





Dyscalculia: Key Components of Effective Screeners



Overview

A screener is an informal tool used to detect early signs of a potential problem, such as difficulties in numeracy or foundational math skills. Teachers and other professionals use informal evaluations and screeners to identify students who may need additional support or formal assessments. A dyscalculia screener can help determine if a student has low numeracy, a weak math foundation, or is suspected of having a learning disability. Dyscalculia is a learning disability that affects how students learn, understand, and remember math (www.thedtri.org). Screeners do not diagnose learning disorders, but they can help guide parents, teachers, and other professionals to find the right support for struggling students. They can be administered by general educators or intervention specialists.

Links

-  [How to Spot Dyscalculia](http://www.childmind.org) (from www.childmind.org)
-  [Types of Tests for Dyscalculia](http://www.understood.org) (from www.understood.org)

WHY THIS MATTERS IN NEW JERSEY

In New Jersey, 32% of students in special education, about 38,000 statewide, have a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) such as dyscalculia.

- With an estimated 8% of the population affected, effective universal screening for math difficulties is essential to identify students early and provide targeted supports.
- Ensure screeners are culturally inclusive.

Screener Best Practices



Evaluate Magnitude (size) and Quantity (amounts)

Students with dyscalculia need more time to understand magnitude and quantity. An appropriate screener will include dot cards, arrays, and groups of objects to test how quickly a student can count and compare amounts.



Evaluate Computation and Mathematical Reasoning

A comprehensive dyscalculia screener will assess mathematical reasoning and thinking, evaluating whether the student can interpret numbers, make connections between objects and patterns, and apply information to solve problems. A good screener will include some basic computations and report both speed and accuracy. Fluency alone does not indicate dyscalculia, but computation of one or more grade levels below their peers can indicate a deeper problem.



Evaluate Math Issues, not Accessibility Factors

A comprehensive screener will be fully accessible to any student. This could mean having both a computer and a paper-and-pencil version, allowing for an adult to read the questions and answer choices, offering multiple languages, and using other accessibility protocols.

