

## **Effective Strategies for Teaching Students with Dyslexia and Related Disorders**

Effective literacy instruction is essential for all students and is especially critical for students identified with dyslexia. High-quality core classroom reading instruction can give students identified with dyslexia a foundation upon which intervention instruction can have a more significant impact.

Each school must provide an identified student access at his/her campus to an instructional program that meets the requirements in 19 TAC §74.28(c) and to the services of a teacher trained in dyslexia and related disorders. While the components of instruction for students with dyslexia include good teaching principles for all teachers, the explicitness and intensity of the instruction, fidelity to program descriptors, grouping formats, and training and skill of the teachers are wholly different from core classroom instruction.

Our goal in Friendswood ISD is to provide students with the skills and strategies to "unlock" the code of reading. Services can range from daily pull-out sessions to inclusion or monitoring in the general education classroom.

### **Specialized Dyslexia Intervention**

For the student who has not benefited from the research-based core reading instruction, the components of instruction will include additional specialized instruction as appropriate for the reading needs of the student with dyslexia. It is important to remember that while intervention is most preventative when provided in kindergarten and first grade, older children with reading disabilities will also benefit from focused and intensive remedial instruction. Instructional decisions for a student with dyslexia must be made by a committee (§504 or ARD) that is knowledgeable about the instructional components and approaches for students with dyslexia. In accordance with 19 TAC §74.28(c), districts shall purchase or develop a reading program for students with dyslexia and related disorders that incorporates all the components of instruction and instructional approaches in the following sections.

### **Critical, Evidence-Based Components of Dyslexia Instruction**

**Phonological awareness**—“Phonological awareness is the understanding of the internal sound structure of words. A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in a given language that can be recognized as being distinct from other sounds. An important aspect of phonological awareness is the ability to segment spoken words into their component phonemes” (Birsh, 2011, p. 19).

**Sound-symbol association**—Sound-symbol association is the knowledge of the various speech sounds in any language to the corresponding letter or letter combinations that represent those speech sounds. The mastery of sound-symbol association (alphabetic principle) is the foundation for the ability to read (decode) and spell (encode) (Birsh, 2011, p. 19). “Explicit phonics refers to 26 an organized program in which these sound symbol correspondences are taught systematically” (Berninger & Wolf, 2009, p. 53).

**Syllabication**—“A syllable is a unit of oral or written language with one vowel sound. The six basic types of syllables in the English language include the following: closed, open, vowel-consonant-e, r-controlled, vowel pair (or vowel team), and consonant-le (or final stable syllable). Rules for dividing syllables must be directly taught in relation to the word structure” (Birsh, 2011, p. 19).

**Orthography**—Orthography is the written spelling patterns and rules in a given language. Students must be taught the regularity and irregularity of the orthographic patterns of a language in an explicit and systematic manner. The instruction should be integrated with phonology and sound-symbol knowledge.

**Morphology**—“Morphology is the study of how a base word, prefix, root, suffix (morphemes) combine to form words. A morpheme is the smallest unit of meaning in a given language” (Birsh, 2011, p. 19).

**Syntax**—“Syntax is the sequence and function of words in a sentence in order to convey meaning. This includes grammar and sentence variation and affects choices regarding mechanics of a given language” (Birsh, 2011, p. 19).

**Reading comprehension**—Reading comprehension is the process of extracting and constructing meaning through the interaction of the reader with the text to be comprehended and the specific purpose for reading. The reader’s skill in reading comprehension depends upon the development of accurate and fluent word recognition, oral language development (especially vocabulary and listening comprehension), background knowledge, use of appropriate strategies to enhance comprehension and repair it if it breaks down, and the reader’s interest in what he or she is reading and motivation to comprehend its meaning (Birsh, 2011, pp. 9 and 368; Snow, 2002).

**Reading fluency**—“Reading fluency is the ability to read text with sufficient speed and accuracy to support comprehension”(Moats & Dakin, 2008, p. 52). Teachers can help promote fluency with several interventions that have proven successful in helping students with fluency (e.g., repeated readings, word lists, and choral reading of passages) (Henry, 2010, p. 104).

Both the teacher of dyslexia and the regular classroom teacher should provide multiple opportunities to support intervention and to strengthen these skills; therefore, responsibility for teaching reading and 27 writing must be shared by classroom teachers, reading specialists, interventionists, and teachers of dyslexia programs.

### **Delivery of Dyslexia Instruction**

While it is necessary that students are provided instruction in the above content, it is also critical that the way in which the content is delivered be consistent with research-based practices.

Principles of effective intervention for students with dyslexia include all of the following:

**Simultaneous, multisensory (VAKT)**—“Multisensory instruction utilizes all learning pathways in the brain (visual, auditory, kinesthetic-tactile) simultaneously in order to enhance memory and learning” (Birsh, 2011, p. 19). “Children are actively engaged in learning language concepts and other information, often by using their hands, arms, mouths, eyes, and whole bodies while learning” (Moats & Dakin, 2008, p. 58).

**Systematic and cumulative**—“Systematic and cumulative instruction requires the organization of material follow order of the language. The sequence must begin with the easiest concepts and progress methodically to more difficult concepts. Each step must also be based on elements previously learned. Concepts taught must be systematically reviewed to strengthen memory” (Birsh, 2011, p. 19).

**Explicit instruction**—“Explicit instruction is explained and demonstrated by the teacher one language and print concept at a time, rather than left to discovery through incidental encounters with information. Poor readers do not learn that print represents speech simply from exposure to books or print” (Moats & Dakin, 2008, p. 58). Explicit Instruction is “an approach that involves direct instruction: The teacher demonstrates the

task and provides guided practice with immediate corrective feedback before the student attempts the task independently” (Mather & Wendling, 2012, p. 326).

**Diagnostic teaching to automaticity**—“Diagnostic teaching is knowledge of prescriptive instruction that will meet individual student needs of language and print concepts. The teaching plan is based on continual assessment of the student’s retention and application of skills” (Birsh, 2011, p. 19.). “This teacher knowledge is essential for guiding the content and emphasis of instruction for the individual student”(Moats & Dakin, 2008, p. 58). “When a reading skill becomes automatic (direct access without conscious awareness), it is performed quickly in an efficient manner” (Berninger & Wolf, 2009, p. 70).

**Synthetic instruction**—“Synthetic instruction presents the parts of any alphabetic language (morphemes) to teach how the word parts work together to form a whole (e.g., base word, derivative)” (Birsh, 2011, p. 19). x  
**Analytic instruction**—“Analytic instruction presents the whole (e.g., base word, derivative) and teaches how the whole word can be broken into its component parts (e.g., base word, prefix, root, and suffix)” (Birsh, 2011, p. 19).

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