

2024-25 Dyslexia Teachers & Home Campus Contact Information

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High School, Alternative Education Center (AEC) & Youth Center (YC)					
Regarding dyslexia therapists assigned at high schools, Alternative Education Center (AEC) & Youth Center (YC) or if you have any questions or concerns, please contact SOM/Dyslexia Supervisor, Heidi Helfferich, @ 432-456-5128 or heidi.helfferich@ectorcountysd.org for assistance.					

Texas Education Agency (TEA)

<https://tea.texas.gov/academics/special-student-populations/dyslexia-and-related-disorders>

2024 Texas Dyslexia Handbook

<https://tea.texas.gov/academics/special-student-populations/special-education/texas-dyslexia-handbook.pdf>

1. DEFINITIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF DYSLLEXIA

The student who struggles with reading and spelling often puzzles teachers and parents. 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.

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>

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

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological 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 Association 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.

Characteristics and Consequences of Dyslexia

Primary reading/spelling characteristics of dyslexia are difficulties with:

- Reading words in isolation
- Accurately decoding unfamiliar words
- Oral reading (slow, inaccurate, or labored without prosody)
- Spelling

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:

- 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:

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

Sources for Characteristics and Consequences of Dyslexia

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Fletcher, J. M., Lyon, G. R., Fuchs, L. S., & Barnes, M. A. (2018). *Learning disabilities: From identification to intervention*. (2nd ed.) New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

The International Dyslexia Association. (2018). *Knowledge and practice standards for teachers of reading*, (2nd ed.). Retrieved from <https://app.box.com/s/21gdk2k1p3bnagdfz1xy0v98j5ytl1w>.

Moats, L. C., & Dakin, K. E. (2008). *Basic facts about dyslexia and other reading problems*. Baltimore, MD: The International Dyslexia Association.

Evidence-Based Core Reading Instruction (Tier I)

TEC §28.0062 requires each local education agency (LEA) to provide for the use of 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. LEAs must ensure that all kindergarten, first, second, and third grade teachers attend a teacher literacy achievement academy to increase teacher knowledge and implementation of the science of teaching reading. Additionally, LEAs must certify to the agency that they prioritize placement of highly effective teachers in kindergarten through second grade and have integrated reading instruments used to diagnose reading development and comprehension to support each student in prekindergarten through third grade. **Schools must ensure that all students receive explicit systematic Tier 1 reading instruction.**

Connecting Research and Practice

Research in understanding dyslexia as a neurodevelopmental disorder is ongoing. Future research will assist in learning more about the phonological awareness deficit and how this deficit interacts with other risk factors related to dyslexia. Research is now also focusing on the developmental cause of neural abnormalities and how these predict treatment response.

Pennington, B. F. (2019). *Diagnosing Learning Disorders: From Science to Practice* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Peterson, R. L., & Pennington, B. F. (2012). Developmental dyslexia. *The Lancet, 379* (9830), 1997–2007.

Common Risk Factors Associated with Dyslexia

If the following behaviors are unexpected for an individual's age, educational level, or cognitive abilities, they may be risk factors associated with dyslexia. A student with dyslexia usually exhibits several of these behaviors that persist over time and interfere with his/her learning. A family history of dyslexia may be present; in fact, recent studies reveal that the whole spectrum of reading disabilities is strongly determined by genetic predispositions (inherited aptitudes) (Olson, Keenan, Byrne, & Samuelsson, 2014).

The following characteristics identify risk factors associated with dyslexia at different stages or grade levels.

Preschool

- Delay in learning to talk
- Difficulty with rhyming
- Difficulty pronouncing words (e.g., “pusgetti” for “spaghetti,” “mawn lower” for “lawn mower”)
- Poor auditory memory for nursery rhymes and chants
- Difficulty adding new vocabulary words
- Inability to recall the right word (word retrieval)
- Trouble learning and naming letters and numbers and remembering the letters in his/ her name
- Aversion to print (e.g., doesn’t enjoy following along if a book is read aloud)

Kindergarten and First Grade

- Difficulty breaking words into smaller parts, or syllables (e.g., “baseball” can be pulled apart into “base” “ball” or “napkin” can be pulled apart into “nap” “kin”)
- Difficulty identifying and manipulating sounds in syllables (e.g., “man” sounded out as /m/ /ă/ /n/)
- Difficulty remembering the names of letters and recalling their corresponding sounds
- Difficulty decoding single words (reading single words in isolation)
- Difficulty spelling words the way they sound (phonetically) or remembering letter sequences in very common words seen often in print (e.g., “sed” for “said”)

Second Grade and Third Grade

Many of the previously described behaviors remain problematic along with the following:

- Difficulty recognizing common sight words (e.g., “to,” “said,” “been”)
- Difficulty decoding single words
- Difficulty recalling the correct sounds for letters and letter patterns in reading
- Difficulty connecting speech sounds with appropriate letter or letter combinations and omitting letters in words for spelling (e.g., “after” spelled “eftr”)
- Difficulty reading fluently (e.g., reading is slow, inaccurate, and/or without expression)
- Difficulty decoding unfamiliar words in sentences using knowledge of phonics
- Reliance on picture clues, story theme, or guessing at words
- Difficulty with written expression

Fourth Grade through Sixth Grade

Many of the previously described behaviors remain problematic along with the following:

- Difficulty reading aloud (e.g., fear of reading aloud in front of classmates)
- Avoidance of reading (particularly for pleasure)
- Difficulty reading fluently (e.g., reading is slow, inaccurate, and/or without expression)
- Difficulty decoding unfamiliar words in sentences using knowledge of phonics
- Acquisition of less vocabulary due to reduced independent reading

- Use of less complicated words in writing that are easier to spell than more appropriate words (e.g., “big” instead of “enormous”)
- Reliance on listening rather than reading for comprehension

Middle School and High School

Many of the previously described behaviors remain problematic along with the following:

- Difficulty with the volume of reading and written work
- Frustration with the amount of time required and energy expended for reading
- Difficulty reading fluently (e.g., reading is slow, inaccurate, and/or without expression)
- Difficulty decoding unfamiliar words in sentences using knowledge of phonics
- Difficulty with written assignments
- Tendency to avoid reading (particularly for pleasure)
- Difficulty learning a foreign language

Postsecondary

Some students will not be identified as having dyslexia prior to entering college. The early years of reading difficulties evolve into slow, labored reading fluency. Many students will experience extreme frustration and fatigue due to the increasing demands of reading as the result of dyslexia. In making a diagnosis for dyslexia, a student’s reading history, familial/genetic predisposition, and assessment history are critical. Many of the previously described behaviors may remain problematic along with the following:

- Difficulty pronouncing names of people and places or parts of words
- Difficulty remembering names of people and places
- Difficulty with word retrieval
- Difficulty with spoken vocabulary
- Difficulty completing the reading demands for multiple course requirements
- Difficulty with notetaking
- Difficulty with written production
- Difficulty remembering sequences (e.g., mathematical and/or scientific formulas)

Since dyslexia is a neurobiological, language-based disability that persists over time and interferes with an individual’s learning, it is critical that identification and intervention occur as early as possible.

Associated Academic Difficulties and Other Conditions

The behaviors in the previous sections represent common difficulties that students with dyslexia may exhibit. In addition, students with dyslexia may have problems in written expression, reading comprehension, and mathematics as well as other complicating conditions and/or behaviors.

Besides academic struggles, some students with dyslexia may exhibit other complex conditions and/or behaviors. The most common co-occurring disorders with dyslexia are attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and specific developmental language disorders (Snowling & Stackhouse, 2006, pp. 8–9). Some, though not all, students with dyslexia may also experience symptoms such as anxiety, anger, depression, lack of motivation, or low self-esteem. In such instances, appropriate instructional/referral services need to be provided to ensure each student’s needs are met.

These additional conditions can have a significant impact on the effectiveness of instruction provided to students with dyslexia. Motivation, in particular, has been shown to be critical to the success or failure of instructional practices. Regarding motivation, Torgesen states (as cited in Sedita, 2011), “even technically sound instructional techniques are unlikely to succeed unless we can ensure that, most of the time, students are engaged and motivated to understand what they read” (p. 532). Acknowledging that students with dyslexia must exert extra effort to meet grade-level expectations, all the factors that may affect learning must be considered when identifying and providing instruction for students with dyslexia. ADHD or symptoms of anxiety, anger, depression, or low self-esteem may lower a student’s engagement in learning. Educators and parents should provide students with affirmation and an environment that fosters engagement and success.

Sources for Common Characteristics and Risk Factors of Dyslexia

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- Olson, R. K., Keenan, J. M., Byrne, B., & Samuelsson, S. (2014). Why do children differ in their development of reading and related skills? *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 18(1), 38–54.
- Shaywitz, S. (2020). *Overcoming dyslexia: A new and complete science-based program for reading problems at any level*. (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.

Sources for Associated Academic Difficulties and Other Conditions

- Gooch, D., Snowling, M., & Hulme, C. (2011). Time perception, phonological skills, and executive function in children with dyslexia and/or ADHD symptoms. *The Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 52(2), 195–203.
- Harpin, V., Mazzone, L., Raynaud, J. P., Kahle, J. R., & Hodgkins, P. (2013). Long-term outcomes of ADHD: A systematic review of self-esteem and social function. *Journal of Attention Disorders*. doi:10.1177/1087054713486516
- Kavale, K. A., & Forness, S. R. (1996). Social skill deficits and learning disabilities: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 29(3), 226–237.
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- Sawyer, M. G., Whaites, L., Rey, J., Hazell, P. L., Graetz, B. W., & Baghurst, P. (2002). Health-related quality of life of children and adolescents with mental disorders. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 41(5), 530–537.
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5. 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.

Definition and Characteristics of Dysgraphia

Difficulty with handwriting frequently occurs in children with dyslexia. When Texas passed dyslexia legislation, the co-existence of poor handwriting with dyslexia was one reason why dysgraphia was called a related disorder. Subsequently, dyslexia and dysgraphia have been found to have diverse co-morbidities, including phonological awareness (Döhla and Heim, 2016). However, dyslexia and dysgraphia are now recognized to be distinct disorders that can exist concurrently or separately. They have different brain mechanisms and identifiable characteristics.

Dysgraphia is related to dyslexia as both are language-based disorders. In dyslexia, the impairment is with word-level skills (decoding, word identification, spelling). Dysgraphia is a written language disorder in serial production of strokes to form a handwritten letter. This involves not only motor skills but also language skills—finding, retrieving and producing letters, which is a subword-level language skill. The impaired handwriting may interfere with spelling and/or composing, but individuals with only dysgraphia do not have difficulty with reading (Berninger, Richards, & Abbott, 2015).

A review of recent evidence indicates that 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.

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 (Andrews & Lombardino, 2014)

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

Dysgraphia is not:

- Evidence of a damaged motor nervous 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 developmental 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 movement and organize the use of space
- Problems with motor planning and sequencing
- Difficulty with storage and retrieval of letter forms (Levine, 1999)

Despite the widespread beliefs that handwriting is purely a motor skill or that only multisensory methods are needed to teach handwriting, multiple language processes are also involved in handwriting. Handwriting draws on language by hand (letter production), language by ear (listening to letter names when writing dictated letters), language by mouth (saying letter names), and language by eye (viewing the letters to be copied or reviewing for accuracy the letters that are produced from memory) (Berninger & Wolf, 2016).

