



# M *School* Management *News*

Ohio School Boards Association

June 2023

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## Implementing dyslexia requirements

*by Kenna S. Haycox  
senior policy consultant*

Districts have been reviewing new dyslexia requirements for several years. As you look to implement these requirements in the 2023-24 school year, let's review the obligations regarding dyslexia screening and intervention.

For the purposes of the statutory requirements, dyslexia is defined by Ohio Revised Code (RC) 3323.25 as "a specific learning disorder that is neurological in origin and that is characterized by unexpected difficulties with accurate or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities not consistent with the person's intelligence, motivation, and sensory capabilities, which difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language."

House Bill (HB) 436 (2021) established new requirements in RC 3323.25, 3323.251, 3319.077 and 3319.078 for districts related to dyslexia. HB 583 (2022) revised the requirements and delayed the required implementation timeline. Districts are required to comply with the RC provisions and any provisions of Ohio's Dyslexia Guidebook that are statutorily required. Districts should review both RC provisions and the dyslexia guidebook, available at <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/86403>, for implementation. In addition, the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) has a webpage of dyslexia supports available at <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/74689>.

The guidebook also contains best practice recommendations that are not statutorily required. Districts may use any of these recommended best practices and recommendations contained in the guidebook but are not required to comply with anything that is not statutorily required.

### Dyslexia screening and intervention

Districts are required to establish a multidisciplinary team to administer screening and intervention measures and analyze results. The team must include trained and certified personnel and an expert in dyslexia identification, intervention and remediation.

A key component of the law is the administration of screenings. Districts should review the dyslexia guidebook for more information on selecting and administering screenings.

RC 3323.251 requires schools to adhere to the following guidelines:

- 2023-24 school year: The district must administer a tier one dyslexia screening to:
  - students in grades K-three after Jan. 1, 2024, but prior to Jan. 1, 2025;
  - students in grades four-six whose parents request the screening or for whom a teacher requests the screening and the parents grant permission.
- 2024-25 school year and beyond: The district must administer a tier one dyslexia screening to:
  - students in kindergarten, to be administered after Jan. 1 of the school year in which the student is enrolled in kindergarten and prior to Jan. 1 of the



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following school year;

- students in grades one-six whose parents request the screening or for whom a teacher requests the screening and the parents grant permission.

Beginning with the 2023-24 school year, districts must administer a tier one dyslexia screening measure to each kindergarten student who transfers into the district or school midyear during the school's regularly scheduled screening of the kindergarten class or within 30 days after the student's enrollment if the screening already has been completed. Districts also must administer a tier one dyslexia screening measure to each student in grades one-six who transfers into the district or school midyear within 30 days after the student's enrollment. In the case of a transfer student who is identified as "at risk of dyslexia," a tier two dyslexia screening must be administered in a timely manner.

Districts must identify students at risk of dyslexia based on a student's results on the tier one screening assessment and notify the parent of such identification.

Unless the student has already been administered a tier two screening, the district must monitor the progress of each at-risk student toward attaining grade-level reading and writing skills for up to six weeks in accordance with the following requirements:

- student progress checks at least at the second, fourth and sixth weeks after a student has been identified as at risk;
- if no progress is observed during this period, the district must notify the parent and administer a tier two dyslexia screening.

Results of the tier two screening must be reported to the parent within 30 days after administration. If a student is identified as having dyslexia tendencies, the district must provide the parent with information about reading development, risk factors for dyslexia and descriptions for evidence-based interventions.

If a student demonstrates markers for dyslexia, the school must provide

parents with a written explanation of the district or school's structured literacy program.

### **Educator professional development/training**

RC 3319.077 establishes professional development requirements for staff in identifying characteristics of dyslexia and understanding the pedagogy for instructing students with dyslexia. The Ohio Dyslexia Committee has determined that teachers need to complete 18 hours of professional development to meet this requirement. The training must be completed in accordance with the following timelines:

- by the beginning of the 2023-24 school year: kindergarten and first grade;
- by the beginning of the 2024-25 school year: second and third grade;
- by the beginning of the 2025-26 school year: fourth through 12th grade (intervention specialists).

Teachers who provide instruction in fine arts, music or physical education are exempt from completing the professional development requirements. Districts may locally decide to train employees not subject to the mandatory training requirements. More information on the professional development requirements is available on the ODE Professional Development webpage at <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/72334>.

Districts are required to establish a Structured Literacy Certification process for teachers providing instruction in kindergarten through third grade and must locally determine which educators will become certified through this process. More information is available on the Structured Literacy Certification Process webpage at <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/66909>.

