

# Whitney Independent School District

## Dyslexia Manual/Procedures

2024-2025



## **Whitney Independent School District**

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Whitney ISD does not discriminate against any person because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, or any other basis prohibited by law.

Whitney ISD's Board of Trustees is responsible for ensuring campuses are implementing procedures for identifying and providing appropriate, evidence-based instructional services to all students with dyslexia or related disorders. The district's procedures must be implemented according to the approved strategies for screening, individualized evaluation, and techniques for treating dyslexia and related services as described in *The Dyslexia Handbook: Procedures Concerning Dyslexia and Related Services* ("The Dyslexia Handbook").

### **Whitney Independent School District Dyslexia Program Goals**

Whitney Independent School District strives to have an exemplary dyslexia program for students in grades K-12. Through a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) in which MTSS/RtI (Response to Intervention) is a component, WISD will monitor students regularly utilizing formal and informal observations, student data, and other assessments, including but not limited to district screeners, district curriculum based assessments, writing samples and/or written evidence of curriculum-based activities. All campuses, through screeners, campus based assessments, and a MTSS/RtI process, will identify students with dyslexia and related disorders and provide appropriate, individualized services.

The Whitney Independent School District is committed to the development and implementation of a dyslexia program that addresses both the Texas Education Code at §38.003 and the Texas Administrative Code at §74.28 and will ensure that each campus completes the following steps.

- 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.

### **Definition and Characteristics of Dyslexia - Texas Education Code §38.003:**

A student who struggles with reading and spelling often puzzles teachers and parents/ guardians. The student displays the ability to learn in the absence of print and receives the same classroom instruction that benefits most children; however, the student continues to struggle with some or all of the many facets of reading and spelling. This student may be a student with dyslexia.

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” includes disorders similar to or related to dyslexia, such as developmental auditory imperceptions, dysphasia, specific developmental dyslexia, developmental dysgraphia, and developmental spelling disability.*

The International Dyslexia Association defines “dyslexia” in the following way:

*Dyslexia is 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 growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.*

Adopted by the International Dyslexia Board of Directors,  
November 12, 2002

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. These consequences are typically unexpected for the student’s age and educational level. These differences are not a result of language acquisition or such factors.

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

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

*It is important to note that individuals demonstrate differences in degree of impairment and may not exhibit all 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

**Multi-Tiered Symptoms of Support (MTSS)/Response to Intervention (RtI)**

In Texas and throughout the country, there is a focus on MTSS/RtI or tiered intervention support as a vehicle for meeting the academic and behavioral needs of all students. Current federal legislation under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA), calls for the use of universal assessments for early identification of struggling students before they fail. In fact, state law requires the use of early reading assessments that are built on substantial evidence of best practices. Carefully chosen, these assessments can give crucial information about a student’s learning and can provide a basis for the tiered intervention model. Through tiered intervention supports, schools can document students’ learning strengths and difficulties, provide supplemental instruction, and monitor reading achievement progress for students at risk for dyslexia or other reading difficulties.

Regardless of the Response to Intervention support in place, parents/ guardians always have the right to request a referral for assessment at any time through a Full and Individual Evaluation (FIE).

**State and Federal Law Regarding Early Identification and Intervention Prior to Formal Evaluation**

In accordance with TEC §28.006, Whitney ISD will administer the Amplify mCLASS K–6 Literacy Assessment & Dyslexia Screening in kindergarten, first, and second grades to determine a students’ reading development and emerging comprehension skills.

Annually, Whitney ISD will administer the BOY to all kindergarten, first, and second graders within the first six weeks of school. The MOY assessments will be given after the Christmas break, and the EOY will be administered in late Spring.

