

Whitney Independent School District Dyslexia Program Procedures

Definition of Dyslexia:

The International Dyslexia Association defines dyslexia as a specific learning disability that is neurological 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 the growth of vocabulary and background knowledge. (adopted by the International Dyslexia Association Board of Directors, November 12, 2002) The Dyslexia Handbook - Update September 2021

Texas Education Code (TEC) §38.003 defines dyslexia and related disorders in the following way: “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.

“Related disorders” include disorders similar to or related to dyslexia, such as developmental auditory imperception, dysphasia, specific developmental dyslexia, developmental dysgraphia, and developmental spelling disability. TEC §38.003(d)(1)-(2) (1995) <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/ED/htm/ED.38.htm#38.003>

Characteristics of Dyslexia:

Students identified as having dyslexia typically experience primary difficulties in phonological awareness, including phonemic awareness and manipulation, single-word reading, reading fluency, and spelling. Consequences may include difficulties in reading comprehension and/or written expression. These difficulties in phonological awareness are unexpected for the student’s age and educational level and are not primarily the result of language difference factors. Additionally, there is often a family history of similar difficulties.

The following are the primary reading/spelling characteristics of dyslexia:

- Difficulty reading words in isolation
- Difficulty accurately decoding unfamiliar words
- Difficulty with oral reading (slow, inaccurate, or labored without prosody)
- Difficulty spelling

It is important to note that individuals demonstrate differences in degree of impairment and may not exhibit all of the characteristics listed above.

The reading/spelling characteristics are most often associated with the following:

- Segmenting, blending, and manipulating sounds in words (phonemic awareness)
- Learning the names of letters and their associated sounds
- Holding information about sounds and words in memory (phonological memory)
- Rapidly recalling the names of familiar objects, colors, or letters of the alphabet (rapid naming)

Consequences of dyslexia may include the following:

- Variable difficulty with aspects of reading comprehension
- Variable difficulty with aspects of written language
- Limited vocabulary growth due to reduced reading experiences

Dyslexia Mission Statement

The mission of the Whitney ISD Dyslexia Program is to provide all eligible students with the multi-sensory and phonological awareness skills necessary to compensate for deficiencies in the areas of reading, writing, and spelling in order to nurture strong self-esteem and to provide opportunities for academic success.

Dyslexia Program Goals

Whitney ISD strives to monitor student progress regularly and provide interventions that address the needs of individual students. Early identification and targeted programs of instruction are keys to student success. The goals of the WISD Dyslexia Program include:

- Screen, refer, and evaluate students in grades K-12 who may be at risk of dyslexia and related disorders;
- Provide targeted instructional programs for students with dyslexia and related disorders;
- Provide staff development that includes the characteristics of dyslexia, evaluation of dyslexia, and procedures for the referral process, intervention strategies, and accommodations; and
- Provide information to parents that includes awareness of the characteristics of dyslexia and related disorders, the evaluation and referral process, instructional strategies and resources that parents can use at home to assist their child, accommodations available for state testing, and information regarding the Talking Books Program.

Screening

- All kindergarten students are screened for dyslexia in May using mClass
- All first-grade students are screened for dyslexia in January using mClass

Whitney ISD shall recommend assessment for dyslexia if the student demonstrates characteristics and risk factors indicated in The Dyslexia Handbook, poor performance in one or more areas of reading and spelling that is unexpected for the student's age/grade or below level performance on the dyslexia screener.

Referral Process

Teachers, parents, or adult students may initiate the referral process. All referrals must go through the same process.

1. The teacher or parent notices that the student demonstrates the characteristics of dyslexia.
2. The teacher requests a meeting of the student assistance team.
3. The school gathers data and presents it to the committee and determines to either recommend testing or continue with current interventions.
4. If further evaluation is recommended, the diagnostician and school personnel provide the parent with information regarding the evaluation process and a copy of the procedural safeguards and rights.
5. Parent or adult student provides consent for a full individual evaluation (FIE).
6. Once the evaluation is complete, an ARD committee meeting is held to review the results and determine eligibility for services.

