



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: December 3, 2025

To: Administrators of Approved Private Schools for Students with Disabilities

From: Kathy Ehling, Assistant Commissioner
Division of Educational Services
Jorden Schiff, Ed.D., Assistant Commissioner
Division of Teaching and Learning

Clarification: Universal Literacy Screening Requirements for Approved Private Schools of Students with Disabilities (APSSDs)

The Learning Equity and Academic Recovery (LEAR) legislation, codified by N.J.S.A. 18A:6-142 through 150, requires that each school district, including Approved Private Schools for Students with Disabilities (APSSDs), conduct, at least twice annually, a literacy screening of every student enrolled in kindergarten through grade three to determine reading proficiency, and provide professional development on best practices in literacy instruction to educators and administrators serving preschool through grade six. This includes classroom teachers, library media specialists, reading and early literacy specialists, speech-language specialists, and educators who support multilingual learners and students with disabilities. All professional learning associated with the LEAR legislation is expected to be completed by June 2026.

Timeline

Because this clarification is being provided after the beginning-of-year screening window has ended, to ensure that APSSDs have adequate time to select a universal literacy screener and train their staff on its use, the NJDOE is establishing adjusted timelines for these schools. APSSDs are expected to follow the timelines outlined below to complete their K-3 literacy screenings and NJ Homeroom submissions in a way that aligns with the LEAR requirements while allowing sufficient preparation time.

Assessment and Submission Timeline:

Collection	Assessment Window	Upload Window
Middle of the Year	Dec. 1, 2025 - Feb. 15, 2026	Feb. 15 - Feb. 28, 2026
End of Year	May 1 - May 31, 2026	June 1 - June 15, 2026

The adjusted timeline and reporting requirements described above apply only to APSSDs. All other local education agencies (LEAs) must continue to follow the timelines outlined in the [July 29, 2025, Broadcast Memo](#). APSSDs should use this adjusted timeline to select a screener, train staff, and administer the K-3 literacy screenings. Appendix B of the [guidance document](#) provides a checklist for screening considerations of diverse learners, and the Department is continuing to develop additional support for students with higher support needs.

Additional Information

The NJDOE has released multiple resources to support implementation of the legislation:

- [The New Jersey Literacy Framework: A Guide to Evidence-Based Literacy Practices & Universal Screeners](#), this includes information about diverse learners such as a checklist in Appendix B;
- [LEARning about Literacy: Synchronous Professional Learning](#); and
- [Learning Management System](#), includes asynchronous educator and administrator training.

Contact Information

Please email the Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery at LEAR@doe.nj.gov and the Office of Special Education special@doe.nj.gov with questions regarding Universal Literacy Screeners, and visit the Learning Equity and Academic Recovery [website](#) for more information.

c: Members, State Board of Education
NJDOE Staff
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network
Garden State Coalition of Schools
NJ LEE Group