- WES will use the two reading interventionists and instructional coach to administer the assessments.
- The 2024-2025 testing schedule is:

Assessment	Beginning of Year	Middle of Year	End of Year
MClass Reading (K-2)	Aug. 19-Sept. 6	Jan. 8-24	April 29-May 10

TEC §28.006 also requires school districts to administer a reading instrument at the beginning of seventh grade to students who did not demonstrate reading proficiency on the sixth grade state reading assessment. Therefore, Whitney ISD will administer the Texas Middle School Fluency Assessment (TMSFA) before the end of the first six-week period. Melissa Marbut, WISD DTC, will provide the list of students to the middle school

principal, WMS Dean of Students, and 7th grade RLA teacher. The principal will then set a schedule and provide a substitute teacher for testing.

- THE TMSFA is scheduled to be administered on September 10 and 11, 2024.

Based on the reading instrument results, a student may be determined to be at risk for dyslexia and/or other reading difficulties. This information is provided to the student's parent/ guardian. In Whitney ISD, the campus Intervention Support Team will use the "Dyslexia Screener Letter" document as a means of documentation and communication for both parents and school staff. This document is only one of the numerous ways in which our school campuses and teachers will continuously communicate the student's progress and/or lack of with parents/guardians.

In addition to the notification letter, an accelerated (intensive) reading program that appropriately addresses and targets the specific nature of the individual student's reading difficulties may be implemented. Parents/guardians will be given access to the Talking Books program as an additional resource. The information from reading instruments administered under TEC§28.006 will be one source of information or accumulated data in deciding whether or not to recommend a student for assessment.

For all students, the following sources of data may be used to assist in the determination of a needed assessment for dyslexia. These sources may include, but are not limited to: student performance in the classroom, a student's response to specific and targeted interventions provided to the student, performance on state and district mandated test grades, a review of the student's grades, a historical review of a student's academic progress and areas of weakness, performance or curriculum based data in reading, writing and spelling, teacher/parent/guardian input, and work samples.

### **Results of Screening**

Each school district and open-enrollment charter school shall report through the Texas Student Data System Public Education Information Management System (TSDS PEIMS) the results of the screening for dyslexia and related disorders required for each student in Kindergarten and each student in Grade 1 in accordance with TEC, §38.003(a).

- Appropriate staff at the campus level will complete a Whitney ISD PEIMS Coding Report, as needed, and submit it to the campus PEIMS representative to properly code students in Ascender.
  - Whitney ISD will use the Whitney ISD PEIMS Coding Report to identify students who will be coded for dyslexia services.
  - Whitney ISD will use the Whitney ISD PEIMS Coding Report to identify dyslexia risk codes.
  - Whitney ISD will use the Whitney ISD PEIMS Coding Report to identify dyslexia screening exceptions.

## **Data Gathering Procedures and Consideration of Evaluation**

As a result of monitoring a student's progress or lack thereof within the components of reading, the teacher shares progress monitoring data and other relative data with the Student Assistance Team (SAT). The committee may determine that additional data and/or documentation is needed to be gathered and utilized so that further action can be considered and/or determined. The academic history of each student will be provided to ensure the underachievement in a student suspected of having dyslexia is not due to lack of appropriate instruction in reading. This information should include data that demonstrates that the student was provided appropriate instruction and include data-based documentation of repeated evaluations of achievement at reasonable intervals (progress monitoring), reflecting formal evaluation of student progress during instruction.

The following data collected by the teacher and the Campus Intervention Team committee will be used within the decision-making process of a student's academic progress. This will assist in determining what actions are needed to ensure a student's improved academic performance.

### **Cumulative Data**

- Vision and hearing screening
- Teacher reports of classroom concerns
- Class and/or district reading assessments
- Accommodations, MTSS/RtI Interventions and progress monitoring data provided by teachers
- Attendance records
- Parent conference notes and input
- Samples of schoolwork applicable to academic concerns
- Academic progress reports (report cards)
- Speech and Language screening or services, if applicable
- Gifted/Talented assessments, if applicable
- Results of testing for Limited English Proficiency (Home Language Survey)
- State student assessment results and recommendations as described in TEC § 39.022
- Results of special education evaluation, if applicable
- Consideration of outside evaluations conducted, submitted by parent/guardian
- Curriculum-based assessment measures (unit or module assessments)
- Instructional strategies provided and student's response to the instruction
- K-grade 2 reading instrument results as required in TEC §28.006
- 7th grade reading instrument results as required in TEC §28.006
- Progress Monitoring: This information collected should include data-based documentation of repeated assessments of achievement at reasonable intervals. This reflects progress monitoring of the student's performance.