OSBA has provided OSBA policy clients with a new model policy that outlines district obligations regarding dyslexia. If you have questions on the new obligations or the policy, please contact the author at (614) 540-4000 or [khaycox@ohioschoolboards.org](mailto:khaycox@ohioschoolboards.org).

# OSSC meets with OSBA to share school safety insights

by Gamy Narvaez, policy consultant

OSBA recently met with Ohio School Safety Center (OSSC) officials to discuss legislation regarding school safety to address districts' questions on these bills. Created in 2019 by Gov. **Mike DeWine**, OSSC assists local schools and law enforcement with preventing, preparing for and responding to threats and acts of violence through a solutions-based approach to improving school safety.

## The threat of violence in schools

School safety has always been a main concern for school administrators trying to create and maintain a healthy learning environment for students in their care. Unfortunately, school safety has been a growing concern in recent years, partly because of an increase in violent crimes and threats in school buildings. It is helpful, when examining these issues, to look at the statistics surrounding school safety.

The rate of nonfatal student victimization — defined in studies as “direct personal experience of threats or harm,” according to the U.S. Department of Education — has decreased significantly from 2009 to 2020. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the total victimization rate fell from 51 victimizations per 1,000 students in 2009 to 30 per 1,000 in 2019, and from 2019 to 2020, the rate decreased again to 11 per 1,000 students (<http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/54699>).

However, an alarming number of public schools continue to report violent crimes. Over 70% of public schools reported one or more violent incidents taking place between 2019 and 2020, and over a quarter of schools reported “serious violent crimes” in the same time period. Serious violent incidents include rape or attempted rape; sexual assault; physical attacks or fights with a

weapon or threats or physical attacks with a weapon; and robbery. What's more, a 2022 Education Week survey of school and district leaders reported that nearly half of all respondents said they are receiving more threats of violence by students in fall 2021 than they did in fall 2019 (<http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/30033>).

## HB 99

The Ohio General Assembly has enacted several laws focused on school safety. Two recent pieces of school safety legislation have been the subject of many district questions: House Bill (HB) 99, which changed the requirements for schools that choose to arm staff, and HB 123, which required school districts to conduct threat assessments, assemble and train threat assessment teams and add elements to their local emergency management plans.

OSBA's legal and policy staff recently met with OSSC officials,

who offered to help address questions surrounding these bills. Regarding HB 99, districts have been asking about the training requirements and process for arming staff, both the training provided by OSSC and whether districts can use their existing training programs for armed staff. OSBA policy clients can review the background and specifics of HB 99 in the August 2022 issue of Policy Development Quarterly (PDQ). First and foremost, OSSC suggested that districts visit its webpage dedicated to the OSSC Armed School Staff Essential Training (ASSET) program at <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/98225>.

The ASSET program is the model curriculum used to provide the training, as required in Ohio law, for school personnel who are authorized by the board of education to carry firearms in a school safety zone. This last point is also worth emphasizing: Any school personnel who will carry firearms in a school safety zone must first be

# School district contract settlements

## Certified contracts

**District:** Chagrin Falls EV

**Settlement date:** April 2023

**Contract term:** three years, effective July 1, 2023

**Particulars:** 2.5% pay increase in each year of the contract; \$500 lump sum payment.

**District:** Lisbon EV

**Settlement date:** April 2023

**Contract term:** three years, effective July 1, 2023

**Particulars:** 2.5% pay increase in each year of the contract.

**District:** Van Wert City

**Settlement date:** April 2023

**Contract term:** three years, effective Aug. 1, 2023

**Particulars:** 2% pay increase and a \$1,000 one-time stipend in year one of the contract, 2.5% pay increase in year two and 2.75% pay increase in year three.

## Classified contracts

**District:** Jackson Local (Stark)

**Settlement date:** March 2023

**Contract term:** three years, effective July 1, 2023

**Particulars:** 3% pay increase in each year of the contract.

If your school has recently settled a contract and you would like SMN to report the settlement information, contact **Sara C. Clark** at (614) 540-4000 or [sclark@ohioschoolboards.org](mailto:sclark@ohioschoolboards.org).

authorized to do so by their boards of education. The ASSET program is comprised of two core training programs: the initial 24-hour certification and an annual eight-hour requalification program. The webpage also addresses the process schools can follow to get OSSC approval for an alternate firearms training program for its armed staff; an FAQ page related to HB 99, posted at <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/67068>; and a webpage dedicated to summarizing key components of HB 99.

