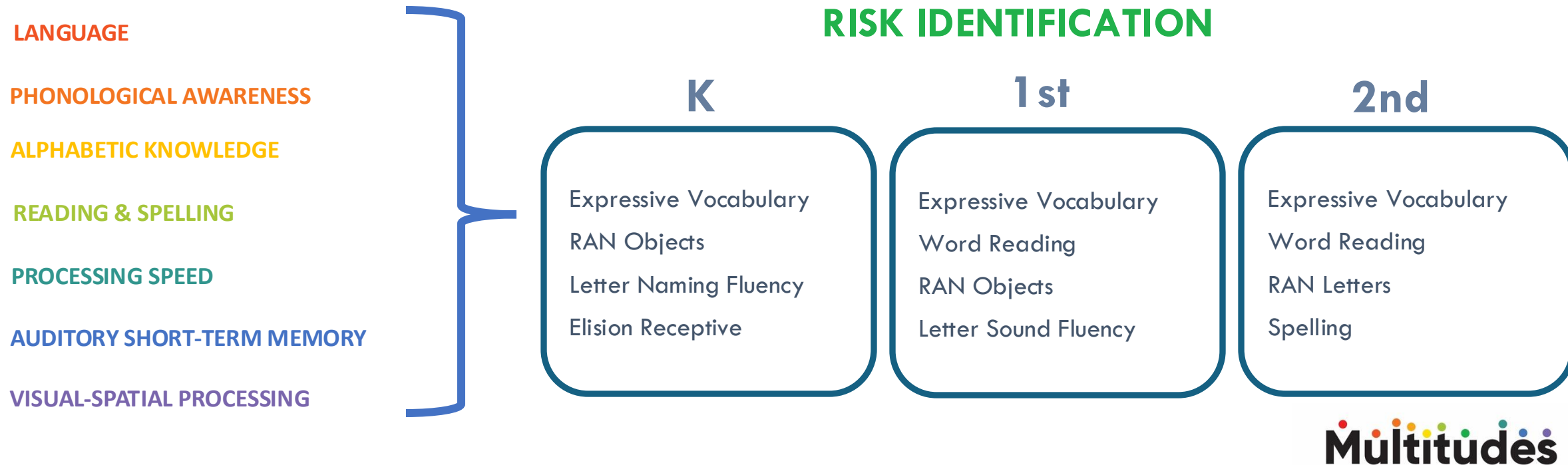


# Five Years of Intense Research in English + Spanish

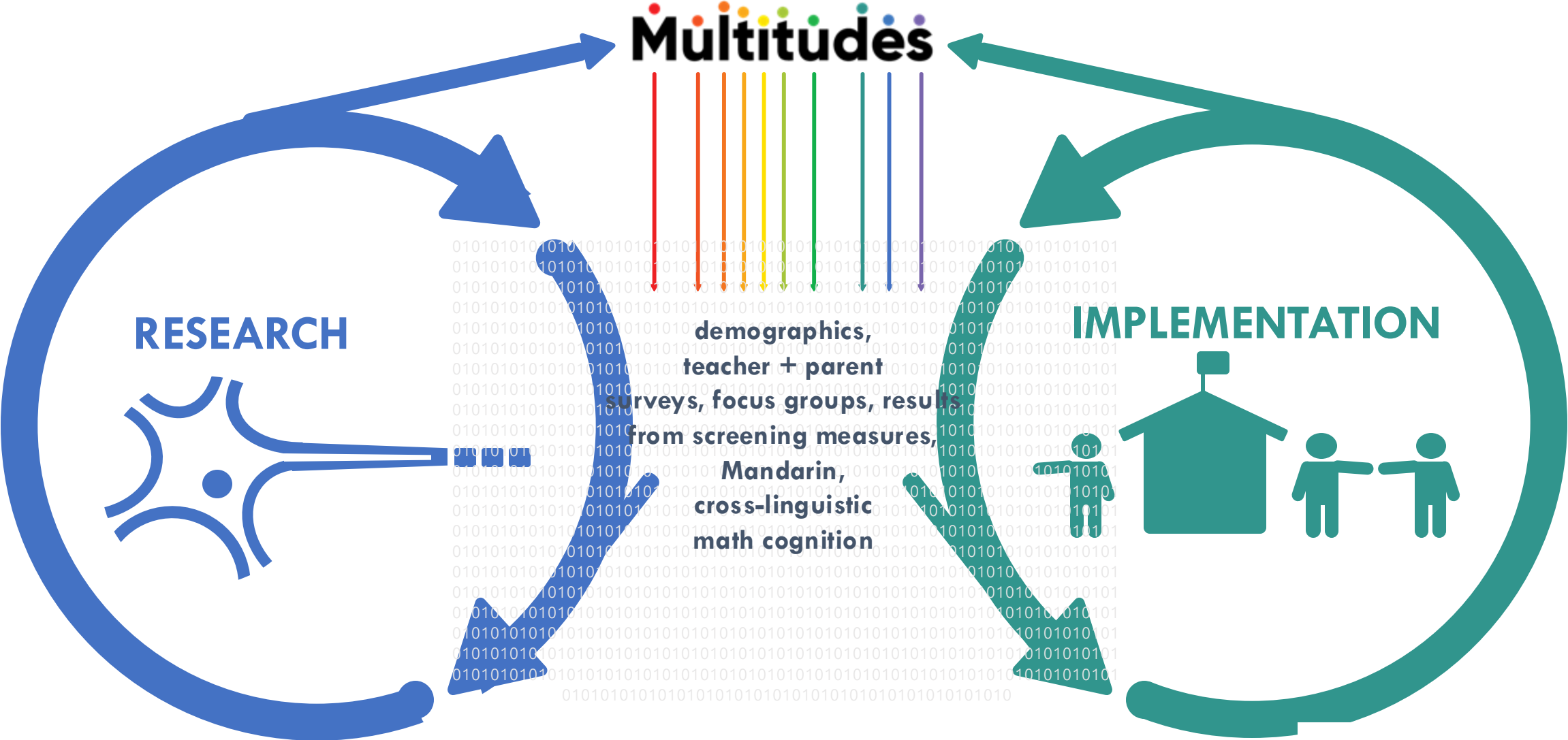


# Universal screener tasks

- ✓ **Informative** for reading development in English + Spanish
- ✓ **Accurate** for both English-only and multilingual learners (allows translanguaging)
- ✓ Include **predictors** of reading difficulties and dyslexia
- ✓ Minimal administration **time**
- ✓ **Reliable one-on-one assessment for young learners**



# Iterative Process



# THANK YOU!



Our multidisciplinary team translates the latest neuroscience discoveries into practice to support transformational change in literacy outcomes, educational equity, and brain health.



CA public  
schools





# Questions?



# QUESTIONS

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# **SPEAKERS**

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**Tami Wilson**

**SCOE Director of Development and Training**

**Reading Difficulties Risk Screener Selection Panel Member**



# ***California Education Code Section 53008 (SB114)*** **K-2 Screening for Reading Difficulties, Including Risk of Dyslexia**

**Association of California County Boards of Education**  
**June 16, 2025**

**Tami Wilson, Director**  
**[twilson@scoe.net](mailto:twilson@scoe.net)**

# Reading/Literacy Focused Initiatives ~ Examples

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- California Dyslexia Initiative
- SB 488 CTC Update Reading and Literacy Standards
- K-2 Screening for Reading Difficulties, Including Risk of Dyslexia
- Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant
- Early Literacy Support Block Grant
- Literacy Coaches & Reading Specialists (LCRS & LCRSET)
- Literacy Roadmap
- Reading Instruction and Interventions Grant



# Current Legislation

**AB 1454 (Rivas, Rubio, Muratsuchi)**  
Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction  
californiakidsread.org | info@californiakidsread.org

**CALIFORNIA'S READING CRISIS: BY THE NUMBERS**

Reading is the most important skill necessary for all future knowledge and opportunity. Yet, far too many children in California are not reading on grade level by the end of third grade, and the numbers are even more staggering for children from low-income communities.