Data that supports the student received conventional (appropriate) instruction and that the difficulties are not primarily the result of socio-cultural factors which include language differences, irregular attendance, or lack of experiential background.

### **Dyslexia Evaluation Guidelines**

Students enrolling in Whitney ISD shall be assessed for dyslexia and related disorders at appropriate times (TEC §38.003 (a)). The appropriate time depends upon multiple factors including the student's reading performance, reading difficulties, limited response to supplemental and scientifically based reading instruction, teachers input, and parent/guardian input. Additionally, the appropriate time for assessing is early within a student's school career (19 TAC §74.28). Regardless of a student's age/grade, if recommended for an assessment based on a review of the collection of data, the student will be assessed.

When formal evaluation is recommended for completion, Whitney ISD follows the request for evaluation process described below. This process for the dyslexia evaluation follows IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) Guidelines. Once the evaluation is completed, a FIE: Full and Individual Evaluation is presented to an ARD Committee: Admission, Review, and Dismissal Committee.

This committee will serve as the individuals who will make appropriate educational decisions for the student. If the student is determined to meet the necessary components that define the condition of dyslexia, the outcomes of programming will include a recommendation of special education eligibility, based on a Specific Learning Disability along with an identification of dyslexia and an individual education plan (IEP) for the student along with accommodations that will support the student's educational progress across all academic settings. Sources of referrals or requests for evaluation may include but are not limited to: parents/guardians and school personnel.

### **MTSS/ Rtl Request for Dyslexia Evaluation**

All Dyslexia evaluations will go through an FIE (Full and Individual Evaluation).

This process includes ongoing communication with the student's parent/ guardian, as they must be notified prior to the request for evaluation being made. Once the request is made and documented through the MTSS/Rtl committee data and concerns are shared with the campus Child Find contact, they will move the referral forward to the district office for approval or denial.

The evaluation for dyslexia will be conducted and completed by a multidisciplinary group of professionals that will include evaluation specialists (Diagnostician and/or LSSP), along with campus based Dyslexia Specialist or teachers of Dyslexia Instruction. In collaboration with campus based staff and gathered data that has been submitted and collected, the evaluation is completed. Through this collaborative and multidisciplinary evaluation process, the student's evaluation is reported within an FIE Report.

## **Parent/ Guardian Request for Dyslexia Evaluation**

A parent/guardian may request to have his/her child evaluated by school staff for dyslexia or a related disorder. When a parent/ guardian requests the assessment to be completed, the campus MTSS/RtI committee will follow district Child Find guidelines by providing the request, data, and concerns to the campus Child Find contact, which will follow the guidance and timelines as defined within IDEA.

Timeline: A total of 15 school days from the date the school receives a written request.

**Evaluation is recommended:** An informed decision is made by the campus Child Find contact to evaluate, based on a thorough review of the collected data. The parent/guardian is contacted by the campus Child Find contact with the campus based decision to have the evaluation conducted, as the campus Child Find contact turns in the required documents/data as defined within the guidelines of district expectations. Within the 15 day timeframe, the parent/guardian is contacted by school evaluation staff to set up a mutual and agreeable time in which consent is obtained.

**Evaluation is not recommended:** Alternatively, after an informed data based decision is made and recommended by the Child Find contact that an evaluation is not educationally necessary; the parent/guardian is notified by the campus Child Find contact that the student will not be assessed for Dyslexia and/or a related disorder. Along with this recommendation determined by the campus, the parent/guardian is given the necessary documents or guidance, as outlined within IDEA. This includes a Copy of the Procedural Safeguards and Prior Written Notice: Notice of Refusal.

## **Referral for Dyslexia Evaluation: Special Education Students**

If a student is currently eligible for special education and exhibits the characteristics of dyslexia or related disorders and is then referred for assessment by the ARD committee, assessment procedures for students under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) will be followed.

