



**Bullard ISD  
District Dysgraphia  
Plan**

**2021-2022**

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## **Definition and Characteristics of Dysgraphia**

For purposes of identification and assessment, Bullard ISD will use the following definition of “dysgraphia”:

*Dysgraphia is best defined as a neurodevelopmental disorder manifested by illegible and/or inefficient handwriting due to difficulty with letter formation. This difficulty is the result of deficits in graphomotor function (hand movements used for writing) and/or storing and retrieving orthographic codes (letter forms) (Berninger, 2015). Secondary consequences may include problems with spelling and written expression. The difficulty is not solely due to lack of instruction and is not associated with other developmental or neurological conditions that involve motor impairment.*

### **Primary characteristics of dysgraphia include difficulty with:**

- Variably shaped and poorly formed letters
- Excessive erasures and cross-outs
- Poor spacing between letters and words
- Letter and number reversals beyond early stages of writing
- Awkward, inconsistent pencil grip
- Heavy pressure and hand fatigue
- Slow writing and copying with legible or illegible handwriting

### **Additional consequences may include:**

- Difficulty with unedited written spelling
- Low volume of written output as well as other aspects of written expression

### **Dysgraphia is not:**

- Evidence of a damaged motor system
- Part of a developmental disability that has fine motor deficits (e.g., intellectual disability, autism, cerebral palsy)
- Secondary to a medical condition (e.g., meningitis, significant head trauma, brain trauma)
- Association with generalized development motor or coordination difficulties (Developmental Coordination Disorder)
- Impaired spelling or written expression with typical handwriting (legibility and rate) (Berninger, 2004)

**Dysgraphia can be due to:**

- Impaired feedback the brain is receiving from the fingers
- Weaknesses using visual processing to coordinate hand movements and organize the use of space
- Problems with motor planning and sequencing
- Difficulty with storage and retrieval of letter forms (Levine, 1999)

**Procedures for the Assessment and Identification of Students with Dysgraphia****Initial Evaluation Pathways:**

The identification of writing disabilities, including dysgraphia, will follow one of two procedures. A district will typically evaluate for dysgraphia through §504. On the other hand, if a student is suspected of having a disability within the scope of IDEA 2004, all special education procedures must be followed.

Data Gathering:

The academic history of each student will provide the school with the cumulative data needed to ensure that the writing difficulties are not due to lack of appropriate instruction in handwriting, spelling, and written expression. This information should include data that demonstrates that the student was provided appropriate instruction and include data-based documentation of repeated assessments of achievement at reasonable intervals (progress monitoring), reflecting formal assessment of student progress during instruction. This cumulative data also includes information from parents/guardians. Sources and examples of cumulative data are provided in Figure 2.1.

<b>Figure 2.1 Sources and Examples of Cumulative Data</b>	
Vision screening	Universal screenings
Parent reports of concerns	School attendance
Medical history	Full individual and initial evaluation
Teacher reports of classroom concerns	Outside evaluations
Accommodations or interventions provided	Curriculum based assessment measures
Samples of written work	Observation of instruction
Academic progress reports (report cards)	Speech and language assessment
GT assessments	Instructional strategies provided with student responses
State assessments	Parent survey

Formal Evaluation:

After data gathering, the next step is formal evaluation. This is used to gather evaluation data. Formal evaluation includes both formal and informal data. All data will be used to determine whether the student demonstrates a pattern of evidence for dysgraphia.

*Notification and Permission:*

When formal evaluation is recommended, the school completes the evaluation process as outlined in §504 or IDEA 2004. Procedural safeguards under IDEA and Section 504 must be followed.

*Referral to Special Education:*

At any time during the assessment for dysgraphia, identification process, or instruction related to dysgraphia, students may be referred for evaluation for special education services. At times, students will display additional factors that may complicate the identification of dysgraphia and may require more support than what is available through general education. In such cases, a referral to special education for evaluation and possible identification as a child with a disability within the meaning of IDEA 2004, should be made (20 U.S.C. §1400 et seq.).

*Tests and Other Evaluation Materials:*

- Include material tailored to assess specific areas of educational need and not merely materials that are designed to provide a single general intelligence quotient
- Selected and administered so as to ensure that when a test is given to a student with impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills, the test results accurately reflect the student's aptitude or achievement level, or any other factor the test purports to measure, rather than reflecting the student's impaired skills
- Selected and administered in a manner that is not racially or culturally discriminatory
- Include multiple measures of a student's written abilities such as informal assessment information (e.g. anecdotal records, district universal screenings, progress monitoring data, criterion-referenced assessments, results of informal handwriting assessment, classroom observations)
- Administered by trained personnel and in conformance with the instructions provided by the producer of the evaluation materials
- Used for the purpose of assessment measures being valid and reliable
- Provided and administered in the student's native language or other mode of communication and in the form most likely to yield accurate information regarding what the child can do academically, developmentally, and functionally, unless it is clearly not feasible to provide or administer

**Parents/guardians always have the right to request a referral for a dysgraphia assessment at any time.**

*Domains to Assess:*

Bullard ISD administers measures that are related to the student's educational needs. Areas for assessment are provided in Figure 2.2.