Third grade is a critical time as students shift from learning to read to reading to learn. In addition, students who are not proficient readers by the end of third grade are four times less likely to graduate from high school, and eight times less likely if they are from a low-income community.

**1.6M students in grades K-3**  
63% are from low-income communities  
75% Black or Latine  
34% English learners

**3rd-Grade Students on Grade Level in ELA**

Overall: 4 in 10  
Low-Income Latine: 3 in 10  
Low-Income Black, English learners, and students with disabilities: 2 in 10

These rates have remained mostly flat over the last decade

**33rd** CA national rank in overall fourth-grade reading proficiency  
**39th** CA national rank in fourth-grade reading proficiency for Black students (out of 42)  
**38th** CA national rank in fourth-grade reading proficiency for English learners (out of 48)

Source: National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2024

**EVIDENCE-BASED READING INSTRUCTION**

...in to read, but that many are not being... and materials scientifically proven to... d to learn to read.

...ly literacy policies aligned to reading... Mississippi, for example, went from... irth-grade reading to 9th in 2024.

**POLICY CHANGE IS NOW**

...ed reading instruction and materials as essential for teaching... network, Ed Code Section 44259, Early Literacy Block Grants, and SB 488 (Rubio), which requires teacher preparation... iples.

...the efforts to date and align reading instruction in California... political choice, and one that must be prioritized in 2025... ind.

...ence-based means of teaching literacy... cy teachers either using the CDE-approved programs or an... here are leftover funds, LEAs may provide PD to other grades... s trained and program used to the CDE.

...ELA/ELD instructional materials aligned to the current Ed Code and... evidence-based materials... n updating materials or self-certify that the off-list materials are... required to follow existing guidelines on reporting instructional... bility Report Cards.

...r preparation programs to include training on effective means of... (e) and certify that programs are following these standards.

**IS A MEANINGFUL INVESTMENT**

...rove reading outcomes for the millions of students struggling... ence-based literacy instruction.

...e is no greater priority of public schools than to teach children... to read. The science is clear: evidence-based instruction is beneficial to all students. Now, our leaders need to advocate for all classrooms to receive the resources necessary for major impact.

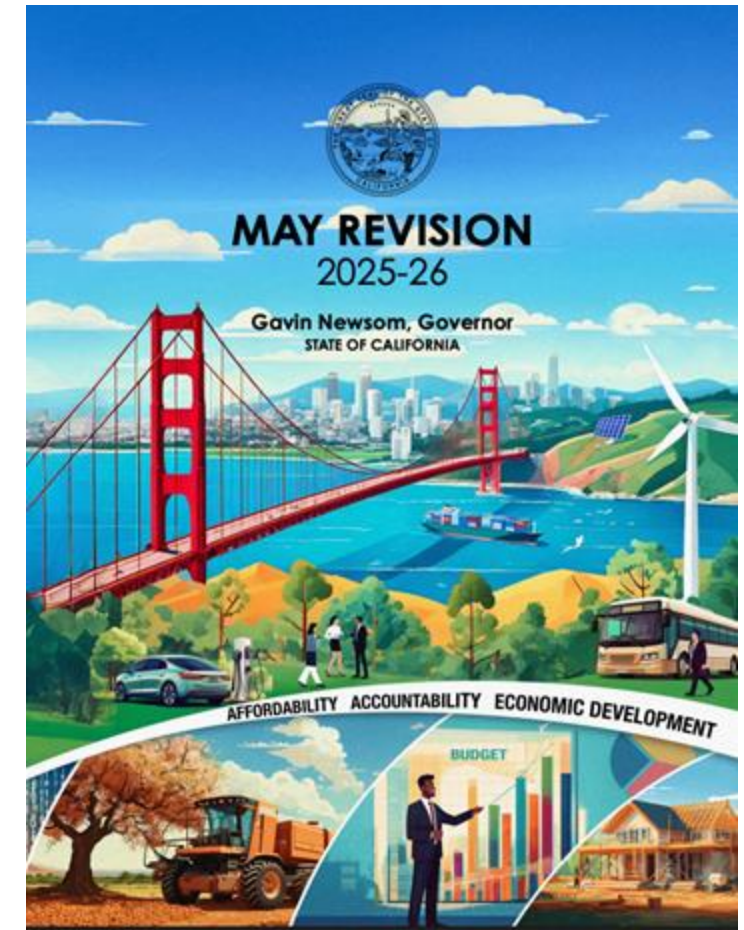
A literate society is a thriving society, and investing in our students and educators today will powerful returns for California's future.