- Current and historical data will be collected from teachers, parents, and district resources.
- Assessment data from prior special education assessments may be utilized, and/or additional assessment may be conducted by personnel trained in assessment to evaluate students for dyslexia and related disorders.
- Once the evaluation is completed, the FIE: Full Individual Evaluation Report is presented to the ARD committee for further consideration.

## **Dyslexia Identified Transfer Students**

Per Texas Education Agency guidelines: Newly enrolled or transfer students identified as having dyslexia or a related disorder from a previous district within Texas will be considered for eligibility within the district's program of multisensory based instruction. Once the student enrolls, assessment records will be requested by campus staff. Once the evaluation reports have been obtained, the campus will notify the Dyslexia Specialist, provide a copy for review and will receive further guidance.



Commensurate services to what the student received prior to enrollment shall be considered and/or provided once the campus is aware of the student's educational needs based on the established dyslexia.

### **Referral for Evaluation: Current 504 Dyslexia Students for SPED Evaluation Prior to the end of 2024–2025**

At times, students may display additional factors complicating the established dyslexia and requiring more support than what is available through dyslexia instruction and accommodations provided. At other times, students with severe dyslexia or related disorders will be unable to make adequate academic progress within any of the programs for dyslexia or related disorders. In such cases, a referral to special education for evaluation will be made upon review of data collected and shared with the campus Educational Diagnostician by the Campus 504 Committee.

All students currently receiving Dyslexia services under 504 will be evaluated for special education prior to the end of the 2024–2025 school year or be informed that they will no longer qualify for the Standard Protocol Dyslexia Instruction. The following procedures will be as following:

- The district Dyslexia Teacher will send a list of students that will need to be considered for SPED evaluation prior to the end of the 2024–2025 school year to the Diagnostician.
- The Diagnostician will set up a referral meeting with the parent and district staff.
- If parents agree to sign consent, a special education evaluation will be completed within federal and state regulation timelines.
  - An ARD committee meeting will be held to determine future Dyslexia services for the student.
- If the parent does not agree to a special education evaluation, the Diagnostician and district staff will explain current state regulations to the parent letting them know that after the 2024–2025 school year, the Standard Protocol Dyslexia Instruction will no longer be available to students that do not qualify for special education services.

### **Referral for Evaluation from MTSS/Rtl Committee for Emergent Bilinguals**

Emergent bilingual students include students served through a Bilingual or English as a Second Language program, as well as students designated as an emergent bilingual whose parent/ guardian have denied services. Since the identification and service delivery process for dyslexia must be aligned to the student's linguistic environment and educational background, involvement of the LPAC is required.

### **Required Additional Data Gathering Language**

Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) documentation TEC 89.1220 (g, h, i) that is necessary when identifying EBs with dyslexia.

- Initial home language survey;

- Assessment related to identification for limited English proficiency (oral language proficiency tests and norm-referenced tests);
- Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) information for four language domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing);
- Linguistic instructional accommodations provided to address language needs;
- Type of language program model provided and language of instruction;
- Previous schooling in and outside of the United States.

### **Students who Struggle to Read in Their Native Language**

Similar measures to previously discussed assessments, in the student's native language, are used. This may require that dyslexia personnel work with the bilingual staff to administer the measure and determine if student performance is lower than would be expected for the student's age/grade. Additional assessment of oral language proficiency should be completed for the dyslexia evaluation due to the importance of the information for consideration in relation to academic challenges, planning the assessment, and interpreting assessment results.

#### **Required Additional Assessment:**

- Comprehensive oral language proficiency testing should be completed in English and the student's native language whenever possible.
- If the student has received academic instruction in his/her native language, as well as English, then the "Domains to Assess" needs to be completed in both languages to the appropriate extent.

### **Considerations for Native English Speakers in a Dual Language Environment**

English dominant students participating in a dual language two-way immersion program are exposed to a second language (Spanish) for their core academic instruction. These students will develop their skills in Spanish over time in the following sequence: listening, speaking, reading, and then writing. Students may need linguistic instructional accommodations in the classroom.