Sources of Data

Cumulative sources of data are used to evaluate academic progress and determine the appropriate course of action to enable the student's success. Sources of data may include but are not limited to health screenings, attendance, academic reports and progress, assessment results (screeners, classroom assessments, district curriculum assessments, and state assessment results) teacher observations, intervention documentation, progress monitoring, accommodations, samples of schoolwork and parent observation and family history.

Assessment, Identification, and Placement

The formal assessment process begins once signed parental consent for the evaluation is obtained and follows the timeline below:

1. Within 45 instructional days of parent consent for assessment, the student must be evaluated by individuals/professionals who have been trained in the evaluation of students for specific learning disabilities, including dyslexia and related disorders.
2. In compliance with Chapter 504 and IDEA, the evaluator will use approved assessment instruments for the purpose of identifying the characteristics of a disability.
3. The diagnostician/evaluator will integrate the sum of the data collected into the FIE assessment report.
4. Within 30 calendar days of evaluation completion, the ARD committee will meet to review the data and make a determination of eligibility for services.
5. Upon determination of eligibility, the ARD committee determines a plan of services for the student.

PEIMS Reporting

In compliance with state reporting requirements, identified students will be coded with the appropriate PEIMS codes according to the services provided to the student. The effective date of these codes is the date of the student's formal identification and parent consent. Upon identification and consent, a WISD PEIMS Coding Sheet will be completed and submitted to the PEIMS clerk to identify the student as dyslexic.

Dyslexia Program & Instruction Design

The International Dyslexia Association recommends a structured literacy approach for educators who are teaching children with dyslexia. This specific approach includes several topics that are particularly important for dyslexic learners to master. Teaching is systematic and cumulative, which means students can depend on material being presented in a logical sequence from the most basic concept to more difficult ideas. By allowing students to master objectives and gradually build on the skills they learn, teachers promote confidence in student's abilities to learn new topics. Additionally, a structured literacy approach consists of explicit instruction where teachers continuously interact with students and ensure that all educational concepts are delivered clearly and attainably. Finally, these specific instructional best practices encourage educators to engage in diagnostic teaching, which involves continuously adapting lessons to meet the unique needs of each student.

Accommodations

Accommodations and specific teaching strategies for students with dyslexia play a critical role in their classroom success. They ensure that a dyslexic student has adequate time to process information and the resources needed to learn effectively. Accommodations may include but are not limited to assistive technology, step-by-step instructions, repeated directions, verbal and visual prompts, writing assistance, highlighting essential information, and preferential seating to reduce stimuli and give them access and opportunity to ask questions and seek assistance.

Reading by Design

Whitney ISD uses the Reading by Program for Dyslexia Instruction. Reading by Design is a systematic, multisensory set of instructional routines that includes content and pedagogically appropriate practices compiled from sources, such as Foundations for Literacy: Structures and Techniques for Multisensory Teaching of Basic Written English Language Skills by Aylett Royall Cox (1980). This program is aligned with research-based practices for developing literacy and is designed for students with basic reading difficulties, such as dyslexia. This intervention follows an intensive, explicit, and cumulative design for the remediation of reading and writing skills at all grade levels. Reading by Design includes all of the components of instruction and instructional approaches supported through research as cited in The Dyslexia Handbook.

- Phonological Awareness - The purpose of the phonological awareness activities is to foster development in the understanding of the internal linguistic structure of words.
- Sound/Symbol Association - connecting the phoneme, grapheme, and letter name.
- Orthography - Orthographic knowledge is an essential component of successful word recognition, reading, decoding, and spelling.
- Morphology - The understanding of word parts (morphemes) and how they combine to form words.
- Syntax, Semantics, & Pragmatics - Students must have the ability to gain meaning from their reading and communicate and interact with others effectively.
- Reading Comprehension - the ability to read text, process, and interpret meaning.
- Reading Fluency - Fluency provides students a bridge between word recognition and comprehension.