Sources for Definition and Characteristics of Dysgraphia

Andrews, J. and Lombardino, L. (2014). Strategies for teaching handwriting to children with writing disabilities. *ASHA SIG1 Perspectives on Language Learning Education*. 21:114-126.

Berninger, V.W. (2004). Understanding the graphia in dysgraphia. In *Developmental Motor Disorders: A Neuropsychological Perspective*. D. Dewry and D. Tupper (Eds.), New York, NY, US: Guilford Press.

Berninger, V.W. (2015). *Interdisciplinary frameworks for schools: Best practices for serving the needs of all student*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

Berninger, V.W., Richards, T.L. and Abbott, R. D. (2015) *Differential Diagnosis of Dysgraphia, Dyslexia, and OWL LD: Behavioral and Neuroimaging Evidence*. *Read Writ*. 2015 Oct;28(8):1119-1153.

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Döhla, D. and Heim, S. (2016). *Developmental dyslexia and dysgraphia: What can we learn from the one about the other?* *Frontiers in Psychology*. 6:2045.

Levine, M.D. (1999). *Developmental Variation and Learning Disorders*. Cambridge, MA: Educators Publishing Service, Inc.

Procedures for Identification

The process of identifying dysgraphia will follow Child Find procedures for conducting a full individual and initial evaluation (FIIE) under the IDEA. These procedural processes require coordination among the teacher, campus administrators, diagnosticians, and other professionals as appropriate when factors such as a student's English language acquisition, previously identified disability, or other special needs are present.

The first step in the evaluation process, data gathering, should be an integral part of the district's or charter school's process for any student exhibiting learning difficulties.

3. PROCEDURES FOR THE EVALUATION AND IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA

Science has moved forward at a rapid pace so that we now possess the data to reliably define dyslexia, to know its prevalence, its cognitive basis, its symptoms and remarkably, where it lives in the brain and evidence-based interventions which can turn a sad, struggling child into not only a good reader, but one who sees herself as a student with self-esteem and a fulfilling future.

—Shaywitz, S.E. Testimony Before the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, U.S. House of Representatives, 2014

The evaluation and identification process for dyslexia can be multifaceted. The process involves both state and federal requirements that must be followed. The evaluation and identification process for students suspected of having dyslexia is guided by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

In Texas and throughout the country, there is a focus on a Response to Intervention (RTI) or a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) process 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 benchmark 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 the tiered intervention process, schools can document students' learning difficulties, provide ongoing evaluation, and monitor reading achievement progress for students at risk for dyslexia or other reading difficulties.

Early intervention is further emphasized as the result of research using neuroimaging. Diehl, Frost, Mencl, and Pugh (2011) discuss the need to determine the role that deficits in phonological awareness and phonemic awareness play in reading acquisition, thus improving the methodology for early intervention. The authors note that future research will be enabled by longitudinal studies of phonology remediation using various treatments. "It will be especially important to take a multilevel analysis approach that incorporates genetics, neuroanatomy, neurochemistry, and neurocircuitry, and also to combine the strengths of the different neuroimaging techniques" (Diehl et al., 2011, p. 230). Evaluation followed by structured intervention that incorporates new scientific research must be embraced.

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

Both state and federal legislation emphasize early identification and intervention for students who may be at risk for reading disabilities such as dyslexia. Those professionals responsible for working with students with reading difficulties should be familiar with the legislation listed in Figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3.1. State and Federal Laws

TEC §28.006, Reading Diagnosis

This state statute requires schools to administer early reading instruments to all students in kindergarten and grades 1 and 2 to assess their reading development and comprehension. Additionally, the law requires a reading instrument from the commissioner's approved list be administered at the beginning of grade 7 to any student who did not demonstrate proficiency on the sixth-grade reading assessment administered under TEC §39.023(a). If, on the basis of the reading instrument results, students are determined to be at risk for dyslexia or other reading difficulties, the school must notify the students' parents/guardians. According to TEC

§28.006(g), the school must also implement an accelerated (intensive) reading program that appropriately addresses the students' reading difficulties and enables them to catch up with their typically performing peers.

TEC §38.003, Screening and Treatment for Dyslexia

Texas state law requires that public school students be screened and tested, as appropriate, for dyslexia and related disorders at appropriate times in accordance with a program approved by the SBOE. The program approved by the SBOE must include screening for each student at the end of the kindergarten year and during first grade.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as reauthorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) The services offered to students who are reported to be at risk for dyslexia or other reading difficulties should align to the requirements of ESSA, which requires schools to implement comprehensive literacy instruction featuring "age- appropriate, explicit, systematic, and intentional instruction in phonological awareness, phonic decoding, vocabulary, language structure, reading fluency, and reading comprehension" (ESSA, 2015).

Equal Education Opportunity Act (EEOA)

This civil rights law ensures that all students are given equal access to educational services regardless of race, color, sex, religion, or national origin; and that the neighborhood is the appropriate basis for determining public school assignments. Therefore, research-based interventions are to be provided to all students experiencing difficulties in reading, including EB students, regardless of their proficiency in English.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

The most recent reauthorization of this federal act is consistent with ESSA in emphasizing quality of instruction and documentation of student progress. A process based on the student's response to scientific, research-based intervention is one of the criteria included in IDEA that individual states may use in determining whether a student has a specific learning disability, including dyslexia.

As referenced in the 2011 letter from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) to the State Directors of Special Education, states have an obligation to ensure that evaluations of children suspected of having a disability are not delayed or denied because of implementation of the RTI process (Musgrove, 2011). For more information, please visit <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/idea-files/osep-memo-11-07-response-to-intervention-rti-memo/>.

The Referral Process for Dyslexia and Related Disorders

The determination to refer a student for an evaluation must always be made on a case-by-case basis and must be driven by data-based decisions. The referral process itself can be distilled into a basic framework as outlined below.

Data-Driven Meeting of Knowledgeable Persons

A team of persons with knowledge of the student, instructional practices, and instructional options meets to discuss data collected, including data obtained during kindergarten and/or first grade screening, and the implications of that data. These individuals would include the classroom teacher and other individuals who can review and analyze the student's data, such as a campus administrator, special education teacher, reading interventionist, and provider of dyslexia instruction. This team may also include the parents and/or a diagnostician familiar with testing and interpreting evaluation results. This team may have different names in different districts and/or campuses. For example, the team may be called a student success team, student

support team, student intervention team, or even something else. Unless the student is already served under IDEA or Section 504, this team of knowledgeable persons is not an Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee or a Section 504 committee, although many of these individuals may be on a future committee if the student is referred for an evaluation.

When the Data Does Not Lead to Suspicion of a Disability, Including Dyslexia or a Related Disorder

If the team determines that the data does not give the members reason to suspect that a student has dyslexia, a related disorder, or another disability included within the IDEA and a need for special education and related services, the team may decide to provide the student with additional support in the classroom or through the RTI/MTSS process. The student should continue to receive grade level, evidence-based core reading instruction (Tier 1) and any other appropriate tiered interventions. However, the student is not referred for an evaluation at this time.

When the Data Lead to a Suspicion of a Disability, Including Dyslexia or a Related Disorder

If the team determines that the data does give the members reason to suspect that the student has dyslexia, a related disorder, or another disability included within the IDEA and a need for special education and related services, the team must refer the student for a full individual and initial evaluation (FIIE). In most cases, an FIIE under the IDEA must be completed within 45-school days from the time a district or charter school receives parental consent. The student should continue to receive grade level, evidence-based core reading instruction (Tier 1) and any other appropriate tiered interventions while the school conducts the FIIE.

If an LEA suspects, or has reason to suspect, a student has dyslexia and may be a child with a disability under IDEA, the LEA must provide parents with a form developed by TEA explaining rights under IDEA that may be additional to rights under Section 504; comply with all federal and state requirements, including this handbook, regarding any evaluation; and if the student is to be evaluated for dyslexia, evaluate the student in all other areas of suspected disabilities. The form can be located on the SPEDTEX website at www.spedtex.org.

Parents/guardians always have the right to request a referral for a dyslexia evaluation at any time.

Once a written parent request for dyslexia evaluation has been made to the appropriate administrator, the school district is obligated to review the student's data history (both formal and informal data) to determine whether there is reason to suspect the student has a disability and must respond within 15 school days. If a disability is suspected, the student needs to be evaluated following the guidelines outlined in this chapter. Under the IDEA, if the school refuses the request to evaluate, it must give parents prior written notice of refusal to evaluate, including an explanation of why the school refuses to conduct an FIIE, the information that was used as the basis for the decision, a copy of the Overview of Special Education for Parents form as mentioned above, and a copy of the *Notice of Procedural Safeguards*. Should the parent disagree with the school's refusal to conduct an evaluation, the parent has the right to initiate dispute resolution options including; mediation, state complaints, and due process hearings.

When an LEA completes an FIIE, and the parent disagrees with the evaluation, the parent may request an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE) at public expense.

Procedures for Evaluation

As discussed in Chapter 2, Child Find is a provision in the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), a federal law that requires the state to have policies and procedures in place to ensure that every student in the state who needs special education and related services is located, identified, and evaluated. The purpose of the IDEA is to ensure that students with disabilities are offered a free and appropriate public education (20 U.S.C. §1400(d); 34 C.F.R. §300.1). Because a student suspected of having dyslexia may be a student with a disability under the IDEA, the Child Find mandate includes these students. Therefore, when referring and evaluating students suspected of having dyslexia, LEAs must follow procedures for conducting

a full individual and initial evaluation (FIE) under the IDEA. For detailed information regarding Child Find see <https://spedsupport.tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/2024-01/technical-assistance-child-find-and-evaluation-guide.pdf>.

As discussed in Chapter 2, all public-school students are required to be screened for dyslexia while in kindergarten and first grade. Additionally, students enrolling in public schools in Texas must 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; poor response to supplemental, scientifically based reading instruction; teachers’ input; and input from parents/guardians. The appropriate time for assessing is early in a student’s school career (19 TAC §74.28). TEC §28.006, Reading Diagnosis, requires assessment of reading development and comprehension for students in kindergarten, first grade, second grade, and as applicable, seventh grade. While earlier is better, students should be recommended for evaluation for dyslexia even if the reading difficulties appear later in a student’s school career.

While schools must follow federal and state guidelines, they must also develop local procedures that address the needs of their student populations. Schools must recommend evaluation for dyslexia if the student demonstrates the following:

- Poor performance in one or more areas of reading and spelling that is unexpected for the student’s age/grade
- Characteristics and risk factors of dyslexia indicated in Chapter 1: Definitions & Characteristics of Dyslexia

Data Gathering

Schools collect data on all students to ensure that instruction is appropriate and scientifically based.