### **Procedures for Students Presenting Outside Independent Evaluations for Dyslexia Services**

For students whose parents/ guardians present evidence of outside independent evaluations addressing dyslexia, the outside evaluation (assessment) must have been administered by an individual certified to conduct an educational evaluation and knowledgeable about dyslexia; be considered valid and comparable to the evaluation standards that Whitney ISD would conduct; and comply with the requirements set forth in Section 504 and the TEA requirements specified in TEA's, The Dyslexia Handbook – Revised 2021.

Additionally, TEA requirements as outlined in House Bill 3928 FAQ section has identified certain expectations in regards to the referral process for a dyslexia assessment and/or eligibility. An outside independent evaluation is considered a single source of data. IDEA requires that data must be provided from a variety of

sources in determining a child's eligibility for services. Case law allows the District to maintain the right to conduct their own evaluation.

### **Evaluation Tests and Measures**

The student is assessed for dyslexia using appropriate tests and assessment measures by a trained professional as outlined in The Dyslexia Handbook. After completion of the assessments, a report will be compiled summarizing all scores, observations, and recommendations of the assessor. The following are required areas of assessment in determining whether a student has dyslexia.

#### 1. Academic Assessment

- Letter Knowledge (name and associated sound)
- Reading words in isolation
- Decoding unfamiliar words accurately
- Reading fluency (rate, accuracy, and prosody are assessed)
- Reading comprehension

#### 2. Cognitive Processes

- Phonological/phonemic awareness
- Rapid Naming of symbols or objects

#### 3. Additional Areas for Consideration

- Vocabulary
- Listening Comprehension
- Verbal expression
- Written expression
- Handwriting
- Memory for letter or symbol sequences (orthographic processing)
- Mathematical calculation/reasoning
- Phonological memory
- Verbal working memory
- Processing Speed

### **Dyslexia Criteria and Identification**

The identification of eligibility under dyslexia is made by the ARD committee. When considering the condition of dyslexia, In addition to required ARD committee members, the committee should also include members who have specific knowledge of:

- the reading process,
- dyslexia and related disorders, and
- dyslexia instruction

A determination must first be made regarding whether a student's difficulties in the areas of reading and spelling reflect a pattern of evidence for the primary characteristics of dyslexia with unexpectedly low performance for the student's age and educational level in some or all of the following areas:

- Reading words in isolation
- Decoding unfamiliar words accurately and automatically
- Reading fluency for connected text (rate and/or accuracy and/or prosody)
- Spelling (an isolated difficulty in spelling would not be sufficient to identify dyslexia)

If the student's difficulties are **UNEXPECTED** in relation to other abilities, the ARD committee must then determine if the student has dyslexia. For EBs, an LPAC representative must be included on the ARD committee. The list of questions below must be considered when making a determination regarding dyslexia.

**Questions for the ARD/Section 504 Committee to Determine the Identification of Dyslexia**

- Does the data show the following characteristics of dyslexia?
  - Difficulty with accurate and/or fluent word reading
  - Poor spelling skills
  - Poor decoding ability
- Do these difficulties (typically) result from a deficit in the phonological component of language? (Cognitive Processes) (Please be mindful that average phonological scores alone do not rule out dyslexia.)
- Are these difficulties **UNEXPECTED** for the student's age in relation to the student's other abilities and provision of effective classroom instruction?(adequate intelligence, not average)

**Findings and Recommendations:** Reported within the FIE will be summarizations, conclusions, and/or recommendations on the basis of the report findings. This may include an identification of Dyslexia and/or a Specific Learning Disability within the reading area, or findings that the student does not meet the criteria to be identified as having the condition of Dyslexia or a Specific Learning Disability. Based upon the student's educational need, the ARD committee may refer the student for eligibility under Section 504 for dyslexia.