Instruction in Reading by Design

- **Simultaneous, Multisensory (VAKT)**

Reading by Design teaches reading, writing, spelling, and verbal and written expression by engaging the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic modalities simultaneously (i.e., mirrors, skywriting, sound boxes, syllable boards, linkages).

- **Systematic and Cumulative**

The Reading by Design lesson format is systematic and the scope and sequence are sequential and cumulative. It progresses from the syllable types (i.e. closed syllable, open syllable, vowel-consonant-e syllable, vowel pair syllable, final stable syllable, and vowel-r syllable) through structural analysis of multisyllabic words, including morphological awareness.

- **Explicit Instruction**

The Reading by Design lesson format is explicitly taught by the teacher through direct instruction, modeling, guided practice, and independent practice.

- **Diagnostic Teaching to Automaticity**

Students enter the Reading by Design Program based on the initial dyslexia assessment data and the specific learning needs of each individual student. Reading by Design contains review lessons and Mastery Checks throughout each of the five volumes of the intervention to ensure adequate student progress and learning.

- **Synthetic Instruction**

Reading by Design presents the parts of the alphabetic language that teach how the word parts work together to form a whole during the new learning, syllabication practice, and reading application.

- **Analytic Instruction**

Reading by Design teaches how whole words may be broken into component parts (i.e. syllables, morphemes) during new learning, syllabication practice, reading application, and extended reading passage practice.

Instructor Qualifications

The Reading by Design program is taught by a certified teacher who has received training in the program through Region 12 Education Service Center. Dyslexia Intervention Fundamentals with Reading by Design is a 30-hour course where participants learn the fundamentals of dyslexia intervention through a review of Texas dyslexia laws and current research, as well as best practices in dyslexia instruction. They dive into evidence-based components of instruction and explore continuums for developing reading ability in students with dyslexia. They also learn how to deliver daily intervention utilizing Reading by Design, a systematic, explicit, and intensive reading program.

Roles of the Dyslexia Interventionist

The District Dyslexia Interventionist is responsible for:

- Delivering the instructional reading program with fidelity and not allowing other duties to prevent her from providing assigned therapies.
- Working to develop a schedule so that all identified students receive services in a timely manner with a small teacher-to-student ratio not to exceed 1:8.
- Administering and gathering pre/post instructional data to monitor program effectiveness and student growth in the area of reading.
- Communicating with student's teachers, parents, and administrators as needed regarding student progress.
- Maintaining all necessary documentation and attendance records required by the district and the dyslexia program.
- Attending professional development to stay abreast of current research and development in dyslexia and research-based reading programs.
- Providing information to families on the characteristics of dyslexia, resources for families, and the referral process.

General Training

Whitney ISD staff will receive training annually on the characteristics of dyslexia, what to look for, the referral process, and teaching strategies and accommodations for students with disabilities.

Dyslexia and Standardized Testing

Students identified with dyslexia or a related disorder will be provided accommodations including accessibility features and designated supports for state assessments if they meet the eligibility requirements to receive them. In addition, accommodations may be requested for assessments including the PSAT or SAT per College Board eligibility guidelines.

Parent Engagement

Information regarding dyslexia and its characteristics, the Dyslexia Handbook, and the Talking Books Program will be mailed home to every identified student in WISD.

Links to the Whitney ISD Dyslexia Program Handbook, The Texas Dyslexia Handbook, and the Texas Talking Books Program will also be provided through the district website.

Program Evaluation

The Whitney ISD Dyslexia Program will be evaluated annually to determine the success of the program based on student reading data. In addition, PEIMS data will be reviewed to determine if there is a need for additional staffing based on the number of students identified and receiving services, so that a low student-teacher ratio may be maintained.