Essential components of comprehensive literacy instruction are defined in Section 2221(b) of ESSA as explicit, systematic, and intentional instruction in the following:

- Phonological awareness
- Phonic decoding
- Vocabulary
- Language structure
- Reading fluency
- Reading comprehension

When evaluating a student for dyslexia, the collection of various data, as indicated in Figure 3.2 below, will provide information regarding factors that may be contributing to or primary to the student’s struggles with reading and spelling.

Cumulative Data

The academic history of each student will provide the school with the cumulative data needed to ensure that underachievement in a student suspected of having dyslexia is not due to lack of appropriate instruction in reading. 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 (progress monitoring), reflecting formal evaluation of student progress during instruction. These cumulative data also include information from parents/guardians. Sources and examples of cumulative data are provided in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2. Sources and Examples of Cumulative Data

- Vision screening
- Hearing screening
- Teacher reports of classroom concerns
- Classroom reading assessments
- Accommodations or interventions provided
- Academic progress reports (report cards)
- Gifted/talented assessments
- Samples of schoolwork
- Parent conference notes
- Results of kindergarten-grade 1 universal screening as required in TEC §38.003
- K-2 reading instrument results as required in TEC §28.006 (English and native language, if possible)
- 7th-grade reading instrument results as required in TEC §28.006
- State student assessment program results as described in TEC §39.023
- Observations of instruction provided to the student
- Previous evaluations
- Outside evaluations
- Speech and language assessment
- School attendance
- Curriculum-based assessment measures
- Instructional strategies provided and student's response to the instruction
- Screening data
- Parent survey

Environmental and Socioeconomic Factors

Information regarding a child's early literacy experiences, environmental factors, and socioeconomic status must be part of the data collected throughout the data gathering process. These data support the determination that difficulties in learning are not due to cultural factors or environmental or economic disadvantage. Studies that have examined language development and the effects of home experiences on young children indicate that home experiences and socioeconomic status have dramatic effects on cumulative vocabulary development (Hart & Risley, 1995). Having data related to these factors may help in determining whether the student's struggles with reading are due to a lack of opportunity or a reading disability, including dyslexia.

Language Proficiency

Much diversity exists among EB students. A student's language proficiency may be impacted by any of the following: native language, English exposure, parent education, socioeconomic status of the family, amount of time in the United States, experience with formal schooling, immigration status, community demographics, and ethnic heritage (Bailey, Heritage, Butler, & Walqui, 2000). EB students may be students served in bilingual and English as a second language (ESL) programs as well as students designated as EB whose parents have denied services. In addition to the information discussed in the previous section of this chapter, the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) maintains documentation (19 TAC §89.1220(g)-(m)) that is necessary

to consider when identifying EB students with dyslexia. The LPAC is required to meet annually to review student placement and progress and consider instructional accommodations and interventions to address the student's linguistic needs. 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. Additional data sources for EB students are provided below in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3. Additional Data Sources for Emergent Bilingual Students
• Home Language Survey • Designation of the student's level of language proficiency • Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) information for four language domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) • Instructional interventions provided to address language needs • Information regarding previous schooling inside and/or outside the United States • Type of language program model provided and language of instruction

Formal Evaluation

A formal evaluation is not a screening; rather, it is an individualized evaluation used to gather specific data about the student. Formal evaluation includes both formal and informal data. All data will be used to determine whether the student demonstrates a pattern of evidence that indicates dyslexia. Information collected from the parents/guardians also provides valuable insight into the student's early years of language development. This history may help explain why students come to the evaluation with many different strengths and weaknesses; therefore, findings from the formal evaluation will be different for each child. Professionals conducting evaluations for the identification of dyslexia will need to look beyond scores on standardized assessments alone and examine the student's classroom reading performance, educational history, early language experiences, and, when warranted, academic potential to assist with determining reading, spelling, and writing abilities and difficulties.

As part of the evaluation when dyslexia is suspected, in addition to the parent and team of qualified professionals required under IDEA, the multidisciplinary team (MDT) must include at least one member with specific knowledge regarding:
• the reading process, • dyslexia and related disorders, and • dyslexia instruction.

- TEC §29.0031(b) states this member must:
- (1) hold a licensed dyslexia therapist (LDT) license under Chapter 403, Occupations Code;
 - (2) hold the most advanced dyslexia-related certification issued by an association recognized by the SBOE, and identified in, or substantially similar to an association identified in, the program and rules adopted under Sections 7.102 and 38.003; or
 - (3) if a person qualified under subdivision (1) or (2) is not available, meet the applicable training requirements adopted by the SBOE pursuant to Sections 7.102 and 38.003.

This member must also sign a document describing the member's participation in the evaluation of the student.

LEAs must prioritize the individuals who meet the credentials of items (1) and (2) above when designating an individual to fill this role, as those are the statutorily required professionals. To meet the credentials of the most advanced dyslexia-related certification, the individual must have received certification or training from

the following programs or providers: Academic Language Therapy Association, the International Dyslexia Association, the Orton Gillingham Academy, Wilson Language Training, or have received training through an International Multisensory Structured Language Education Council-(IMSLEC)- accredited training center at the teaching or therapy level. Individuals who are currently enrolled and participating in a credentialing program that will result in becoming an LDT or obtaining the most advanced dyslexia-related certification would be considered as meeting the credentials for items (1) and (2).

Understanding the limitations of availability of the individuals who meet the credentials of items (1) and (2) above, an LEA may identify another individual to serve in this role who, within one calendar year from the date of being designated as such member, must:

- register and complete the Texas Education Agency's (TEA's) Texas Dyslexia Academies (TDAs);
- register and complete the TEA's Guidance for the Comprehensive Evaluation of a Specific Learning Disability training; and
- document that the member has training in current research and evidence-based assessments that are used to identify the most common characteristics of dyslexia.

When TEA updates the required trainings above, the member must complete those updated trainings within one calendar year from the date the revised training was made available.

Notification and Permission

When an FIIE is recommended, parents are provided:

- Prior Written Notice (PWN)
- Notice of Procedural Safeguards
- Overview of Special Education for Parents form
- Opportunity for parent to provide written consent to evaluate

Tests and Other Evaluation Materials

When formal evaluation is recommended, the school must complete the evaluation procedures as outlined in the IDEA.

Test instruments and other evaluation materials must meet the following criteria:

- Used for the purpose for which the evaluation or measures are valid or reliable
- Include material(s) tailored to assess specific areas of educational need and not merely material(s) that are designed to provide a single, general intelligence quotient
- Selected and administered 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, achievement level, or whatever other factor the test purports to measure rather than reflecting the student's impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills
- Selected and administered in a manner that is not racially or culturally discriminatory
- Include multiple measures of a student's reading abilities such as informal assessment information (e.g., anecdotal records, district universal screenings, progress monitoring data, criterion-referenced evaluations, results of informal reading inventories, classroom observations)
- Administered by trained personnel and in conformance with the instructions provided by the producer of the evaluation materials
- 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

Additional Considerations for EB students

A professional involved in the evaluation, interpretation of evaluation results, and identification of EB students with dyslexia must have the following training/knowledge:

- Knowledge of first and second language acquisition theory
- Knowledge of the written system of the first language: transparent (e.g., Spanish, Italian, German), syllabic (e.g., Japanese-kana), Semitic (e.g., Arabic, Hebrew), and morphosyllabic (e.g., Chinese-Kanji)
- Knowledge of the student's literacy skills in native and second languages
- Knowledge of how to interpret results from a cross-linguistic perspective
- Knowledge of how to interpret TELPAS (Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System) results
- Knowledge of how to interpret the results of the student's oral language proficiency in two or more languages in relation to the results of the tests measuring academic achievement and cognitive processes as well as academic data gathered and economic and socioeconomic factors

Although data from previous formal testing of the student's oral language proficiency may be available, as required by TEC §29.056, additional assessment of oral language proficiency should be completed for a dyslexia evaluation due to the importance of the information for—

- consideration in relation to academic challenges,
- planning the evaluation, and
- interpreting evaluation results.

If there is not a test in the native language of the student, informal measures of evaluation such as reading a list of words and listening comprehension in the native language may be used.

Domains to Assess Specific to Dyslexia

Academic Skills

The school administers measures that are related to the student's educational needs. Difficulties in the areas of letter knowledge, word decoding, and fluency (rate, accuracy, and prosody) may be evident depending upon the student's age and stage of reading development. In addition, many students with dyslexia may have difficulty with reading comprehension and written composition.

Cognitive Processes

Difficulties in phonological and phonemic awareness are typically seen in students with dyslexia and impact a student's ability to learn letters and the sounds associated with letters, learn the alphabetic principle, decode words, and spell accurately. Rapid naming skills may or may not be weak, but if deficient, they are often associated with difficulties in automatically naming letters, reading words fluently, and reading connected text at an appropriate rate. Memory for letter patterns, letter sequences, and the letters in whole words (orthographic processing) may be selectively impaired or may coexist with phonological processing weaknesses. Finally, various language processes, such as morpheme and syntax awareness, memory and retrieval of verbal labels, and the ability to formulate ideas into grammatical sentences, may also be factors affecting reading (Berninger & Wolf, 2009, pp. 134–135).

Based on the student's academic difficulties, characteristics, and/or language acquisition, additional areas related to vocabulary, listening comprehension, oral language proficiency, written expression, and other cognitive processes may need to be assessed. Areas for evaluation are provided below in Figure 3.4.

Figure 3.4. Areas for Evaluation

Academic Skills	Cognitive Processes	Possible Additional Areas
• Letter knowledge (name and associated sound) • Reading words in isolation • Decoding unfamiliar words accurately • Reading fluency (rate, accuracy, and prosody are assessed) • Reading comprehension • Spelling	• Phonological/phonemic awareness • Rapid naming of symbols or objects	• 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

Review and Interpretation of Data and Evaluations

The MDT, using input from the parent/guardian, completes the FIIE, which determines if the student meets the criteria for dyslexia, and, if so, explains the impact of dyslexia on the student's access and progress in the enrolled grade-level general curriculum. The next step is for the ARD committee, which includes the parent/guardian as a committee member, to determine prong 1 and prong 2, which means the student has both the identification of a qualifying disability and the need for special education and related services. Eligibility is determined by the ARD committee in accordance with federal and state law and regulations.

The ARD committee will review the FIIE and all available data to determine eligibility for special education and related services. When a student is determined to have dyslexia and the data shows a need for specially designed instruction, i.e., evidence-based dyslexia instruction, then the student meets the two prongs of special education eligibility. That is, the student has a qualifying disability – as dyslexia is an SLD under the IDEA and state law – and demonstrates a need for specially designed instruction.

To appropriately **understand** evaluation data, the MDT and ARD committee 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.

When considering initial or continued special education eligibility for dyslexia, the ARD committee must include at least one member who has specific knowledge regarding—

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

TEC §29.0031(b) states this member must:

- (1) hold a licensed dyslexia therapist (LDT) license under Chapter 403, Occupations Code;
- (2) hold the most advanced dyslexia-related certification issued by an association recognized by the SBOE, and identified in, or substantially similar to an association identified in, the program and rules adopted under Sections 7.102 and 38.003; or
- (3) if a person qualified under subdivision (1) or (2) is not available, meet the applicable training requirements adopted by the SBOE pursuant to Sections 7.102 and 38.003.