**Re-evaluation for Dyslexia:** As defined within TEC §38.003(b-1), the following is stated when in consideration of a re-evaluation for dyslexia: Unless otherwise provided by law, a student determined to have dyslexia during testing under Subsection (a) or accommodated because of dyslexia may not be retested for dyslexia for the purpose of reassessing the student's need for accommodations until the district reevaluates the information obtained from previous testing of the student.

**Program Description & Components**

Once it has been determined that a student has dyslexia, Whitney ISD shall provide an appropriate instructional program for the student (TEC §38.003).

The following procedures are generally followed:

- Instructional decisions for a student with dyslexia are made by the ARD Committee/ Section 504 Committee that is knowledgeable about the student, the meaning of the evaluation information, and instructional components and approaches for students with dyslexia.
- Whitney ISD shall provide a phonics curriculum that uses systematic direct instruction, without the incorporation of three-cueing, in kindergarten through third grade to ensure all students obtain necessary early literacy skills.
  - Whitney ISD will use Amplify Texas Elementary Literacy Program (ELP): ELAR and SLAR K–5 at Whitney Elementary School and Whitney Intermediate School.
  - Whitney ISD will use Reading By Design at all campuses to serve dyslexic students.
- Parents/guardians of students eligible under the Section 504 Rehabilitation Act or the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) will be informed of all services and options available to the student under that federal law.
- Teachers who provide the appropriate instruction for students with dyslexia will be trained in the professional development activities specified by the district and/or campus decision making committee. As stated in 19 TAC, §74.28, the teachers who provide appropriate instruction for students with dyslexia must be trained and be prepared to implement instructional strategies that utilize individualized, intensive, multisensory, phonetic methods and a variety of writing and spelling components. They may serve as consultants in the area of dyslexia and related disorders to general education, intervention specialists, and special education teachers.
  - Whitney ISD specialists who serve the dyslexic student population will complete the Reading by Design Structured Literacy Certification Program with Education Service Center Region 12.
- If the student with dyslexia is found eligible for special education services in the area of reading, and the ARD committee determines that the student's instructional needs for reading are most appropriately met in a special education placement, the student's individualized education program (IEP) must include appropriate reading instruction. Appropriate reading instruction includes the components and delivery of dyslexia instruction listed in The Dyslexia Handbook. If a student has previously met special education eligibility, the ARD committee should include goals that reflect the need for dyslexia instruction in the IEP and determine the least restrictive environment for delivering the student's dyslexia intervention.

### **Parent/ Guardian Refusal or Revocation of Direct Dyslexia Services**

If the parent/guardian refuses dyslexia services for a special education student, the ARD committee will complete the Prior Written Notice and document this request in the ARD minutes. The parent/guardian must be in attendance at the meetings to refuse services.

## **Dyslexia Placement Guidance**

**IDEA 2004** requires that public schools (districts and charters) serve students with disabilities with their nondisabled peers, to the maximum extent appropriate (34 CFR 300.114 (a) (2) (i). This requirement specifically includes students in public school or private institutions or other care facilities. Additionally, schools must ensure that a student with a disability is removed from the general educational environment (including removal to separate schools or special classes) only when the nature of severity of the student's disability is such that he/she cannot be educated in general education classes, even with the use of supplementary aids and services (34 CFR 300.114 (a) (2).

ARDs should consider addressing the critical, evidence-based components of dyslexia instruction (phonological awareness, sound symbol association, syllabication, orthography, morphology, syntax, reading comprehension and reading fluency).

## **Instructional Services**

Once a student is identified as meeting criteria for a student with dyslexia, there are several courses of action available for use depending on the needs and accommodations of the individual student.

- Assign appropriate accommodations based on the student's unique need for the disability of dyslexia
  - Accommodations must be provided based on current screening and individual student needs.
- Instruction in the regular classroom with accommodations by the regular education teacher
- Instruction by a Dyslexia Specialist with specially designed dyslexia instruction (SDI) along with necessary accommodations followed by all teachers that service the student
- Instruction by Special Education teacher trained in the district's Specially Designed Instruction services for dyslexia
- Instruction by SpEd teacher focusing on student's individual reading deficits with a variety of instructional tools

The intervention program should be offered in a small class setting and include reading, writing, and spelling as appropriate for each student. The major instructional strategies should utilize individualized, intensive, and multisensory methods as appropriate.

