



Fort Worth ISD
Dyslexia/Dysgraphia Program
Family Handbook

2023-2024

DYSLEXIA SERVICES A Division of Specialized Academic Support Services



My Child Was Diagnosed with Dyslexia, What Should I Know?

While dyslexia can make reading more difficult, with the right instruction almost all individuals with dyslexia can learn to read. Many people with dyslexia have gone on to accomplish great things. Among the many dyslexia success stories are Jay Leno, Stephen Spielberg, Walt Disney, Charles Schwab, and Richard Branson.

Dyslexia is a neurological condition caused by a different wiring of the brain. There is no cure for dyslexia. However, with the right instruction, individuals with dyslexia become proficient readers and writers. Dyslexia is not caused by low intelligence; many intellectually gifted people have dyslexia.

While the school years can be challenging for dyslexic learners, their exceptional gifts and talents have made them some of the most successful people in the world –*outside of the classroom*. So while some people may look at dyslexia as a disability, it is actually a learning difference that may be accompanied by some impressive strengths.

Some of those strengths may include:

- high level of creativity
- perseverance
- ability to see patterns, connections, and similarities
- excellent problem solving abilities
- strong reasoning skills
- ability to see the big picture

Because of these talents, people with dyslexia tend to excel in certain careers/fields:

- science\research
- creative fields such as graphic arts, marketing, architecture, design, and photography
- engineering
- mechanics
- software design
- robotics
- athletics

However, successful persons with dyslexia are found in all fields and jobs.

As parents and educators, we have a tremendous amount of influence on our children. Get to know their strengths to help them dream and set goals for themselves. We need to educate our students about dyslexia, encourage them, foster their strengths, and make them aware that they can be anything they choose to be.

Questions Your Child May Have About Dyslexia

What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a learning difference that makes reading, writing, and spelling more difficult.

How did I get dyslexia?

You were born with it, just like you were born with blue eyes, brown hair, etc. It is a difference in how your brain processes language.

Is there something wrong with my brain?

No, the road your brain takes to read is simply different.

What does the word dyslexia mean?

The word, dyslexia, comes from “dys” which means difficulty, and the Greek word “lexia” which means words. So, the word dyslexia literally means, “Difficulty with words.”

Does it mean I am dumb?

No, people with dyslexia have adequate to above average intelligence.

Will my dyslexia ever go away?

No, it is a lifelong condition; however, with proper instruction reading and writing become easier.

Why do I have to leave my classroom for dyslexia instruction?

People with dyslexia need to train the brain to read a different way. Not everyone gets to be in this special reading class. Only other kids with dyslexia get to learn this new method; it can be like learning a secret language. PLUS, you'll find out there are lots of other kids just like you!

What Can I Expect from Fort Worth ISD?

Dyslexia Identification Process

FWISD adheres to the Texas Dyslexia Handbook referral process and identification criteria.

Dyslexia Instruction

Fort Worth ISD uses Neuhaus Language Enrichment, Nuehaus Basic Language Skills, and Project Read curriculum. All three of these programs are based on the Orton-Gillingham methodology that includes the critical evidence-based components of dyslexia instruction:

- **Phonological Awareness:** Orally Manipulating word parts and sounds in words.
- **Sound-Symbol Association:** Re-teaching the letter/sound system using multiple senses like sight, sound, and touch at the same time.
- **Syllabication and Morphology:** Analyzing the structure of words by recognizing syllable types, common division patterns, prefixes, roots, and suffixes.
- **Orthography:** Improving spelling by teaching the rules of English, predictable patterns, formulas, and common word parts.
- **Reading Accuracy and Fluency:** Strategies to increase reading rate and accuracy that ultimately lead to comprehension.
- **Syntax:** the arrangement of words and phrases to create well-formed sentences in a language.
- **Reading Comprehension:** Constructing meaning from what is being read.

Format of Instruction:

- Small group that includes a maximum of 6 students and may include multiple grade levels
- Taught by a specialist trained in characteristics of dyslexia and multisensory instruction
- Orton-Gillingham programs are sequential, meaning that each lesson builds on the previous lesson. Therefore, newly identified students should not join previously established groups that are further along in the program. It is best that they start at the beginning of the program whenever possible.
- Grades K-5:
 - Typically, 45-minute classes, 4 days a week
 - Students are scheduled from their English/Language Arts intervention time, whenever possible. Students will be able to attend all special events and field trips with their homeroom class.
- Grades 6-8:
 - 1 class period, 5 days a week
 - The Dyslexia Reading Course will take the place of an elective
- Grades 9-12:
 - 45 minutes twice a week during their Reading I or Reading II class

Communication of Progress:

- The dyslexia teacher will provide a progress report every six /nine weeks depending on the campus grading period. Students identified with dyslexia through 504 and students served through SpEd will receive an IEP progress report.
- Upon program completion, your child will continue to receive needed accommodations.
- Because dyslexia is a life-long condition, students remain eligible for accommodations they routinely use, even in college. Additionally, 504 or IEP plans are reviewed and updated annually.
- We encourage you to create a folder or binder to store all communications from your child's teacher. These documents may be necessary for your child to access needed supports when applying to college or trade schools. Make sure to retain all 504/IEP paperwork.