This member must also sign a document describing the member’s participation in any resulting individualized education program (IEP) of the student.

LEAs must prioritize the individuals who meet the credentials of items (1) and (2) above when designating an individual to fill this role, as those are the statutorily required professionals. To meet the credentials of the most advanced dyslexia-related certification, the individual must have received certification or training from the following programs or providers: Academic Language Therapy Association, the International Dyslexia Association, the Orton Gillingham Academy, Wilson Language Training, or have received training through an International Multisensory Structured Language Education Council-(IMSLEC)- accredited training center at the teaching or therapy level. Individuals who are currently enrolled and participating in a credentialing program that will result in becoming an LDT or obtaining the most advanced dyslexia-related certification would be considered as meeting the credentials for items (1) and (2).

Understanding the limitations of availability of the individuals who meet the credentials of items (1) and (2) above, an LEA may identify another individual to serve in this role who, within one calendar year from the date of being designated as such member, must:

- register and complete the Texas Education Agency’s (TEA’s) Texas Dyslexia Academies (TDAs);
- register and complete the TEA’s Guidance for the Comprehensive Evaluation of a Specific Learning Disability training; and
- document that the member has training in current research- and evidence-based assessments that are used to identify the most common characteristics of dyslexia.

When TEA updates the required trainings above, the member must complete those updated trainings within one calendar year from the date the revised training was made available.

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)

Another factor to consider when interpreting test results is the student’s linguistic background. The nature of the writing system of a language impacts the reading process. Thus, the identification guideposts of dyslexia in languages other than English may differ. For example, decoding in a language with a transparent written language (e.g., Spanish, German) may not be as decisive an indicator of dyslexia as reading rate. A transparent written language has a close letter/sound correspondence (Joshi & Aaron, 2006). Students with dyslexia who have or who are being taught to read and write a transparent language may be able to decode real and nonwords adequately but demonstrate serious difficulties in reading rate with concurrent deficiencies in phonological awareness and rapid automatized naming (RAN).

Figure 3.5. Dyslexia in Transparent and Opaque Orthographies

Opaque	Transparent
Early and marked difficulty with word-level reading Fluency and comprehension often improve once decoding is mastered	Less difficulty with word-level reading More difficulty with fluency and comprehension

Figure 3.6. Characteristics of Dyslexia in English and Spanish

English	Spanish
Phonological awareness	Phonological awareness – may be less pronounced
Rapid naming	Rapid naming
Regular/irregular decoding	Decoding – fewer “irregular words” in Spanish
Fluency	Fluency – often a key indicator
Spelling	Spelling – may show fewer errors than in English, but still more than students that do not have dyslexia
Reading comprehension may be a weakness in both English and Spanish.	

Findings support guidance in the interpretation of phonological awareness test scores.

There is evidence that blending skills develop sooner than analysis skills, and that students can have good blending skills and inadequate reading development. Only when both blending and analysis skills are mastered do we see benefits for reading development.

—Kilpatrick, D.A. Essentials of Assessing, Preventing, and Overcoming Reading Difficulties, 2015

With this in mind, when determining phonological awareness deficits, the MDT should examine subtest scores, including discreet phonological awareness skills, instead of limiting interpretation to composite scores since a deficit in even one skill will limit reading progress.

Based on the above information and guidelines, should the MDT find that the student exhibits weaknesses in reading and spelling (i.e., academic deficits in areas associated with dyslexia), the MDT will then examine all of 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 reading and spelling. The MDT reports the analysis of strengths and weaknesses within the FIE.

Therefore, it is not one single indicator but a preponderance of data (both informal and formal) that provide the team with evidence for whether these difficulties are unexpected.

Dyslexia Identification

If the student's difficulties are unexpected in relation to other abilities, the ARD committee must then determine if the student has dyslexia and the need for special education and related services. For EB students, an LPAC representative must be included on the ARD committee. The list of questions in Figure 3.7 below must be addressed by the MDT in the evaluation report to assist the ARD committee when determining eligibility, which includes that dyslexia is present and there is a need for special education and related services.

Figure 3.7. Questions to Determine the Identification of Dyslexia

- Do 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?
(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?

If, through the evaluation process, it is established that the student meets the criteria for dyslexia, then the student meets the first prong of eligibility under the IDEA (identification of condition). In other words, the identification of dyslexia, using the process outlined in this chapter, meets the criterion for the condition of a specific learning disability. Dyslexia is an SLD and should be noted as the SLD.

However, the presence of a disability condition alone, is not sufficient to determine if the student is a student with a disability under the IDEA. Eligibility under the IDEA consists of both identification of the condition and a corresponding need for specially designed instruction as a result of the disability.

In IDEA, dyslexia is considered one of a variety of etiological foundations for SLD. Section 34 C.F.R. §300.8(c)(10) states the following:

Specific learning disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.

The term SLD does not apply to children who have learning difficulties that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities; of intellectual disability; of emotional disturbance; or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

The IDEA evaluation requirements for SLD eligibility in 34 C.F.R. §300.309(a)(1) specifically designate the following areas for a learning disability in reading: basic reading skills, reading fluency skills, and/or reading comprehension. However, for purposes of TEC §29.0031(a), because dyslexia is an example of and meets the definition of an SLD, dyslexia should be noted as the identified SLD and be included in the evaluation and any resulting IEP for a student.

The October 23, 2015 letter from the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) (Dear Colleague: Dyslexia Guidance) states that dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia are conditions that could qualify a child as a child with a specific learning disability under the IDEA. The letter further states that there is nothing in the IDEA that would prohibit the use of the terms *dyslexia*, *dyscalculia*, and *dysgraphia* in the IDEA evaluation, eligibility determinations, or IEP documents. For more information, please visit <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/idea-files/osep-dear-colleague-letter-on-ideaiep-terms/>

A 2018 Letter to the Administrator Addressed from the Texas Education Agency regarding the provision of services for students with dyslexia and related disorders states that any time it is suspected that a student requires special education or related services to provide appropriate reading supports and interventions, a referral for an FIE should be initiated. The letter further states that all students who are identified with dyslexia or a related disorder *and* who require special education services because of dyslexia or a related disorder are eligible under the IDEA for special education and related services as students with a specific learning disability. For more information, please visit https://tea.texas.gov/About_TEA/News_and_Multimedia/Correspondence/TAA_Letters/Provision_of_Services_for_Students_with_Dyslexia_and_Related_Disorders_-_Revised_June_6_2018/

Once dyslexia has been identified as the IDEA-eligible disability, a determination must be made by the ARD committee regarding the most appropriate way to serve the student. If a student with dyslexia is found eligible for special education (i.e., student has both the disability and requires dyslexia instruction, which is specially designed instruction), the student's IEP must include appropriate reading instruction. Appropriate

reading instruction includes the components and delivery of dyslexia instruction discussed in Chapter 4: Critical, Evidence-Based Components of Dyslexia Instruction. If a student has previously met special education eligibility and is later identified with dyslexia, the ARD committee should include in the IEP goals that reflect the need for dyslexia instruction and determine the least restrictive environment for delivering the student's dyslexia instruction.

If—based on the data—the student is identified with dyslexia, but is determined by the ARD committee as not eligible for special education and related services because the student is determined to not need dyslexia instruction, (i.e., specially designed instruction) the student may be eligible to receive accommodations under Section 504.

A student who is found not eligible under the IDEA because the student is determined to not need dyslexia instruction (i.e., specially designed instruction), but who is identified with dyslexia through the FIIE process should not be referred for a second evaluation under Section 504. Instead, the Section 504 committee will use the FIIE and determine eligibility for Section 504 as necessary.

For students eligible for Section 504, a Section 504 committee will develop the student's Section 504 Plan, which must include appropriate instructional accommodations to meet the individual needs of the student. A student identified with dyslexia and who needs dyslexia instruction would not be served under Section 504, as this is a specially designed instruction.

cerebral palsy)

- Secondary to a medical condition (e.g., meningitis, significant head trauma, brain trauma)
- Association with generalized developmental 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 movement and organize the use of space
- Problems with motor planning and sequencing
- Difficulty with storage and retrieval of letter forms (Levine, 1999)

Despite the widespread beliefs that handwriting is purely a motor skill or that only multisensory methods are needed to teach handwriting, multiple language processes are also involved in handwriting. Handwriting draws on language by hand (letter production), language by ear (listening to letter names when writing dictated letters), language by mouth (saying letter names), and language by eye (viewing the letters to be copied or reviewing for accuracy the letters that are produced from memory) (Berninger & Wolf, 2016).

Sources for Definition and Characteristics of Dysgraphia

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Döhla, D. and Heim, S. (2016). *Developmental dyslexia and dysgraphia: What can we learn from the one about the other?* *Frontiers in Psychology*. 6:2045.

Levine, M.D. (1999). *Developmental Variation and Learning Disorders*. Cambridge, MA: Educators Publishing Service, Inc.

Procedures for Identification

The process of identifying dysgraphia will follow Child Find procedures for conducting a full individual and initial evaluation (FIIE) under the IDEA. These procedural processes require coordination among the teacher, campus administrators, diagnosticians, and other professionals as appropriate when factors such as a student's English language acquisition, previously identified disability, or other special needs are present.

The first step in the evaluation process, data gathering, should be an integral part of the district's or charter school's process for any student exhibiting learning difficulties.

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 during handwriting (too hard or too soft)
- Excessive erasures
- Poor spacing between words
- Poor spacing 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

While schools must follow federal and state guidelines, they must also develop procedures that address the needs of their student populations.