Components of instruction, as appropriate for the reading needs of the student, should include:

- **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 [phonemic awareness]." (Birsh, 2018, p. 26).

- **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, 2018, p. 26). “Explicit phonics refers to 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. Instruction must include the six basic types of syllables in the English language; closed, open, vowel-consonant-e, r-controlled, vowel pair (or vowel team), and final stable syllable. Syllable division rules must be directly taught in relation to the word structure”(Birsh, 2018, p. 26).
- **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 morphemes are combined to form words. A morpheme is the smallest unit of meaning in the language” (Birsh, 2018, p. 26).
- **Syntax**—“Syntax is the set of principles that dictate sequence and function of words in a sentence in order to convey meaning. This includes grammar, sentence variation, and the mechanics of language” (Birsh, 2018, p. 26).
- **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, 2018, p.14; 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). Fluency also includes prosody. 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).

Instructional approaches, as appropriate to meet the instructional needs of the student, should include:

- **Simultaneous, multisensory** —“Teaching is done using all learning pathways in the brain (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile) simultaneously in order to enhance memory and learning” (Birsh, 2018, p. 26). “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). 43

- **Systematic and cumulative**—“Multisensory language instruction requires that the organization of material follows the order of the language. The sequence must begin with the easiest concepts and most basic elements and progress methodically to more difficult material. Each step must also be based on [elements] already learned. Concepts taught must be systematically reviewed to strengthen memory” (Birsh, 2018, p. 26).
- **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**—“The teacher must be adept at prescriptive or individualized teaching. The teaching plan is based on careful and [continual] assessment of the individual’s needs. The content presented must be mastered to the degree of automaticity” (Birsh, 2018, p. 27). “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 the language and then teaches how the parts work together to form a whole” (Birsh, 2018, p. 27). • **Analytic instruction**—“Analytic instruction presents the whole and teaches how this can be broken into its component parts” (Birsh, 2018, p. 27)

### **Dyslexia Program Monitoring Status**

Consideration to move to monitor status will be given based on the student’s progress in the dyslexia program and/or successful completion of the district’s dyslexia program(s), as measured by mastery checks completed at regular intervals. Additional criteria to move to monitor status may include but is not limited to: present levels of student performance in the areas of reading fluency, accuracy, and comprehension, grades from progress reports or report cards, state assessment data, benchmarks, teacher and/or parent/guardian observations/checklists, currently provided accommodations and individual dyslexia program progress data.

### **Monitoring of Students: General Education and Special Education**

General education students served under Section 504 in grades K-12, who have completed/transitioned from the Whitney ISD dyslexia instructional program, will be monitored by the campus 504 coordinator, student’s teachers, dyslexia teacher, and parents. Monitoring may include, but is not limited to the collection/evaluation of:

- progress reports
- report cards



- state assessment data
- teacher reports/checklists
- parent/ guardian reports/checklists
- counselor reports
- other program reports
- additional assessment data

Special education students who have completed/ transitioned from the instructional program will be monitored by special education teachers and staff, as defined within the IEP and ARD process.

**Providers of Dyslexia Instruction**

Teachers, such as reading specialists, master reading teachers, general education classroom teachers, or special education teachers are not required to hold a specific license or certification to provide dyslexia intervention for students; however, they must at a minimum have additional documented dyslexia training aligned to 19 TAC §74.28(d) and must deliver the instruction with fidelity.

