



READING DIFFICULTIES RISK SCREENING POLICY

It is the intent of the Governing Board (“Board”) of Heartwood Charter School (“HCS” or “Charter School”) to close academic achievement gaps and ensure that students are provided the appropriate tools and instruction to achieve their full potential.

Many pupils with reading difficulties struggle to read without proper identification and support. Early identification and intervention with evidence-based literacy instructional strategies and materials improves literacy outcomes for students at risk of, and with, reading difficulties, including dyslexia.

Definitions

“Kindergarten” does not include transitional kindergarten.

“Reading difficulties” means a barrier that impacts a pupil’s ability to learn to read or improve reading abilities, including dyslexia.

“Screening instrument” means a brief tool administered by an appropriately trained school employee, including, but not limited to, a certificated teacher of record, measuring discrete areas to determine pupils at risk of reading difficulties, including dyslexia.

“English learner” means a student aged 3 through 21 whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the student the ability to meet the challenging State academic standards, the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English, or the opportunity to participate fully in society. This includes an student who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English; an individual who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas and who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the student’s level of English language proficiency; or a student who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant.

Administering Risk Screenings

As part of its comprehensive instructional strategy, HCS shall annually screen students in **kindergarten and grades 1 and 2**, for risk of reading difficulties, including dyslexia (“risk screening”).

HCS may provide additional screenings or diagnostic evaluations as appropriate to support ongoing efforts towards early identification of students at risk of reading difficulties.

HCS shall use the results of the risk screenings to:

- 1) Inform individualized instruction,
- 2) Measure a student’s progress,
- 3) Identify student learning needs, and
- 4) Enable parents and educators to discuss student needs in a more informed way.

HCS utilizes the following culturally, linguistically, and developmentally appropriate screening instruments:

- AMIRA HRM Screening and supplemental support
- STAR Reading Assessment and supplemental supports

The screening instrument(s) identified above provide assessments for both English-speaking and non-English speaking students, in languages reflecting the primary languages of students enrolled in HCS, to the extent assessments in those languages are available.

Students who do not speak sufficient English to be screened with an English-language instrument will be screened in their primary language. If HCS’s adopted screening instrument(s) is not available in a student’s primary language or a language the student is proficient in, the student’s risk for reading difficulties will be evaluated through analysis of the student’s educational and developmental history in combination with the student’s literacy progress consistent with best practices, which includes the California Dyslexia Guidelines. Assessment of that student may include components of screening instruments that do not require English language proficiency. When the student acquires sufficient English language knowledge and fluency to be assessed using the HCS’s screening instruments identified in this Policy, or when a state-approved screening instrument in their primary language becomes available, HCS will assess the student using the appropriate screening instrument.

To determine when during the school year to administer each screening instrument, HCS shall consider whether students have received sufficient instruction in foundational reading skills to support a valid assessment.

HCS employees administering risk screening instrument(s) will be appropriately trained to administer the instrument(s).

Interpreting Risk Screening Results

Risk screening results will be used by HCS to flag for potential risk of reading difficulties, not as a diagnosis of a disability. HCS shall use risk screening results as part of a broader process to further evaluate student needs and progress, identify supports for classroom instruction, enable targeted individual intervention as needed, and allow for further diagnosis if concerns do not resolve.

Assessments utilized in the risk screening process will not be considered an evaluation or diagnostic tool to establish eligibility for special education and related services pursuant to an Individual Education Program (“IEP”) , or an evaluation to determine eligibility for a Section 504 Plan. . However, student data collected through these reading difficulty risk assessments may be used by HCS to recommend that a student receive *further* assessment and evaluation to establish eligibility for an IEP or Section 504 Plan.

Risk screening results will not be utilized for any high stakes purposes, including but not limited to:

- Evaluating teachers of other staff,
- Accelerating (skipping a grade) or retaining a student ,
- Identifying students for gifted or talented education (GATE),
- Reclassifying English learners, or
- Identifying an individual as a student with exceptional needs.

Exemptions

A student may be exempted from HCS’s risk screening in the following circumstances:

- 1) The student’s parent/guardian opts out of the risk screening in writing, or
- 2) With the prior written consent of the parent/guardian if the student:
 - a. Has a current identification or diagnosis of a reading difficulty, reading disorder, or other disability,
 - b. Is eligible for special education and related services under the IDEA or a plan under Section 504, or
 - c. Is currently in the assessment process for eligibility under the IDEA or Section 504 where diagnostic assessments are being utilized which make the reading difficulties risk screening redundant.

If a student enrolls at HCS for the first time in kindergarten or grades 1 or 2 *after* the screening instrument(s) have been administered to all students in that grade for the academic year, HCS will administer the screening within 45 days of the student’s enrollment unless:

- 1) The student's parent/guardian opts out of the reading difficulties risk screening in writing, or
- 2) HCS is provided documentation that the student had a similar reading difficulties risk screening in their prior school for their current grade and the parent/guardian was made aware of the results of the screening.

Parent Notifications

HCS shall provide written notice of the screening to parents/guardians, within fifteen (15) calendar day of the date the screening will occur. The notice shall include the following:

- 1) The date(s) the screening will take place
- 2) Instructions for how a parent/guardian can opt out of the screening for their child in writing

HCS shall notify parents/guardians of the results of any risk screening administered pursuant to this Policy, and information about how to interpret the results, no later than 45 calendar days after the screening occurs.

If a student is identified as being at risk of having reading difficulties after being screened, the notification shall also include information about any available HCS services and supports, appropriate to the specific challenges identified by the screening instrument and other pertinent information about the student. Such supports and services may include but are not limited to, the following:

- Evidence-based literacy instruction;
- Progress monitoring;
- Early intervention in the regular education program;
- One-on-one or small group tutoring; or
- Further evaluation or diagnostic assessment.