### HB 123

We also discussed HB 123, known as the Safety and Violence Education (SAVE) Students Act, which addresses school security, school health curriculum and youth suicide awareness, education and training. The bill required that each school district, no later than March 24 of this year, establish threat assessment teams for each district building serving students in grades six through 12. District buildings are also required to add a threat assessment plan and a protocol for the threat assessment team to their existing school emergency management plans. In addition, the SAVE Students Act tasked OSSC with creating a model threat assessment plan, available at <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/40134>, and


protocol for district use. Schools have been asking many clarifying questions about these provisions, and most of OSBA's discussion with OSSC focused on HB 123.

Following the release of the OSSC model policy to guide districts in updating their local emergency management plans, a question we often received was whether districts should adopt a board policy covering threat assessment teams, trainings and plans. OSSC clarified that the "model policy" includes both the model plan and protocol and was not intended to refer to board policy; it has since updated its website and renamed the document the "OSSC Model Plan." OSSC also confirmed that it has not released or approved any model board policies on threat assessments, so if any districts have been advised to adopt model board policies based on HB 123, it was not based on OSSC guidance. OSBA continues to recommend that districts refrain from adopting a board policy to cover the specifics of its threat assessment plan and instead keep those details within their local emergency management plans.

Also, given the number of resources OSSC has created around threat assessments, OSSC officials distinguished its model policy from its sample emergency operations plan (EOP), which is item 1 under the header "Emergency Management

Plan Requirements" on the OSSC PK-12 School Emergency Management Plans webpage at <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/31619>. The OSSC model plan is longer and more in-depth regarding the HB 123 requirements and how threat assessments will function at the district level, including tips for district building administrators creating their threat assessment plan and protocol. The sample EOP is a more practical document to guide each district's building administrators as they create a compliant emergency management plan based on the individual needs and requirements in each of the district's buildings. If you haven't updated your procedures in light of these new requirements, please make this a priority and consider looking at our articles in the August 2022 and November 2022 issues of PDQ.

Finally, given that improving safety has been a greater priority for schools in recent years, OSSC reiterated that its mission and goal is to educate and assist Ohio schools. Consider using its staff as a resource. The OSSC officials are committed to school safety and were kind and gracious with their time, and OSBA encourages any school district with questions on school safety in general, or questions surrounding legislation in particular, to reach out to them for support.



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# Act, don't react: Navigating difficult situations

by Kristi Robbins, SPHR-SCP  
board and management services  
consultant

Much has been written on the topic of dealing with difficult people. Book titles have evolved from “Coping with Difficult People” to “How to Deal with Annoying People” to “Dealing with People You Can’t Stand” and, my personal favorite, “Since Strangling Isn’t An Option.”

While we can’t change difficult people, we can adjust the way we communicate so they change themselves. That statement is worth repeating: We cannot change others whom we perceive to be difficult, but we can change the way *we* communicate with difficult people, which leads them to changing their own behavior.

One of the best pieces of advice I received early in my career was to act, not react. Easy to say, but difficult to do, especially in the heat of the moment. Learning to act, rather than react, changed the way I approached almost every situation, difficult or not.

More importantly, it improved interactions with others whom I perceived to be difficult, which has typically led to better outcomes for all of us. I learned the importance of acting with purpose and forethought during challenging situations by using a mirror and a magnifying glass ... plus having a lot of patience with myself and others.

Let’s start with the mirror. By looking into a mirror we can assess our own behavior. In other words, how are we contributing to the situation? How are we reacting to our difficult person? What are we projecting when we interact with them? Why does this person bother us so much? What label are we putting on this person? By asking myself these questions in dealing with difficult people, I quickly learned that my actions and reactions were creating my own reality, which was not a positive one.

I also learned that other people do not have the power to raise or lower our self-esteem. High self-esteem is a prerequisite for effectively dealing with difficult people. Some people appear to be difficult because of how they make us feel about ourselves. Think about how these difficult types are affecting you. Which source of self-esteem do they hook? Which source of self-esteem are they trying to fulfill? Their behavior often reflects how they have met their own needs for self-esteem in the past. Think about it.

Once we have reflected upon our own behavior and actions, we need to look through a magnifying glass to examine the behavior of others. Every behavior has a purpose or motive. Is your difficult person behaving in a more passive or aggressive way? Are they focusing on a task or a relationship? What source of self-esteem or need are they trying to fulfill?

According to authors Dr. **Rick Brinkman** and Dr. **Rick Kirschner**, there are four general intents that help us better understand the motivation of others, including the intent to:

- Get a task done.
- Get a task right.
- Get along with people.
- Get appreciation from others.