Print

[AB1454 Leg Info](#)

[AB 1454 One-Pager.pdf](#)

[2025-26 May Revision Budget Summary V2](#)





# Universal Screening for Reading Difficulties



*(e) “Commencing no later than the 2025–26 school year, and annually thereafter, a local educational agency serving pupils in kindergarten or grades 1 or 2 shall assess each pupil in kindergarten and grades 1 and 2 for risk of reading difficulties using the screening instrument or instruments adopted by the governing board or body of the local educational agency . . .”*

*California Code, EDC 53008.*

SB114 was signed by Governor Newsom on July 10, 2023

# K-2 Screening for Reading Difficulties, Including Risk of Dyslexia

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*“The Legislature finds and declares that screening pupils for risk of reading difficulties, including dyslexia, is one of many tools that educators can employ to gain information about how to support their pupils’ learning. Screening should be considered **part of a school’s comprehensive instructional strategy**, and should be used by educators like other types of formative and summative assessments: to inform individualized instruction, measure a pupil’s progress, identify pupil learning needs, and enable parents and educators to discuss pupil needs in a more informed way.”*

*California Code, EDC 53008. (a)(1)*

# State Funding

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## State Funding for Screening for Risk of Reading Difficulties

Section 117 of Chapter 38 of the Statutes of 2024 (2024 Education Budget Trailer Bill) appropriated \$25 million to LEAs to implement the requirement to screen kindergarten through second grade students for risk of reading difficulties beginning in the 2025-26 school year. What types of expenditures can LEAs use these funds for?

LEAs must expend these funds to train educators to administer student screenings pursuant to subdivision (c) of Section 117 of Chapter 38 of the Statutes of 2024

Retrieved 8.22.24 [RDRSSP FAQ - Reading Difficulties Risk Screener Selection Panel \(CA Dept of Education\)](#)

# Getting Familiar With 53008



Download and skim read California Code, EDC 53008. Note - select “PDF” at the top and download.

Note: You may access an overview document available on the *California Dyslexia Initiative (CDI)* webpage at sb114\_overview (1).pdf



# Screening for Risk of Reading Difficulties, Including Dyslexia

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- **On or before June 30, 2025**, LEAs will adopt one or more screeners from the approved list.
- **Starting in 2025/2026 school year**, LEAs will assess each pupil in grades K - 2 (unless parent/guardian opts out).
- **No later than 15 calendar days prior to screening**, LEAs will notify parents/guardians and give option to opt out.
- **If a new K-2 pupil enrolls**, LEAs must screen within 45 calendar days of enrollment.
- **Results of screening**, including how to interpret results and next steps, within 45 days (53008 k)

**CA Ed Code 53008**

Rights. Equity. Access. Diversity. Success.