Schools shall recommend evaluation for dysgraphia if the student demonstrates the following:

- Impaired or illegible handwriting that is unexpected for the student's age/grade
- Impaired handwriting that interferes with spelling, written expression, or both that is unexpected for the student's age/grade

Data Gathering

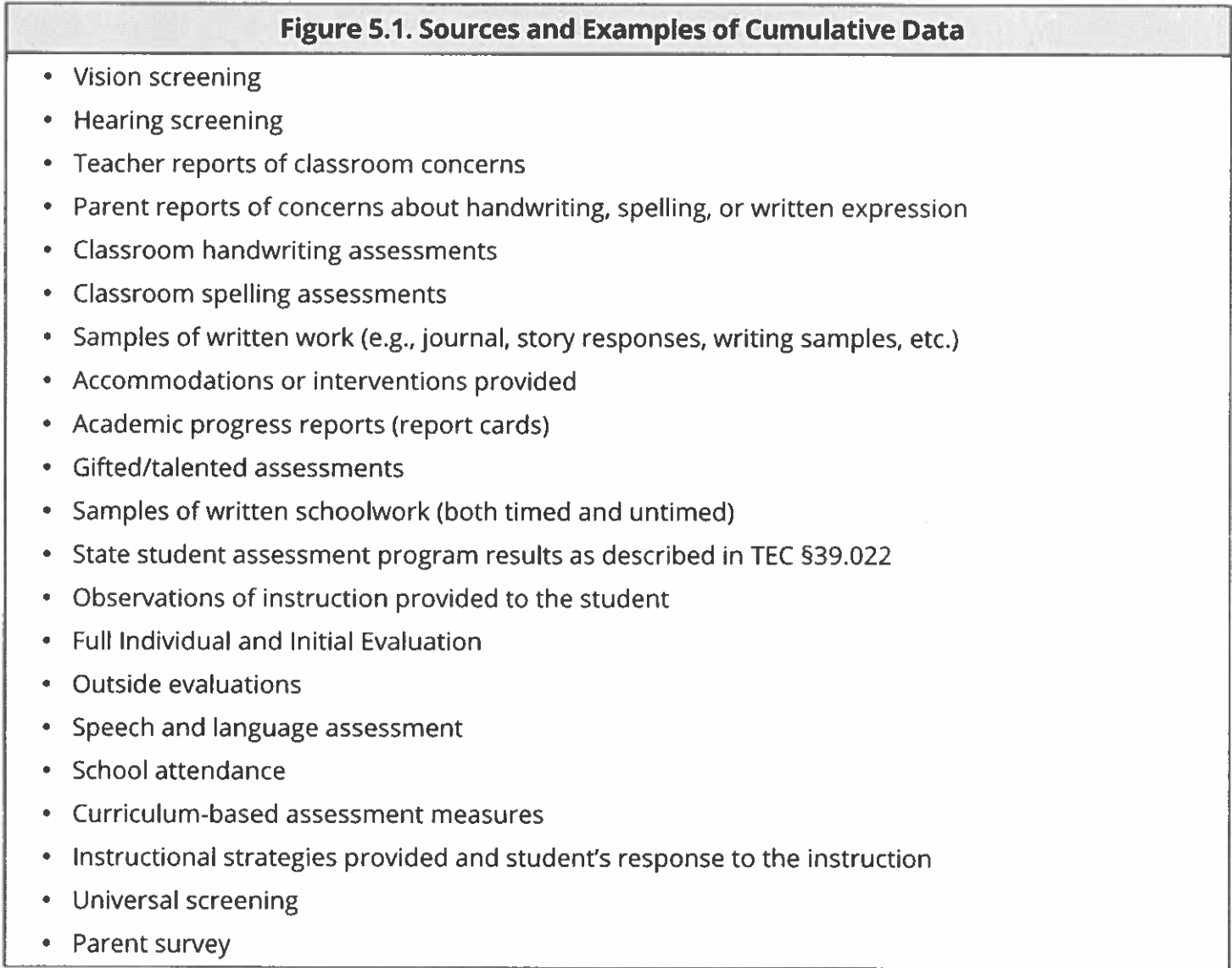
Schools collect data on all students to ensure that instruction is appropriate and scientifically based. Essential components of comprehensive literacy instruction, including writing, are defined in Section 2221(b) of ESSA as explicit instruction in writing, including opportunities for children to write with clear purposes, with critical reasoning appropriate to the topic and purpose, and with specific instruction and feedback from instructional staff.

Any time from kindergarten through grade 12 a student continues to struggle with one or more components of writing, schools must collect additional information about the student. Schools should use previously collected as well as current information to evaluate the student's academic progress and determine what actions are needed to ensure the student's improved academic performance. The collection of various data, as indicated in Figure 5.1 below, will provide information regarding factors that may be contributing to or primary to the student's struggles with handwriting, spelling, and written expression.

Cumulative Data

The academic history of each student will provide the school with the cumulative data needed to ensure that underachievement in a student suspected of having dysgraphia is not due to lack of appropriate instruction in

handwriting, spelling, and written expression. 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 (progress monitoring), reflecting formal evaluation of student progress during instruction. This cumulative data also include information from parents/guardians. Sources and examples of cumulative data are provided in Figure 5.1.



Formal Evaluation

After data gathering, the next step in the process is formal evaluation. This is not a screening; rather, it is an individualized evaluation 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. Information collected from the parents/guardians also provides valuable insight into the student's early years of written language development. This history may help to explain why students come to the evaluation with many different strengths and weaknesses; therefore, findings from the formal evaluation will be different for each child. Professionals conducting evaluations for the identification of dysgraphia will need to look beyond scores on standardized assessments alone and examine the student's classroom writing performance, educational history, and early language experiences to assist with determining handwriting, spelling, and written expression abilities and difficulties.

Notification and Permission

When an FIE is recommended, parents are provided:

- Prior Written Notice (PWN);
- Notice of Procedural Safeguards
- Overview of Special Education for Parents Form
- Opportunity for parent to provide written consent to evaluate

Tests and Other Evaluation Materials

When formal evaluation is recommended, the school must complete the evaluation procedures as outlined under IDEA.

Test instruments and other evaluation materials must meet the following criteria:

- Be used for the purpose for which the evaluation or measures are valid or reliable
- Include material tailored to assess specific areas of educational need and not merely materials that are designed to provide a single general intelligence quotient
- Be selected and administered 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, achievement level, or whatever other factor the test purports to measure, rather than reflecting the student's impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills
- Be selected and administered in a manner that is not racially or culturally discriminatory
- Include multiple measures of a student's writing abilities such as informal assessment information (e.g., anecdotal records, district universal screenings, progress monitoring data, criterion-referenced evaluations, samples of written work, classroom observations)
- Be administered by trained personnel and in conformance with the instructions provided by the producer of the evaluation materials
- Be 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

Domains to Assess

Academic Skills

The school administers measures that are related to the student's educational needs. Difficulties in the areas of letter formation, orthographic awareness, and general handwriting skills may be evident dependent on the student's age and writing development. Additionally, many students with dysgraphia may have difficulty with spelling and written expression.

Cognitive Processes

The process of handwriting requires the student to rely on memory for letters or symbol sequences, also known as orthographic processing. Memory for letter patterns, letter sequences, and the letters in whole words may be selectively impaired or may coexist with phonological processing weaknesses. When spelling, a student must not only process both phonological and orthographic information, but also apply their knowledge of morphology and syntax (Berninger & Wolf, 2009).

Figure 5.2. Areas for Evaluation of Dysgraphia

Academic Skills	Cognitive Processes	Possible Additional Areas
• Letter formation • Handwriting • Word/sentence dictation (timed and untimed) • Copying of text • Written expression • Spelling • Writing fluency (both accuracy and fluency)	• Memory for letter or symbol sequences (orthographic processing)	• Phonological awareness • Phonological memory • Working memory • Letter retrieval • Letter matching

Berninger, V. W., & Wolf, B. (2009). Teaching students with dyslexia and dysgraphia lessons from teaching and science. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

To make an informed determination the ARD committee must include members who are knowledgeable about the following:

- Student being assessed
- Evaluation instruments being used
- Interpretation of the data being collected

Additionally, the committee members should have knowledge regarding

- the handwriting process;
- dysgraphia and related disorders;
- dysgraphia instruction, and;
- district or charter school, state, and federal guidelines for evaluation.

There likely may be a need for an occupational therapist on the committee to assist in addressing all required areas of evaluation for dysgraphia.

Review and Interpretation of Data and Evaluation

The MDT, using input from the parent/guardian, completes the FIIE, which determines if the student meets the criteria for dysgraphia, and, if so, explains the impact of dysgraphia on the student's access and progress in the enrolled grade-level general curriculum. The next step is for the ARD committee, which includes the parent/guardian as a committee member, to determine prong 1 and prong 2, which means the student has both the identification of a qualifying disability and the need for special education and related services. Eligibility is determined by the ARD committee in accordance with federal and state law and regulations.

The ARD committee will review the FIIE and all available data to determine eligibility for special education and related services. When a student is determined to have dysgraphia and the data shows a need for specially designed instruction, then the student meets the two prongs of special education eligibility. That is, the student has a qualifying disability – as dysgraphia is an SLD under the IDEA– and demonstrates a need for specially designed instruction.

To appropriately understand evaluation data, the MDT and ARD committee must interpret tests results in light of the student's educational history, linguistic background, environmental or socioeconomic factors, and any other pertinent factors that affect learning.

A determination must first be made regarding whether 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 MDT find that the student exhibits weakness in writing and spelling (i.e., academic deficits in areas associated with dysgraphia), the MDT will then examine all of the student's data to determine whether these difficulties are unexpected in relation to the student's other abilities, sociocultural factors, language differences, irregular attendance, or lack of appropriate and effective instruction. For example, the student may exhibit strengths in areas such as reading comprehension, listening comprehension, oral verbal ability, or math reasoning yet still have difficulty with writing and spelling. The MDT reports the analysis of strengths and weaknesses within the FIEE.

Therefore, it is not one single indicator, but a preponderance of informal and formal data that provide the team with evidence for whether these difficulties are unexpected.

Dysgraphia Identification

If the student's difficulties are unexpected in relation to other abilities, the ARD committee must then determine if the student has dysgraphia and the need for special education and related services. The list of questions in Figure 5.3 below must be addressed by the MDT in the evaluation report to assist the ARD Committee when determining eligibility, which includes that dysgraphia is present and there is a need for special education and related services.

Figure 5.3. Questions to Determine the Identification of Dysgraphia

- Do the data show the following characteristics and consequences of dysgraphia?
 - Illegible and/or inefficient handwriting with variably shaped and poorly formed letters
 - Difficulty with unedited written spelling
 - Low volume of written output as well as problems with other aspects of written expression
- Do these difficulties (typically) result from a deficit in graphomotor function (hand movements used for writing) and/or storing and retrieving orthographic codes (letter forms)?
- Are these difficulties unexpected for the student's age in relation to the student's other abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction?

If through the evaluation process, it is established that the student meets the criteria for dysgraphia, then the student meets the first prong of eligibility under the IDEA (identification of condition). In other words, the identification of dysgraphia, using the process outlined in this chapter, meets the criterion for the condition of a specific learning disability. However, the presence of a disability condition alone is not sufficient to determine if the student is a student with a disability under the IDEA. Eligibility under the IDEA consists of both identification of the condition and a corresponding need for specially designed instruction as a result of the disability.

The ARD committee will determine whether the student who has dysgraphia is eligible under IDEA as a student with a specific learning disability. The student is eligible for services under IDEA if he/she has dysgraphia and, because of the dysgraphia needs special education services. The October 23, 2015 letter from the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) (Dear Colleague: Dyslexia Guidance) states that dyslexia,

dyscalculia, and dysgraphia are conditions that could qualify a child as a child with a specific learning disability under IDEA. The letter further states that there is nothing in the IDEA that would prohibit the use of the terms dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia in IDEA evaluation, eligibility determinations, or IEP documents. For more information, please visit <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/idea-files/osep-dear-colleague-letter-on-ideaiep-terms/>

Once dysgraphia has been identified as the IDEA eligible disability, a determination must be made by the ARD committee regarding the most appropriate way to serve the student. If the student with dysgraphia is found eligible for special education, the student's IEP must include appropriate writing instruction, which might include instruction from a related services provider.

If the student is identified with dysgraphia but is determined by the ARD committee as not eligible for special education and related services (because the student does not need specially designed instruction), then the student may be eligible to receive appropriate accommodations and services under Section 504.