How Can I Support My Child at home?

Reading Support

- Read to your child or have him/her listen to audiobooks. This will allow your child to develop a robust vocabulary and will develop his/her background knowledge leading to improved reading comprehension.
- Share the reading. Take turns reading sentences, paragraphs, or pages with your child.
- Read the passages to your child when the point of the homework is to answer questions about the text. It is not cheating!
- Practice lists of high frequency words to the point of automatic recognition. More than 50% of all texts are made up of high frequency words. (Your child's dyslexia teacher can provide you with a list if needed)
- Use fingers to cover parts of words so chunks can be recognized in compound words, longer words, words with suffixes, etc.
- Turn on text-to-speech options on home devices. This allows your device to read highlighted text to the user. This includes websites, e-books, .pdf files, etc.

Spelling Support

- People with dyslexia may be able to memorize words for spelling tests, but then do not spell correctly in written work.
- Consider helping your child unblend the individual sounds in words. For example, d-o-g.
- Allow them to use spell check or speech-to-text software.
- Teach them to ask Siri to spell for them.

Writing Support

- Focus on quality not quantity
- Focus on creativity and development rather than the mechanics of writing.
- Turn on speech to text options in settings on home computers. This allows your child to speak his/her compositions instead of typing every word. Generally, compositions are more detailed when using speech to text.

Math Support

- Read the problems to your child. The goal is to solve the math problem, not take a reading test. It is not cheating!
- Allow your child to check his/her finished work with a calculator.
- Allow your child to use math charts, fraction bars, multiplication grids, place value charts, etc. to complete homework. People with dyslexia frequently have trouble memorizing facts which can affect calculations but not their ability to understand the problem.

Tech Support

- There are many useful technology assistive apps/software that can support a student with dyslexia, and many of which are free. These include:
 - Microsoft Dictate/Immersive Reader
 - Grammarly
 - Online dictionaries/thesaurus
 - Don Johnston Tools
 - Google Voice Typing

Homework Support

- Create a color-coding system to help organize and manage assignments
- Create a designated time and place for homework. Remember your child is likely very tired at the end of his/her school day and may need a break before tackling more school work.
- Use a clock or timer to break assignments into smaller chunks with breaks in between.
- Use/create mnemonics such as “**M**y **V**ery **E**ducated **M**other **J**ust **S**erves **U**s **N**achos” to help remember the 8 planets

Reliable Resources

Reading for Parent\Guardian

- *Overcoming Dyslexia* by Sally Shaywitz, M.D.
- *Straight Talk about Reading* by Susan L. Hall and Louisa C. Moats, Ed. D.
- *Brainiac* by Ellen Braaten, PhD and Brian Willoughby, PhD
- *Parenting the Struggling Reader* by Louisa Moats and Susan Hall
- *Late, Lost, and Unprepared* by Joyce Cooper-Kahn and Laurie Dietzel, PhD
- *All Kinds of Minds* by Mel Levine
- *A Whole New Mind* by Daniel Pink

Books for talking to your child about dyslexia

- *The Alphabet War* by Diane Burton Robb
- *Thank you, Mr. Falker* by Patricia Polacco
- *The Wild Book* by Margarita Engle
- *Fish in a Tree* by Lynda Mullaly Hunt
- *Tom's Special Talent* by Kate Gaynar

Our Favorite Websites

1. [Texas Education Agency/Dyslexia](#) – State Dyslexia Handbook
2. www.dyslexiaida.org International Dyslexia Association
 - Recommended Reading for Children and Teens with learning disabilities
 - Parent resources and FAQ Fact Sheets
3. www.understood.org
 - Research based articles that are frequently updated and geared for parents\guardians
 - Mini-simulations to let you experience the impact of dyslexia on your child and how your child experiences certain situations
4. www.nessy.com Enrichment activities designed for the child with dyslexia
5. www.chadd.org (Children and Adults with ADHD)
6. www.learningally.org (digital library for blind and dyslexic people)
 - Over 80,000 titles, including textbooks, required novels, and books for fun
 - Useful for ages 6 through adult
 - All students in FWISD have access to a free account. If your child does not know his/ her login, reach out to his/her dyslexia teacher.
7. <https://www.tsl.texas.gov/tbp/aboutus> Talking Book Program
 - The Talking Book Program (TBP) provides free library services for Texans of any age who are blind or have a visual, physical, or reading disability. Registered TBP patrons may borrow books and magazines in digital audio, Braille, and large print.
 - Materials and playback machines are mailed to your door, completely free of charge—you do not have to pay for postage when you return them. Eligible Texas residents who cannot read standard print material in the usual manner can complete an application and return it by mail. TBP will call you to set up an

account after the application is approved. Contact us for any questions or comments you may have.

Social Media Facebook Groups

- FWISD Special Education PTA
- Discovering Dyslexia –Tarrant County
- Decoding Dyslexia Texas-Facebook