# California Literacy - Teaching & Learning (CA Dept of Education)



## Screening Instruments and Information Overviews

Organization	Title	Grade Levels	Languages	Information Overviews
Amira Learning, with HMH as distribution partners	Amira	Kindergarten, Grade One, and Grade Two	English and Spanish	<a href="#">Amira Information Overview</a>
Amplify Education	mCLASS with DIBELS Edition 8 and mCLASS Lectura	Kindergarten, Grade One, and Grade Two	English and Spanish	<a href="#">mClass with DIBELS Edition 8 and mClass Lectura Information Overview</a>
University of California San Francisco (UCSF) Dyslexia Center	Multitudes	Kindergarten, Grade One, and Grade Two	English and Spanish	<a href="#">Multitudes Information Overview</a>
Stanford University, Brain Development and Education Lab	Rapid Online Assessment of Reading (ROAR)	Grade One and Grade Two	English only	<a href="#">ROAR Information Overview</a>

# Screening Shall NOT Be . . .

These screening assessments shall not be considered an evaluation or diagnostic tool to establish eligibility for special education and related services or an evaluation to determine eligibility for a Section 504 plan.

Screening shall not be used for any high stakes purpose and not as a diagnosis of a disability.

Adapted California Code,  
EDC 53008. (g)(2)

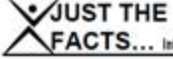
# Why Screen?

Screening is for **all** students to **determine risk** and who need **additional assessment** and **early intervention**.



**Instructional response is the KEY!**

# The Importance of Universal Screening



**JUST THE FACTS...** Information provided by the International DYSLexIA Association®

### Universal Screening: K-2 Reading

This fact sheet focuses on the importance of universal screening in the primary grades to identify students who are in need of reading intervention.

**What are the purposes for different types of assessment?**

Assessment can have multiple purposes:

- **Universal Screening**—to determine a student's risk for reading difficulty and the need for intervention
- **Intervention Planning**—to make data-based decisions for instruction informed by results of testing
- **Progress Monitoring**—to determine if progress is adequate or if more (or different) intervention is required
- **Diagnostic Evaluation**—to identify an individual's learning strengths and weaknesses and likely source of academic problems—and to determine if profile fits the definition of a learning disorder (diagnosis)

**Universal Screening: K-2 Reading**

Since research has shown that the rapid growth of the brain and its response to instruction in the primary years make the time from birth to age eight a critical period for literacy development (Nevills & Wolfe, 2009), it is essential to identify the instructional needs of struggling students as soon as possible. It is imperative to "catch them before they fail" (Torgesen, 1998). Thus, educators need to understand:

- The basic principles of universal screening
- Findings from cognitive science that are the basis of reading and literacy development

- Potential risk factors (i.e., "red flags") that indicate potential for common reading problems, including dyslexia

**What is a screening?**

Screening measures, by definition, are typically brief assessments of a particular skill or ability that is highly predictive of a later outcome. Screening measures are designed to quickly differentiate students into one of two groups: 1) those who require intervention and 2) those who do not. A screening measure needs to focus on specific skills that are highly correlated with broader measures of reading achievement resulting in a highly accurate sorting of students.

Universal screening tools have the following characteristics:

- Quick and targeted assessments of discrete skills that indicate whether students are making adequate progress in reading achievement
- Alternate equivalent forms so they can be administered three to four times a year
- Standardized directions for administration and scoring
- Have established reliability and validity standards

**Why should we screen?**

Universal screening results should identify those students who are potentially at risk for reading failure, including those who may have developmental reading disabilities.