A student who is found not eligible under the IDEA but who is identified with dysgraphia through the FIE process should not be referred for a second evaluation under Section 504. Instead, the Section 504 committee will use the FIE and determine eligibility for Section 504 as necessary

For students eligible for Section 504, a Section 504 committee will develop the student's Section 504 Plan, which must include appropriate instructional accommodations to meet the individual needs of the student.

Instruction for Students with Dysgraphia

"... Done right, early handwriting instruction improves students' writing. Not just its legibility, but its quantity and quality." (p. 49)

—S. Graham, Want to Improve Children's Writing? Don't Neglect Their Handwriting, *American Educator*, 2010

Graham and his colleagues describe two reasons for teaching handwriting effectively. The first reason is what they call the Presentation Effect. Research demonstrates that, in general, a reader's evaluation of a composition's quality is influenced by how neatly it is written (Graham, Harris, & Hebert, 2011). The second reason that educational scientists give for teaching handwriting effectively is called the Writer Effect.

Research demonstrates that handwriting difficulties interfere with other writing processes such as expression of ideas and organization. In fact, a 2016 meta-analysis showed that handwriting instruction improved students' writing fluency, quantity, and quality. The findings of this research report were dramatic, showing moderate effects on writing fluency and very large effects on the number of words students wrote and the quality of their compositions (Santangelo & Graham, 2016).

Handwriting interferes with other writing processes or consumes an inordinate amount of cognitive resources, at least until handwriting becomes automatic and fluent ... Handwriting-instructed students made greater gains than peers who did not receive handwriting instruction in the quality of their writing, how much they wrote, and writing fluency. (p. 226)

—Santangelo & Graham, A Comprehensive Meta-Analysis of Handwriting Instruction, 2016

Supporting Students Struggling with Handwriting

Between 10% and 30% of students struggle with handwriting. Early difficulties in this area are significantly correlated with poorer performance on composition tasks. The following are research-based elements of effective handwriting instruction.

4. CRITICAL, EVIDENCE-BASED COMPONENTS OF DYSLEXIA INSTRUCTION

Although dyslexia affects individuals over the life span . . . reading skills can be increased with the right early intervention and prevention programs . . . It is clear from the consensus of scientifically based reading research that the nature of the educational intervention for individuals with reading disabilities and dyslexia is critical. (pp. 21–22)

— Birsh, J. R. Connecting Research and Practice, 2018

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.

TEC §38.003(b) states, “in accordance with the program approved by the State Board of Education, the board of trustees of each school district shall provide for the treatment of any student determined to have dyslexia or a related disorder.” The board must also adopt and implement a policy requiring the district to comply with all rules and standards adopted by the SBOE to implement the program, including this handbook and guidance published by the commissioner to assist the district in implementing the program.

Evidence-Based Dyslexia Instruction

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 and must be considered when making individual placement decisions.

For the student who has not benefited from the research-based core reading instruction, the components of instruction will include additional focused intervention as appropriate for the reading needs of the student with dyslexia. Evidence-based dyslexia instruction provides evidence-based, multisensory structured literacy instruction for students with dyslexia. This instruction must be explicit, systematic, and intentional in its approach. This instruction is designed to likely take place in a small group setting.

Evidence-based dyslexia instruction must be—
• evidence-based and effective for students with dyslexia; • taught by an appropriately trained instructor; and • implemented with fidelity.

Evidence-based dyslexia programs and instruction are considered specially designed instruction (SDI) and therefore special education services, so the provision of those services must follow the IDEA requirements. This means that evidence-based dyslexia instruction is only available to students who are served under IDEA, which prescribes the legal requirements for special education and related services. LEAs must ensure that the provision of evidence-based dyslexia instruction addresses the critical, evidence-based components and methods of delivery described in this chapter.

An LEA’s first consideration for every student who requires dyslexia instruction should be an evidence-based dyslexia program taught with fidelity and in accordance with all SBOE dyslexia program requirements included in this handbook. Differentiation that does not compromise the fidelity of the program, such as adjusting the amount of information or pacing of the program, may be necessary to address students’ unique needs and to promote progress among students receiving dyslexia instruction. An ARD committee must only consider deviations from the program’s fidelity requirements when data collection, a student’s present levels

of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP), and other areas of the student's IEP clearly indicate the need for more intensive or supplemental supports.

The ARD committee, when discussing how a student will access an LEA's evidence-based dyslexia program, must address the following:

- How the program addresses the required components of dyslexia instruction described in this handbook, and whether the student's PLAAFP or other areas of the IEP show evidence that the program must be supplemented with a focus on one or more components;
- How the program addresses the required instructional delivery methods described in the handbook, and whether the student's PLAAFP or other areas of the IEP show evidence that the program must be supplemented to meet the student's needs;
- The fidelity statements/requirements that are included with the program, and how those will be delivered and/or intensified for the student; and
- Confirm that the provider of dyslexia instruction (PDI) is fully trained in the instructional materials to implement the program and how to differentiate the program, as determined by the ARD committee.

Evidence-based dyslexia instruction is not considered to be "regular" education aids and services. Regular aids and services are things like accommodations provided to a student to assist in classroom instruction and access to instruction, such as giving extra time for assignments and allowing speech-to-text capabilities when given a writing assignment. While a Section 504 plan could be appropriate for those needs, the need for evidence-based dyslexia instruction crosses over into a special education need.

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 [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).

In addition, other areas of language processing skills, such as written expression, which require integration of skills, are often a struggle for students with dyslexia. Moats and Dakin (2008) posit the following:

The ability to compose and transcribe conventional English with accuracy, fluency, and clarity of expression is known as basic writing skills. Writing is dependent on many language skills and processes and is often even more problematic for children than reading. Writing is a language discipline with many component skills that must be directly taught. Because writing demands using different skills at the same time, such as generating language, spelling, handwriting, and using capitalization and punctuation, it puts a significant demand on working memory and attention. Thus, a student may demonstrate mastery of these individual skills, but when asked to integrate them all at once, mastery of an individual skill, such as handwriting, often deteriorates. To write on demand, a student has to have mastered, to the point of being automatic, each skill involved (p. 55).

Both the provider of dyslexia instruction and the regular classroom teacher should provide multiple opportunities to support intervention and to strengthen these skills; therefore, responsibility for teaching reading and 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)—"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).

Systematic and cumulative—"Multisensory language instruction requires that the organization of material follow 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).

As appropriate intervention is provided, students with dyslexia make significant gains in reading. Effective instruction is highly-structured, systematic, and explicit, and it lasts for sufficient duration. With regard to explicit instruction, Torgesen (2004) states, "Explicit instruction is instruction that does not leave anything to chance and does not make assumptions about skills and knowledge that children will acquire on their own" (p. 353).

In addition, because effective intervention requires highly structured and systematic delivery, it is critical that those who provide intervention for students with dyslexia be trained in the program used and that the program is implemented with fidelity.

Sources for Critical, Evidence-Based Components and Delivery of Dyslexia Instruction

Berninger, V. W., & Wolf, B. (2009). *Teaching students with dyslexia and dysgraphia: Lessons from teaching and science*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

Birsh, J. R. (2018). Connecting research and practice. In J. R. Birsh, *Multisensory teaching of basic language skills* (4th ed., pp21–34). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

Henry, M. K. (2010). *Unlocking literacy: Effective decoding and spelling instruction* (2nd ed.). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

The International Multisensory Structured Language Council. (2013). *Multisensory structured language programs: Content and principles of instruction*. Retrieved from <https://www.imslec.org/directory.asp?action=instruction>.

Mather, N., & Wendling, B. J. (2012). *Essentials of dyslexia assessment and intervention*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Moats, L. C, & Dakin, K. E. (2008). *Basic facts about dyslexia and other reading problems*. Baltimore, MD: The International Dyslexia Association.

Student Progress Reports

Any student that is provided an evidence-based reading program must have a progress report prepared and communicated to a parent specifically on the student's progress as a result of that program at least once per grading period. To the extent that an IEP goal progress report would not comply with this requirement for a student receiving special education and related services, a separate progress report should be sent to comply with TEC §29.0031(d). This includes a student receiving evidence-based dyslexia instruction through a Section 504 accommodation plan during the transition period, which ends beginning with the 2025-2026 school year.

Providers of Dyslexia Instruction

In order to provide effective intervention, school districts are encouraged to employ highly trained individuals to deliver dyslexia instruction. Teachers, such as reading specialists, master reading teachers, general

Please note that certification and licensing requirements may change with time. For more complete and up-to-date information, contact the specific licensing body.

Professional Development Relative to Dyslexia for All Teachers

Research consistently confirms the impact that a knowledgeable teacher can have on the success or failure of even the best reading programs (Shaywitz, 2020). To ensure that teachers are knowledgeable about dyslexia, [TEC §21.054\(b\)](#) and [19 TAC §232.11\(k\)](#) require educators who teach students with dyslexia to be trained in new research and practices related to dyslexia as a part of their continuing professional education (CPE) hours. TEC §21.4552(b-1) provides that the completion of a literacy achievement academy by an educator who teaches students with dyslexia satisfies the training requirements under TEC §21.054(b).

<http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/ED/htm/ED.21.htm>

<http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/sbecrules/tac/chapter232/ch232a.html#232.11>

Educator Preparation Programs

According to TEC §21.044(b), all candidates completing an educator preparation program must receive instruction in detection and education of students with dyslexia. This legislation ensures that newly certified teachers will have knowledge of dyslexia prior to entering the classroom.

<https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/ED/htm/ED.21.htm#21.044>

Instructional Intervention Consideration for EB Students with Dyslexia

EB students receiving dyslexia services will have unique needs. Provision of dyslexia instruction should be in accordance with the program model the student is currently receiving (e.g., dual language, transitional bilingual, ESL). Interventionists working with EB students should have additional training on the specialized needs of EB students.

Learning to read, write, and spell in two languages can be facilitated by building on a student's native language knowledge and helping to transfer that knowledge to a second language. While direct, systematic instruction is still required for all aspects of reading, additional explicit instruction will be needed to address the similarities and differences in sounds, syllable structure, morphology, orthography, and syntax between the first and second languages.

For example, instructional considerations may include capitalizing on familiar sound-symbol correspondences. Direct and systematic instruction of the cross-linguistic correlations is beneficial for EB students. Instruction can subsequently include those sound-symbol correlations that partially overlap or present a slight variation from the native language to the second language. Unfamiliar phonemes and graphemes then can be presented to EB students. A systematic approach will enhance instruction and assist the bilingual student in transferring native language and literacy knowledge to second language and literacy acquisition.

For EB students learning to read in English and not in their native language, progress in reading may be hindered due to limited vocabulary in English. Therefore, in addition to all the components of effective instruction previously discussed, intervention for EB students also must emphasize oral language development (Cardenas- Hagan, 2018). Because the English language is derived from Anglo-Saxon, Latin, Greek, French, and other languages, EB students can expand their oral language and vocabulary knowledge by understanding the cognates (baseball/béisbol or leader/lider) that exist in their native language and English. The similarities of words in the native language and English must be explicitly taught.

It is also necessary to incorporate ESL strategies during the intervention process and in all content areas. In Texas, school districts are required to implement the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) as an integral part of each subject area in the required curriculum ([19 TAC §74.4\(a\)](#)).

