

**NORTHWEST INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**DYSLEXIA PROGRAM REVIEW**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**February 8, 2016**

**Dyslexia Program Evaluation:**

Northwest Independent School District’s Dyslexia program seeks to ensure proper identification of students with dyslexia and provide appropriate academic support to gain the skills and strategies in reading, writing and spelling to build a strong academic foundation for success. To meet this goal, each campus in the district offers services to students with dyslexia. Many students receive services from a specially trained teacher, who uses intensive small group and individual activities to provide services to students with dyslexia. Interventions incorporate the components of a dyslexia program outlined in the Dyslexia Handbook published by the Texas Education Agency. The dyslexia program also utilizes strategies appropriate for struggling readers as well as students identified with dyslexia.

The purpose of this program evaluation in the Northwest Independent School District is multi-faceted and shall ensure results in findings, recommendations, and/or conclusions that:

* Ensure program alignment with district mission, vision, and goals;
* Assess strengths and weaknesses of the program;
* Measure the success of the program in meeting its expressed goals; and/or
* Result in improvements in or revisions to the program.

**Research Questions:**

This evaluation is composed of data from the 2012-2013, 2013-2014, and 2014-2015 school years and will attempt to answer the following questions:

* **What is the identification and referral process for the dyslexia program?**
* **What is the continuum of services for students receiving services for dyslexia?**
* **What are the instructional support strategies for students with dyslexia currently in place?**
* **What level of progress are students in the dyslexia program making?**

**Findings:**

**Research Question 1: What is the identification and referral process for the dyslexia program?**

While the referral process in Northwest ISD has not changed significantly in the past three years, the number of students being referred and qualifying for services has increased dramatically. In 2011-2012, Northwest ISD was serving 402 students. In the three year timespan of the study, 551 students were referred and 343 students have qualified for services bringing the total of identified dyslexic students in Northwest ISD to 745. This is a 46% increase in the number of students receiving services for dyslexia. Northwest ISD has absorbed this number and provided services without adding additional staffing of dyslexia teachers.

The study also showed that parent referrals have increased significantly over the last three years. When a student is referred for dyslexia testing by Northwest ISD, they have completed the RtI process at the campus level. The RtI process in Northwest ISD includes a review of student work, documented interventions, committee reviews and a series of interventions before testing is recommended. However, by TEA guidelines, a parent can also request dyslexia testing be conducted on their child. This request can be made without completing the RtI process. As a result, Northwest ISD has seen a significant increase in parent referrals. In 2012-2013 there were 88 parent referrals, and in 2014-2015 that number had increased to 167. Of the 167 students referred by parents in 2014-2015, 102 students qualified for services.

**Research Question 2: What is the continuum of services for students receiving services for dyslexia?**

At the elementary level, students receiving pull-out services are served through an integrated curriculum; however, a self-reporting survey of teacher respondents show that the majority of dyslexia teachers (21/22) have relied almost exclusively on the SIPPS resource as the primary mode of instruction. This survey will be given again in April 2016 to determine if this ratio has changed based on the added professional development and resources provided during the summer of 2015 and throughout the school year. Recommendations for the two primary pull-out modes are listed below.

**The Integrated Curriculum recommendations are as follows:**

* + The lessons were written for 30-45 minutes, but most choose to do 30 minutes four days a week.
  + Recommend no more than five students to a group.

**The Take Flight (Clara Love Elementary and Hughes Elementary) recommendations are as follows:**

* + The lessons are written for 45 minutes five days a week or one hour four days a week.
  + The Scottish Rite Hospital recommends no more than 6 students per group. Most of NISD groups are 2-3 due to scheduling.

At the secondary level, very few students (only 6 middle school students) accept offered pull-out services for dyslexia. Most of the secondary dyslexia students are served through 504 accommodations by their classroom teachers.

**Research Question #3: What are the instructional support strategies currently in place for students with dyslexia?**

All of the elementary dyslexia teachers were trained in the summer of 2015 at the Scottish Rite Hospital on the Rite Flight program. This training is designed to increase teacher knowledge on dyslexia and provide additional strategies to use within their instruction. Strategies have been incorporated during the school year as part of the Integrated Curriculum plans that teachers are using. In addition, two teachers have been trained on the more intensive Take Flight program and are currently piloting the program on two campuses. The results of both of these models will be assessed both through an additional teacher survey as well as annual literacy assessment comparisons.

At the secondary level, very few students (6) received direct instruction from a dyslexia teacher. However, students identified with dyslexia may receive accommodations through an individual 504 plan.

**Research Question #4: What level of progress are students in the Dyslexia program making?**

Students identified with dyslexia tend to score lower than the general population of students on standardized assessments such as the Reading STAAR and the DRA2; however, the tracking of cohort groups does show an increase in the passing rate. For example, when tracking the students that took the grade 3 reading test in the 2011-2012 school year, only 56% passed, but by the time these students took the grade 6 reading assessment in 2014-2015, the pass rate had increased to 71%. Similar numbers persist in grade 4 from 2011-2012 (60%) to grade 7 in 2014-2015 (75%) and in grade 5 from 2011-2012 (61%) to grade 8 in 2014-2015 (79%).

**Recommendations:**

1. Further study regarding the identification/referral process for dyslexia including the overall RtI program for the District. RtI is designed to develop intervention plans for students at the earliest signs of need. With approximately 40% of students being referred for dyslexia screening not qualifying for services, a review of their needs is the next step in the evolution of student services.
2. Conduct a second survey of dyslexia teachers to determine their perceptions of the implementation of new trainings and resources as well as look at the growth of their students for the 2015-2016 school year.
3. Further study at the secondary level is needed to monitor and assess the progress of dyslexia students that are receiving accommodations through 504 plans. A determination of professional development needs that would allow teachers to provide more effective accommodations may be needed.
4. At the elementary level, Northwest ISD is using a growth measure for DRA2 during the 2015-2016 school year. A review of the progress made by dyslexia students receiving services and the general population will allow Northwest ISD to determine if students are increasing their reading levels at the same pace as their peers.
5. There is a need to compare the growth each year of dyslexia students in reading compared to the general population’s growth. Northwest ISD would benefit from determining if the reading gap is getting larger or smaller between the two groups.
6. A recommendation of a primary resource and training for elementary pull-out services should be made after end-of-year assessments. The SIPPS program, the Rite Flight, and the Take Flight programs are the programs being most frequently implemented and a concentrated area is needed to bring consistency and fidelity to the program.