

Definition of Dyslexia

Texas Education Code (TEC) §38.003 defines dyslexia in the following way: (1) "Dyslexia" means a disorder of constitutional origin manifested by a difficulty in learning to read, write, or spell, despite conventional instruction, adequate intelligence, and sociocultural opportunity. (2) "Related disorders" include disorders similar to or related to dyslexia such as developmental auditory imperceptions, dysphasia, specific developmental dyslexia, developmental dysgraphia, and developmental spelling disability.

<http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/ED/htm/ED.38.htm#38.003>

The **International Dyslexia Association** definition

"Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge."

Adopted by the IDA Board of Directors, Nov. 12, 2002.

Breaking Down the Definition

"Dyslexia is a specific learning disability"

- one specific type of learning disability
- may exist along with other conditions as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or an oral language disorder
- Generally in Texas, dyslexia identification and intervention most often happen through general education rather than special education. Special education and the assessment through IDEA 2004 may occur when dyslexia is associated with factors complicating dyslexia, thus requiring more support than what is available through the general education dyslexia program.

"...neurological in origin"

- When a person has dyslexia, their brain works differently.
- These differences have been shown in studies of the brain.

"characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling."

- The student misreads common words.
- The student stumbles over words when reading.
- A student may read a word correctly once and then misread it another time.
- The student misspells common words and has problems using spelling rules.

“...difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language...”

- The “phonological component” is the sound system of our language.
- Problems with these skills lead to problems in learning to read.
- Surprisingly, intelligence does not always lead to strong reading skills.
- This explains why a child who does well in other areas can struggle with reading.

Phonological processing abilities include:

- phonemic awareness
- phonological memory
- rapid naming

“...unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction”

- it is a surprise that the child struggles to read
- good reading is not predicted by
 - age
 - intelligence
 - other abilities in school
- Good classroom instruction is important!
- Watching how the student responds to good instruction can lead to earlier intervention.

“...secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge”

- If a child struggles to read, that child will read less.
- A child, who reads less, does not “practice” and does not improve as quickly as classmates.
- A child who reads less learns fewer vocabulary words for reading comprehension.
- A child who struggles to read accurately and at a reasonable rate may have difficulty understanding what he/she has read.