Dyslexia instruction for EB students must incorporate the ELPS. A few strategies to consider include the following:

- Establish routines so that EB students understand what is expected of them
- Provide native language support when giving directions or when students do not understand the task
- Provide opportunities for repetition and rehearsal so that the new information can be learned to mastery
- Adjust the rate of speech and the complexity of the language used according to the second language proficiency level of each student
- Provide extra time for the EB students to process the English language. This is especially necessary during the early stages of second language development
- Provide extra time for the EB students to formulate oral and written responses
- Emphasize text that includes familiar content and explain the structure of the text

Source for Instructional Intervention Consideration for EB students with Dyslexia

19 Texas Administrative Code §74.4, English Language Proficiency Standards. (2007).

Cardenas-Hagan, E. (2018). Language and literacy development among English language learners. In J. R. Birsh, *Multisensory teaching of basic language skills* (4th ed.) (pp. 720–754). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

Research-Based Best Practices

It is important to note that in Texas, the approach to teaching students with dyslexia is founded on research-based best practices. The ideas upon which the state's approach is based are summarized here.

- Gains in reading can be significant if students with reading problems are provided systematic, explicit, and intensive reading instruction of sufficient duration in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary (e.g., the relationships among words and the relationships among word structure, origin, and meaning), reading comprehension strategies, and writing.
- A failure to learn to read impacts a person's life significantly. The key to preventing this failure for students with dyslexia is early identification and early intervention.
- Instruction by a highly skilled and knowledgeable educator who has specific preparation in the remediation of dyslexia is necessary.

It is vital to start evidence-based interventions as soon as possible. Effective treatments for dyslexia should consist of explicit academic teaching of reading and spelling skills.

The following research reflects the essential components of dyslexia instruction discussed above and may serve as additional sources of information for those working with students identified with dyslexia. The similarities between the state's approach and the research are noted in bold. Unless otherwise indicated, the following pages contain excerpts from the resources cited.

1. August and Shanahan (2006, pp. 3–5) state the following:
 - a. **Instruction that provides substantial coverage in the key components of reading—identified by the National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000) as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension**—has clear benefits for language-minority students.
 - b. **Instruction in the key components of reading** is necessary—but not sufficient—for teaching language-minority students to read and write proficiently in English. Oral proficiency

Ineffective Treatment for Dyslexia

Interventions that claim to treat dyslexia in the absence of print are generally ineffective. Claims of ineffective treatments for dyslexia may use terms or techniques described as “brain training,” “crossing the midline,” “balance therapy,” and others. While some treatments may ameliorate conditions other than dyslexia, their use for students with dyslexia has not been proven effective. Figure 4.2 addresses some commonly advertised interventions that may be purported to treat dyslexia, but scientific, peer-reviewed research has demonstrated ineffective results for students with dyslexia.

Figure 4.2. Treatments Ineffective for Dyslexia

Examples	What Research Has Found	Citation
Colored Overlays and Colored Lenses	“Consistent with previous reviews and advice from several professional bodies, we conclude that the use of colored overlays to ameliorate reading difficulties cannot be endorsed and that any benefits reported in clinical settings are likely to be the result of placebo, practice, or Hawthorne effects.”	Griffiths, P.G., Taylor, R.H., Henderson, L.M., & Barrett, B.T. (2016). The effect of colored overlays and lenses on reading: a systematic review of the literature. <i>Ophthalmic & Physiological Optics</i> , 36, 519–544. https://doi.org/10.1111/opo.12316
Specialized fonts designed for people with dyslexia	“Dyslexie font did not lead to improved reading compared to normal ‘Arial’ font, nor was it preferred by most students.”	Kuster, S. M., van Weerdenburg, M., Gompel, M., & Bosman, A. M. (2018). Dyslexie font does not benefit reading in children with or without dyslexia. <i>Annals of Dyslexia</i> , 68, 25-42. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11881-017-0154-6
Vision Therapy	“Scientific evidence does not support the claims that visual training, muscle exercises, ocular pursuit-and-tracking exercises, behavioral/ perceptual vision therapy, ‘training’ glasses, prisms, and colored lenses and filters are effective direct or indirect treatments for learning disabilities. There is no valid evidence that children who participate in vision therapy are more responsive to educational instruction than children who do not participate.”	Handler, S.M., Fierson, W.M., et al. (2011). Joint technical report - learning disabilities, dyslexia, and vision. <i>Pediatrics</i> , 127, e818-56. https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2010-3670
Specific Working Memory Training Programs	“The authors conclude that working memory training programs appear to produce short-term, specific training effects that do not generalize to measures of ‘real-world’ cognitive skills. These results seriously question the practical and theoretical importance of current computerized working memory programs as methods of training working memory skills.”	Melby-Lervåg, M., Redick, T. & Hulme, C. (2016). Working memory training does not improve performance on measures of intelligence or other measures of “far transfer”: Evidence from a meta-analytic review. <i>Perspectives on Psychological Science</i> , 11, 512-534. https://DOI:10.1177/1745691616635612

dyscalculia, and dysgraphia are conditions that could qualify a child as a child with a specific learning disability under IDEA. The letter further states that there is nothing in the IDEA that would prohibit the use of the terms dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia in IDEA evaluation, eligibility determinations, or IEP documents. For more information, please visit <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/idea-files/osep-dear-colleague-letter-on-ideaiep-terms/>

Once dysgraphia has been identified as the IDEA eligible disability, a determination must be made by the ARD committee regarding the most appropriate way to serve the student. If the student with dysgraphia is found eligible for special education, the student's IEP must include appropriate writing instruction, which might include instruction from a related services provider.

If the student is identified with dysgraphia but is determined by the ARD committee as not eligible for special education and related services (because the student does not need specially designed instruction), then the student may be eligible to receive appropriate accommodations and services under Section 504.

A student who is found not eligible under the IDEA but who is identified with dysgraphia through the FIE process should not be referred for a second evaluation under Section 504. Instead, the Section 504 committee will use the FIE and determine eligibility for Section 504 as necessary

For students eligible for Section 504, a Section 504 committee will develop the student's Section 504 Plan, which must include appropriate instructional accommodations to meet the individual needs of the student.

Instruction for Students with Dysgraphia

"... Done right, early handwriting instruction improves students' writing. Not just its legibility, but its quantity and quality." (p. 49)

—S. Graham, Want to Improve Children's Writing? Don't Neglect Their Handwriting, *American Educator*, 2010

Graham and his colleagues describe two reasons for teaching handwriting effectively. The first reason is what they call the Presentation Effect. Research demonstrates that, in general, a reader's evaluation of a composition's quality is influenced by how neatly it is written (Graham, Harris, & Hebert, 2011). The second reason that educational scientists give for teaching handwriting effectively is called the Writer Effect.

Research demonstrates that handwriting difficulties interfere with other writing processes such as expression of ideas and organization. In fact, a 2016 meta-analysis showed that handwriting instruction improved students' writing fluency, quantity, and quality. The findings of this research report were dramatic, showing moderate effects on writing fluency and very large effects on the number of words students wrote and the quality of their compositions (Santangelo & Graham, 2016).

Handwriting interferes with other writing processes or consumes an inordinate amount of cognitive resources, at least until handwriting becomes automatic and fluent ... Handwriting-instructed students made greater gains than peers who did not receive handwriting instruction in the quality of their writing, how much they wrote, and writing fluency. (p. 226)

—Santangelo & Graham, A Comprehensive Meta-Analysis of Handwriting Instruction, 2016

Supporting Students Struggling with Handwriting

Between 10% and 30% of students struggle with handwriting. Early difficulties in this area are significantly correlated with poorer performance on composition tasks. The following are research-based elements of effective handwriting instruction.

These elements, which apply to both manuscript and cursive handwriting, may not necessarily apply to an entire class but instead may be used to support instructional methods delivered in small groups with students whose penmanship is illegible or dysfluent.

- Show students how to hold a pencil.
- Model efficient and legible letter formation.
- Provide multiple opportunities for students to practice effective letter formation.
- Use scaffolds, such as letters with numbered arrows showing the order and direction of strokes.
- Have students practice writing letters from memory.
- Provide handwriting fluency practice to build students' automaticity.
- Practice handwriting in short sessions.

—Adapted from Berninger et al., 1997; Berninger et al., 2006; Denton, Cope, & Moser, 2006; Graham et al., 2012; Graham, Harris, & Fink, 2000; Graham & Weintrub, 1996.

Some students who struggle with handwriting may actually have dysgraphia. Dysgraphia may occur alone, or with dyslexia. An assessment for dysgraphia, as it relates to dyslexia, is important in order to determine whether children need additional explicit, systematic instruction in handwriting only; handwriting and spelling; or handwriting, spelling, and written expression along with word reading and decoding (IDA, 2012).

TEC §38.003(b) states, "In accordance with the program approved by the State Board of Education, the board of trustees of each school district shall provide for the treatment of any student determined to have dyslexia or a related disorder."

While it is important for students with dysgraphia to receive the research-based elements of handwriting, spelling, and written language instruction as part of the core curriculum, for those students who require additional supports and services for dysgraphia, instructional decisions must be made by a committee (either Section 504 or ARD) that is knowledgeable about the instructional elements and delivery of instruction that is consistent with research-based practice.

Handwriting

The research-based elements for effective instruction of handwriting as stated above for all students are the same for students with dysgraphia. However, the intensity, frequency, and delivery of instruction may need to be adjusted to meet specific student need as determined by the Section 504 or ARD committee. Figure 5.4 below provides a hierarchy of instruction for handwriting as a reference to best practice:

Figure 5.4. Handwriting Hierarchy of Instruction

Posture	Also known as "Watch Our Writing" (W.O.W) • Feet are flat on the floor • Back is straight • Paper slanted so that the edge of the paper is parallel to the writing arm • Paper anchored with non-writing hand • Pencil grip and position correct
Grip	Normal tripod grip with pencil resting on first joint of middle finger with the thumb and index fingers holding the pencil in place at a 45° angle.

Letter Formation

Emphasis placed in the following order:

- Shape
- Proportion
- Size
- Rhythm/fluency
- Slant

Sequence

- Lower case letters first; Capitals as needed beginning with first letters of student name
- Manuscript – group by stroke formation
- Cursive – group by beginning approach stroke
- Letters
- Syllables
- Words
- Phrases
- Sentences
- Paragraphs

Spelling

Handwriting supports spelling, a complex process of translating a phoneme (spoken sound) to the corresponding grapheme (orthographic representation) in order to generate written text to express an idea. 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.