<b>Figure 2.2 Areas for Assessment</b>		
<b>Academic Skills</b>	<b>Cognitive Processes</b>	<b>Possible Additional Areas</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Letter formation</li><li>● Handwriting</li><li>● Word/sentence dictation (timed and untimed)</li><li>● Copying of text</li><li>● Written expression</li><li>● Writing fluency (both accuracy and fluency)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Memory for letter or symbol sequences (orthographic processing)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Phonological Awareness</li><li>● Phonological Memory</li><li>● Working memory</li><li>● Letter retrieval</li><li>● Letter matching</li></ul>

It is rare for a child to have ONLY dysgraphia without any reading deficits. Therefore, data regarding the student's reading skills (word identification, decoding, fluency, and comprehension) should be included in the assessment process.

**Procedures for Identification:**

The identification of dysgraphia is made by a §504 committee or in the case of a special education referral, the admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee. In order to make an informed determination, the committee must include members who are knowledgeable about the following:

- Student being assessed
- Evaluation instruments being used
- Interpretation of the data being collected
- The handwriting processes
- Dysgraphia characteristics and related disorders
- Dysgraphia instruction
- District, state and federal guidelines for assessment

**Review and Interpretation of Data and Assessments:**

To appropriately **understand** evaluation data, the committee of knowledgeable persons (§504 or ARD) must **interpret** test results in light of the student's educational history, linguistic background, environmental or socioeconomic factors, and any other pertinent factors that affect learning.

The committee (§504 or ARD) must first determine if a student's difficulties in the areas of writing and spelling reflect a pattern of evidence for the primary characteristics of dysgraphia with unexpectedly low performance for the student's age and educational level in some or all of the following areas:

- Handwriting
- Writing fluency (accuracy and rate)
- Written expression
- Spelling

Based on the above information and guidelines, should the committee (§504 or ARD) determine that the student exhibits weaknesses in writing and spelling, the committee will then examine the student's data to determine whether these difficulties are **unexpected** in relation to the student's other abilities, sociocultural factors, language difference, irregular attendance, or lack of appropriate and effective instruction. For example, the student may exhibit strengths in areas such as reading comprehension, listening comprehension, math reasoning, or verbal ability yet still have difficulty with writing and spelling. Therefore, it is **not** one single indicator but a **preponderance of data** (both informal and formal) that provides the committee with evidence for whether these difficulties are **unexpected**.

#### **Dysgraphia Identification:**

If the student's difficulties are unexpected in relation to other abilities, the committee (§504 or ARD) must then determine if the student has dysgraphia. If the student has dysgraphia, the committee also determines whether the student has a disability under §504. A student has a disability under §504 if the physical or mental impairment (dysgraphia) **substantially** limits one or more major life activities, such as the specific activity of writing (34 C.F.R. §104.3(j)(1)).

Additionally, the §504 committee in determining whether a student has a disability that substantially limits the student in a major life activity (writing), must not consider the ameliorating effects of any mitigating measures the student is using. If the §504 committee does not identify dysgraphia, but the student has another condition or disability that substantially limits the student, eligibility for §504 services related to the student's other condition or disability should be considered. The §504 committee will also consider whether the student is eligible for accommodations. This is a separate determination from the determination that the student has dysgraphia.

If the student with dysgraphia is found eligible for special education, the ARD committee must include on the student's IEP the appropriate writing instruction, which might include instruction from a related service provider.



For students presenting an outside evaluation for dysgraphia, the following will be considered:

- Was the evaluation conducted by an individual who is knowledgeable about the characteristics of dysgraphia?
- Is the evaluation considered valid?
- Is the evaluation comparable to the evaluation standards that Bullard ISD would conduct?

Students identified as having dysgraphia from an outside source will be evaluated for eligibility in the Bullard ISD program. Bullard ISD may choose to accept the outside assessment or may reassess the student. In either situation, a duly constituted campus committee (§504 or ARD) will determine the identification status of a student enrolled in Bullard ISD.

### **Instruction for Students with Dysgraphia:**

Once it has been determined that a student has dysgraphia, Bullard ISD shall provide an appropriate instructional program for the student. The following procedures will be followed:

- The §504 or ARD committee will make instructional decisions for a student with dysgraphia.
- Bullard ISD shall purchase a writing program or develop their own writing program for students with dysgraphia.
- Parents/guardians of students eligible under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, §504, will be informed of all services and options available to the student under the federal statute.
- Parents/guardians of students eligible under IDEA 2004 will be informed of all services and options available to the student under the federal law.

The instructional program will include handwriting, written expression, and spelling as appropriate. The content will be delivered with the principles of effective intervention for students with dysgraphia including the following:

- Simultaneous, multisensory
- Systematic and cumulative
- Explicit
- Diagnostic teaching to automaticity

### **Program Exit Criteria:**

The dysgraphia instructional program exit criteria are based on a thorough consideration of a preponderance of student data. The committee (§504 or ARD) will make the decision to exit a student from the district's dysgraphia instructional program if such evidence is available to support the decision. Such evidence may include:

- Completion and/or mastery of all the objectives in the district's dysgraphia instructional program
- Data that shows consistent improvement in student's handwriting abilities.
- Lack of progress due to factors such as behavior and/or absenteeism that prevent the student from benefiting from the district's dysgraphia instructional program.

**This lack of progress must be documented in either the student's §504 committee minutes or ARD committee minutes along with documentation indicating district remediation.**