- Whitney ISD specialists who serve the dyslexic student population have all completed the Reading by Design Structured Literacy Certification Program with Education Service Center Region 12. Specialists for 2024-2025 include:

Staff Member	Role
Lara Maggi Massengale	Whitney ISD Dyslexia Coordinator Whitney Intermediate School Specialist
Jennifer Copeland	Whitney Elementary School Specialist
Kristina Matthaei	Whitney Elementary School Specialist
Haley Becker	Whitney Intermediate School Specialist
Jennifer Fonseca	Whitney Middle School Specialist

**Roles of Dyslexia Specialist**

Whitney ISD ensures that the dyslexia specialist will:

- Deliver instructional reading program (Reading By Design) for identified dyslexic students with fidelity. Completing “other duties as assigned” by campus/district administration shall NOT prevent the Dyslexia Specialist from providing their assigned dyslexia interventions. This is a compliance/FAPE issue.
- Administer and gather mastery checks and instructional data to monitor program effectiveness and student growth in the area of reading.
- Communicate with student’s teachers, administrators and parents/ guardians as needed regarding student’s progress.
- Maintain all necessary student documentation
- Provide parent/guardian awareness and support

- Attend professional development each year to stay abreast of current research and development in dyslexia and research-based reading programs as assigned by the District.
- Assist in organizing and/or conducting training at their assigned campus to support and ensure general classroom teacher knowledge on dyslexia.
- Attend 504/ARD meetings for current and new students when applicable.
- Comply with all state and federal laws as well as district policies.

### **Dyslexia Parent Awareness**

Each school district and open-enrollment charter school shall provide information to parents/guardians of students with dyslexia and related disorders that includes:

- awareness and characteristics of dyslexia and related disorders;
- information on testing and diagnosis of dyslexia and related disorders;
- information on effective strategies for teaching students with dyslexia and related disorders;
- awareness of information on accommodations and modifications, especially those allowed for standardized testing;
- information on eligibility, evaluation requests, and services available under IDEA and the Rehabilitation Act, §504, and information on the MTSS/RtI process; and contact information for the relevant regional and/or school district or open-enrollment charter school specialists.
- School districts and open-enrollment charter schools shall provide to parents/ guardians of children suspected to have dyslexia or a related disorder a copy or a link to the electronic version of the "Dyslexia Handbook: Procedures Concerning Dyslexia and Related Disorders."

Whitney ISD will send the ESC Region 12 Dyslexia Program Awareness Document to all parents/guardians of dyslexic students and will post it on the district website.

### **Dysgraphia**

Texas state law requires districts and charter schools to identify students who have dyslexia and related disorders. TEC §38.003 identifies the following examples of related disorders: developmental auditory imperception, dysphasia, specific developmental dyslexia, developmental dysgraphia, and developmental spelling disability. Recent research in the field of dysgraphia has prompted the addition of the following guidance regarding the evaluation, identification, and provision of services for students with dysgraphia. Dysgraphia is 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.

The characteristics of dysgraphia include the following:

- 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 of dysgraphia may also include:

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

### **Procedures for Identification of Dysgraphia**

The referral process for dysgraphia is the same as dyslexia. The process of identifying dysgraphia will follow Child Find procedures for conducting a full individual and initial evaluation (FIIE) under the IDEA.

Documentation of the following characteristics of dysgraphia could be collected during the data gathering phase:

- Slow or labored written work
- Poor formation of letters
- Improper letter slant
- Poor pencil grip
- Inadequate pressure
- Excessive erasures
- Poor spacing between/inside words
- Inability to recall accurate orthographic patterns for words
- “b” and “d” reversals beyond developmentally appropriate time
- Inability to copy words accurately
- Inability of student to read what was previously written
- Overuse of short familiar words such as “big”
- Avoidance of written tasks
- Difficulty with visual-motor integrated sports or activities

Schools should recommend evaluation for dysgraphia if the student demonstrates impaired or illegible handwriting that is unexpected for the student’s age/grade or impaired handwriting that interferes with spelling, written expression, or both that is unexpected for the student’s age/grade.

### **Data Gathering**

The collection of various data will provide information regarding factors that may be contributing to or primary to the student's struggles with handwriting, spelling, and written expressions. This information should include data that demonstrate that the student was provided appropriate instruction and include data-based documentation of repeated evaluations of achievement at reasonable intervals, reflecting formal evaluation of student progress during instruction