Dyslexia is a neurobiological disorder. Research has shown that brain plasticity decreases through childhood. It takes four times as long to intervene in fourth grade as it does in late kindergarten (NICHD) because of brain development and

*“Since research has shown that the rapid growth of the brain and its response to instruction in the primary years make the time from birth to age eight a critical period for literacy development (Nevills & Wolfe, 2009), it is essential to identify the instructional needs of struggling students as soon as possible.*

***It is imperative to ‘catch them before they fail’ (Torgesen, 1998).”***

# Instructional Response Is KEY

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Provide supports and services **appropriate to the specific challenges identified**, which may include:


- Evidence-based literacy instruction focused on the pupil's specific needs.
- Progress monitoring.
- Early intervention in the regular general education program.
- One-on-one or small group tutoring.
- Further evaluation or diagnostic assessment.

Adapted California Code, EDC 53008. (2)(l)

A wooden Scrabble rack containing the word 'PROACTIVE' in capital letters. The tiles are light-colored wood with black lettering and point values. The rack is placed on a wooden surface, and several other loose tiles are scattered around it, including 'S', 'A', 'E', 'G', 'C', 'R', 'U', 'I', 'H', and 'D'.




# Supporting Older Striving Readers



**Sacramento County READS**  
Supporting Older Striving Readers  
Strategies for Success

As students move up the grades, skilled reading is necessary for school success in all content areas. Beyond school, reading proficiency is vital for success in work, life, and civic engagement. The grim statistic in Sacramento County reveals that only 43% of 8th grade students are meeting or exceeding grade level expectations. What that means is that 57% of adolescents in our county are not able to read complex text proficiently.

Early success in reading tends to lead to further skill development, while children who struggle early on often fall further behind. This widening gap occurs because proficient readers gain more opportunities to practice, while struggling readers miss out on these critical experiences.



Grade	Proficient	Below Proficient
8th Grade	43%	57%

**What are common challenges for older striving readers?**

Struggling readers often have decoding issues, in particular difficulty breaking down longer words. They often have slow or choppy reading that impacts their understanding and they struggle with grade-level text. The less they read, the more limited their vocabulary, which impacts understanding of content and leads to frustration, disengagement, and lack of motivation and confidence.

**What can be done for older striving readers?**

Students who are reading below grade level and need extra help to catch up with their classmates require targeted interventions that address both foundational skills and grade-level content. These interventions may include:

- Explicit and systematic phonics and word study instruction targeted to students' specific needs
- Explicit instruction and a routine for breaking down larger words
- Fluency practice to focus on improving accuracy, rate, and expression
- Vocabulary building in context and content-area subjects
- Active reading strategies like summarizing, questioning, and visualizing
- High-interest texts that are age-appropriate and aligned with student interests
- Small group or one-on-one interventions to personalize learning

**What is the role of social-emotional support, family, and community?**

- Acknowledge and address the frustration and disengagement many older struggling readers feel and incorporate praise and recognition of small successes to build confidence.
- Provide a safe and supportive environment for students to take reading risks without fear of failure or embarrassment.
- Encourage families to engage with reading at home through discussions, family read-alouds, or shared reading of high-interest materials.
- Highlight community resources like libraries, after-school tutoring programs, or reading clubs that offer additional literacy support.

To learn more . . .  
[Is the "Matthew Effect" Affecting Your Child's Desire to Read?  
When Older Students Can't Read](#)

Fact Sheet #5 / 11.22.24

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# To Learn More . . .

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[Screening for Reading Difficulties Including Risk of Dyslexia Padlet](#)

[SCOE | Sacramento County READS Literacy Initiative](#)

[National Center on Improving Literacy](#)

# **SPEAKERS**

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**Gina Plate**  
**Senior Vice President for Education**  
**Deveau Burr Group LLC**

# Literacy Budget Update

Governor, SSPI and other leaders in Compton last week to roll out the [Golden State Literacy Plan](#).