By observing behavior and listening closely to others, we can better see and hear where people are coming from and adapt our behavior as a result. Once we have identified the root cause of the situation, we are able to adjust our behavior accordingly.

For example, if someone is trying to get something right, their behavior becomes more perfectionistic. One of my memorable difficult people fell into this category. We were preparing to present our annual operating budget to the board of directors for approval. My colleague and I were meeting to review budget projections for my department. When I shared some of my estimates by using words like “about”

and “roughly,” he became frustrated. Once I realized that I was causing his frustration by not being precise, I was able to change my approach and behavior, which, in turn, changed our interaction.

Two essential skills that work in most difficult situations are blending and clarifying. Blending is intended to reduce the differences between us and our difficult people by finding common ground and building rapport. We do this every day without realizing it by blending with others through facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice and body language. Blending is intended to reduce the distance between us and convey the message that we are *with* the other person rather than *against* them.

Clarifying requires us to listen and ask good open-ended questions. By using this skill, we are gathering information rather than reacting, which can help slow a difficult situation and help us understand the specifics of an interaction. Our goal is to reach a deeper and clearer understanding of the other person’s behavior. In addition, asking clarifying questions helps us remain calm and avoid judging others.

When dealing with those whom we label as difficult people, self-awareness and a desire to better understand others will ultimately lead to better relationships and interactions in most situations. It’s a conscious choice we can make to create a better outcome for ourselves and others. After all, there’s a good chance we are someone’s difficult person, right?

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# Strategize messaging to improve community buy-in

by Cheryl W. Ryan  
director of board and management services

The ability to collaborate and reach a group decision is a clear expectation for board of education members. Although the decision is most important, its impact will be less effective if key messages regarding details of the decision aren't effectively communicated.

We encourage boards to determine and explain not only the path the district will embark upon, but also why this decision was needed. Considerations for messaging could include, "Which aspect of the decision does the board see as most important?" or "Which challenges in the district will be addressed or alleviated by this decision?" For school communities to

become invested in — or even excited about — the board's decisions, the message must be unified, easily understood and relatable.

Once the board has agreed on the message, which should explain the factors leading to the decision, how the decision is expected to lead to progress and when results are expected, a conversation and plan to share the message shouldn't be overlooked. Sharing the message appropriately is critical to its success, and this is where administrators, teachers and staff members can have a vital impact. The board must be able to encourage and rely on all district constituents to share their message. These are the people who engage and communicate daily with parents, community partners and students. The board that ensures its message is shared accurately

and consistently will likely see better and faster results.

Although many decisions made by the board are straight-forward, requiring little discussion thanks to the preparation of district administrators, some demand weeks or months of consideration. Board members work individually, wading through reports and background information, sometimes meeting in committees or with other experts, asking questions of the superintendent or treasurer or talking one-on-one with other board members as they seek understanding of not just the problem to be "fixed" but also all potential solutions and their trade-offs. Community members are often unaware of this preparatory work, but administrators and many staff members are. Their assistance in sharing not only the message, but the



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work of the board and administrators in making it, can greatly help ensure its effectiveness.

Absent good distribution of the board's message, it will stay — for all intents and purposes — within the walls of its conference room. The impact of a well-thought-out decision may be dampened or misunderstood. In this time of quick clicks and streaming meetings, hearing something first-hand and in-person is still the best way to share information. Board members are often told by people within the district that the board's decisions weren't heard or — even worse — were misinterpreted. Many will ask why the board “did this instead of that” or “couldn't see that other options were clearly far better.”

There are several possible reasons for muddled messages.

- **One:** The board was well prepared and had good discussion resulting in a shared decision but never shared details of this work during board meetings. Then, it failed to share the decision directly through a succinct and thorough message.
- **Two:** The board discussed an appropriate message but didn't discuss its effective distribution. Working with the superintendent and treasurer on a plan to ensure the message will be heard is often missed. How and when to send the message is also important.
- **Three:** The school community and staff weren't invited to be partners in sharing the message.

Ensuring everyone feels they're an important part of the success of key district decisions will improve the chances of school community buy-in.

- **Four:** The board created and discussed a message but didn't “run it through” before sending it. Listening to the message from the perspective of each key audience may reveal potential pitfalls. How would parents hear this? How is that different from how teachers might hear it?

In the end, a phrase we've all heard so many times remains true as we consider school district decisions made within the board room: It's not what we say, it's how we say it.

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**Blake Regan | Alexander Local (Athens) board member**

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