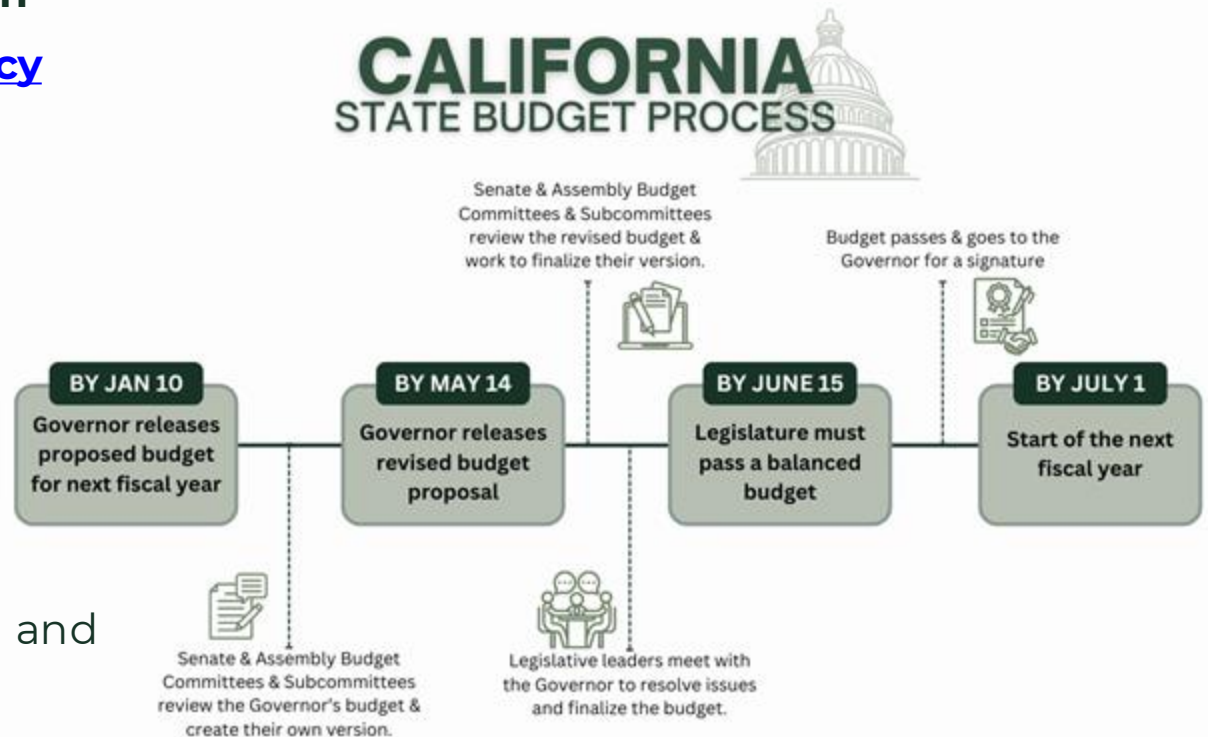
- [CA State Literacy Plan](#)

## Ongoing Commitments:

- Literacy Coaches
- Literacy Roadmap
- Learning Recovery Block Grant
- Expanded Learning (Before/After school and Summer.

## New Proposals:

- Professional learning
- Screener across multiple languages



# Literacy Policy Update

1. [AB 1454 \( Rivas, Muratsuchi and Rubio\)](#) Coauthors: [Addis, Bonta, Hoover and Patel.](#) Pupil Literacy: [administrative services credential program standards and professional development: instructional materials.](#)



## Key Dates:

- **Bill Introduction Deadline:** February
- **Legislative Session:** December - August
- **Final Deadline for Governor's Action:** September 30

# QUESTIONS

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# THANK YOU TO FOUNDING MEMBERS



# NEXT STEPS

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- **Aug 4<sup>th</sup> Board of Directors Meeting at 6:00 PM**
- **Aug 25<sup>th</sup> Building Trustee Excellence – Superintendent Salary at 6:00 PM**
- **[Complete our Member Experience Survey](#)**
- **Sign up for on demand 1:1 Coaching for new Trustees and Monthly Coaching sessions for all trustees**

# HERE IS OUR CONTACT INFORMATION

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THANK YOU