Because spelling is meaning driven and draws upon the phonological, orthographic, and morphological aspects of words, students will benefit from systematic, explicit instruction based on the following guiding principles:

- Phoneme-grapheme correspondence
- Letter order and sequence patterns, or orthographic conventions:
 - syllable types
 - orthographic rules
 - irregular words
- Position of a phoneme or grapheme in a word
- Meaning (morphology) and part of speech
- Language of origin (Moats, 2005)

Writing

A potential secondary consequence of dysgraphia is difficulty with students expressing themselves in written text. This difficulty may be attributed to deficits in handwriting, spelling, language processing, or the integration of each of those skills. In Chapter 4 of this handbook, Moats and Dakin (2008) are quoted as stating:

The ability to compose and transcribe conventional English with accuracy, fluency, and clarity of expression is known as basic writing skills. Writing is dependent on many language skills and processes and is often even more problematic for children than

reading. Writing is a language discipline with many component skills that must be directly taught. Because writing demands using different skills at the same time, such as generating language, spelling, handwriting, and using capitalization and punctuation, it puts a significant demand on working memory and attention. Thus, a student may demonstrate mastery of these individual skills, but when asked to integrate them all at once, mastery of an individual skill, such as handwriting, often deteriorates. To write on demand, a student has to have mastered, to the point of being automatic, each skill involved (p. 55).

Students with written expression difficulties because of dysgraphia would benefit from being taught explicit strategies for composing including planning, generating, reviewing/evaluating, and revising different genre including narrative, informational, compare and contrast, and persuasive compositions (IDA, 2012).

Delivery of Intervention

The way the content is delivered should be consistent with the principles of effective intervention for students with dysgraphia including the following:

Simultaneous, multisensory (VAKT) — “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. 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 — “Multisensory language instruction requires that the organization of material follow 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. 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 — “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).

Sources for Critical, Evidence-Based Components and Delivery of Dysgraphia Instruction

- Berninger, V. W., Rutberg, J.E., Abbott, R.D., Garcia, N., Anderson-Youngstrom, M., Brooks, A., & Fulton, C. (2006). Tier 1 and tier 2 early intervention for handwriting and composing. *Journal of School Psychology, 44*(1), 3-30.
- Berninger, V. W., & Wolf, B. (2009). *Teaching students with dyslexia and dysgraphia: Lessons from teaching and science*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.
- Berninger, V. W., Vaughan, K.B., Abbott, R.D., Abbott, S.P. Woodruff-Logan, L., Brooks, A., Reed, E., & Graham, S. (1997). Treatment of handwriting problems in beginning writers: Transfer from handwriting to composition. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 89*(4), 652-666.

Instructional Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students with dyslexia who receive dyslexia instruction that contains the components described in this chapter will be better equipped to meet the demands of grade-level or course instruction. In addition to dyslexia instruction, accommodations provide the student with dyslexia effective and equitable access to grade-level or course instruction in the general education classroom. **Accommodations are not one size fits all; rather, the impact of dyslexia on each individual student determines the necessary accommodation.**

Listed below are examples of reasonable classroom accommodations:

- Copies of notes (e.g., teacher- or peer-provided)
- Note-taking assistance
- Additional time on class assignments and tests
- Reduced/shortened assignments (e.g., chunking assignments into manageable units, fewer items given on a classroom test or homework assignment without eliminating concepts, or student planner to assist with assignments)
- Alternative test location that provides a quiet environment and reduces distractions
- Priority seating assignment
- Oral reading of directions or written material
- Word banks
- Audiobooks
- Text to speech
- Speech to text
- Electronic spellers
- Electronic dictionaries
- Formula charts
- Adaptive learning tools and features in software programs

Accommodations are changes to materials, actions, or techniques, including the use of technology, that enable students with disabilities to participate meaningfully in grade-level or course instruction. The use of accommodations occurs primarily during classroom instruction as educators use various instructional strategies to meet the needs of each student. A student may need an accommodation only temporarily while learning a new skill, or a student might require the accommodation throughout the school year and over several years including beyond graduation.

Decisions about which accommodations to use are very individualized and should be made for each student by that student's ARD or Section 504 committee, as appropriate. Students can, and should, play a significant role in choosing and using accommodations. Students need to know what accommodations are possible, and then, based on knowledge of their personal strengths and limitations, they select and try accommodations that might be useful for them. The more input students have in their own accommodation choices, the more likely it is that they will use and benefit from the accommodations.

When making decisions about accommodations, instruction is always the foremost priority. Not all accommodations used in the classroom are allowed during a state assessment. However, an educator's ability to meet the individual needs of a student with dyslexia or provide support for the use of an accommodation should not be limited by whether an accommodation is allowable on a state assessment.

In order to make accommodation decisions for students, educators should have knowledge of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and how a student performs in relation to them. Educators should

also collect and analyze data pertaining to the use and effectiveness of accommodations (e.g., assignment/test scores with and without the accommodation, observational reports from parents and teachers) so that informed educational decisions can be made for each student. By analyzing data, an educator can determine if the accommodation becomes inappropriate or unnecessary over time due to the student's changing needs. Likewise, data can confirm for the educator that the student still struggles in certain areas and should continue to use the accommodation.

For more information about accommodations, see [Accommodations for students with Disabilities](https://dyslexiaida.org/accommodations-for-students-with-dyslexia/) available at <https://dyslexiaida.org/accommodations-for-students-with-dyslexia/>.

Access to Instructional Materials for Students with Disabilities

Accessible instructional materials are textbooks and related core instructional materials that have been converted into specialized formats (e.g., Braille, audio, digital text, or large print) for students who are blind or have low vision, have a physical disability, or have a reading disability such as dyslexia. Digital books or text-to-speech functions on computers and mobile devices provide access to general education curriculum for students with dyslexia. **Bookshare** and **Learning Ally** provide electronic access to digitally recorded materials for students with print disabilities. TEA provides links to these resources as well as other accessible instructional materials for students with disabilities at <https://tea.texas.gov/academics/instructional-materials/state-adopted-instructional-materials/accessible-instructional-materials>.

Texas State Student Assessment Program Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Educators, parents, and students must understand that accommodations provided during classroom instruction and testing might differ from accommodations allowed for use on state assessments. The state assessment is a standardized tool for measuring every student's learning in a reliable, valid, and secure manner. An accommodation used in the classroom for learning may invalidate or compromise the security and integrity of the state assessment; therefore, not all accommodations suitable for instruction are allowed during the state assessments. It is important to keep in mind that the policies for accommodation use on state assessments **should not** limit an educator's ability to develop individualized materials and techniques to facilitate student learning. **Instruction comes first** and can be customized to meet the needs of each student.

For the purposes of the statewide assessments, students needing accommodations due to a disability include the following:

- Students with an identified disability who receive special education services and meet established eligibility criteria for certain accommodations
- Students with an identified disability who receive Section 504 services and meet established eligibility criteria for certain accommodations
- Students with a disabling condition who do not receive special education or Section 504 services but meet established eligibility criteria for certain accommodations

For students who receive special education or Section 504 services, the decision for student use of accommodations during the statewide assessments is made by the ARD or Section 504 committee. In those rare instances where a student does not receive services but meets the eligibility criteria due to a disabling condition, the decision about using accommodations on the statewide assessments is made by the appropriate team of people at the campus level, such as the RTI team or student assistance team. For more information about accommodations on statewide assessments, visit <https://tea.texas.gov/accommodations/>.

Enrollment in Gifted/Talented and Advanced Academic Programs

A student who has been identified with dyslexia can also be a gifted learner, or a twice-exceptional learner. A twice-exceptional learner is a child or youth who performs at or shows the potential for performing at

- Birsh, J. R. (2018). Connecting research and practice. In J. R. Birsh, *Multisensory teaching of basic language skills* (4th ed., pp.1–24). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.
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- Santangelo, T., & Graham, S. (June 2016). A comprehensive meta-analysis of handwriting instruction. *Educational Psychology Review*, 28(2), 225-265.

Instructional Accommodations for the Student with Dysgraphia

By receiving instruction based on the elements described in this chapter, a student with dysgraphia is better equipped to meet the demands of grade-level or course instruction. In addition to targeted instruction, accommodations provide the student with dysgraphia effective and equitable access to grade-level or course instruction in the general education classroom. **Accommodations are not a one size fits all; rather, the impact of dysgraphia on each individual student determines the accommodation.**

When considering accommodations for the student with dysgraphia, consider the following:

- The rate of producing written work
- The volume of the work to be produced
- The complexity of the writing task
- The tools used to produce the written product
- The format of the product (Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children, 2018, p. 5).

Listed below are examples of reasonable classroom accommodations for a student with dysgraphia based on the above considerations:

- Allow more time for written tasks including note taking, copying, and tests
- Reduce the length requirements of written assignments
- Provide copies of notes or assign a note taking buddy to assist with filling in missing information

- Allow the student to audio record important assignments and/or take oral tests
- Assist student with developing logical steps to complete a writing assignment instead of all at once
- Allow the use of technology (e.g., speech to text software, etc.)
- Allow the student to use cursive or manuscript, whichever is most legible and efficient
- Allow the student to use graph paper for math, or to turn lined paper sideways, to help with lining up columns of numbers
- Offer an alternative to a written project such as an oral report, dramatic presentation, or visual media project

Accommodations are changes to materials, actions, or techniques, including the use of technology, that enable students with disabilities to participate meaningfully in grade-level or course instruction. The use of accommodations occurs primarily during classroom instruction as educators use various instructional strategies to meet the needs of each student. A student may need an accommodation only temporarily while learning a new skill, or a student might require the accommodation throughout the school year or over several years including beyond graduation.

Decisions about which accommodations to use are very individualized and should be made for each student by that student's ARD or Section 504 committee, as appropriate. Students can, and should, play a significant role in choosing and using accommodations. Students need to know what accommodations are possible, and then, based on knowledge of their personal strengths and limitations, they select and try accommodations that might be useful for them. The more input students have in their own accommodation choices, the more likely it is that they will use and benefit from the accommodations.

When making decisions about accommodations, instruction is always the foremost priority. Not all accommodations used in the classroom are allowed during a state assessment. However, an educator's ability to meet the individual needs of a student with dysgraphia or provide support for the use of an accommodation should not be limited by whether an accommodation is allowable on a state assessment.

In order to make accommodation decisions for students, educators should have knowledge of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and how a student performs in relation to them. Educators should also collect and analyze data pertaining to the use and effectiveness of accommodations (e.g., assignment/test scores with and without the accommodation, observational reports from parents and teachers) so that informed educational decisions can be made for each student. By analyzing data, an educator can determine if the accommodation becomes inappropriate or unnecessary over time due to the student's changing needs. Likewise, data can confirm for the educator that the student still struggles in certain areas and should continue to use the accommodation.

For more information about accommodations, see [At a Glance: Classroom Accommodations for Dysgraphia](https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/partnering-with-childs-school/instructional-strategies/at-a-glance-classroom-accommodations-for-dysgraphia), available at <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/partnering-with-childs-school/instructional-strategies/at-a-glance-classroom-accommodations-for-dysgraphia>

Technology Tools

There are many technology resources to assist a student with dysgraphia. The *Technology Integration for Students with Dyslexia* online tool (TEC §38.0031) is a resource developed to support school districts and charter schools in making instructional decisions regarding technology that benefit students with dyslexia and related disorders. For more information and to view this source, visit [Dyslexia and Related Disorders | Texas Education Agency](#).

WHAT IS SPECIAL EDUCATION?

When a child receives special education, it means that a public school provides custom services and instruction specific to the needs of that student. Special education is available because of a federal law called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which provides students with disabilities and their parents special legal rights to receive these individualized learning opportunities.

Special education is a service, not a place.

How can special education services help your child?

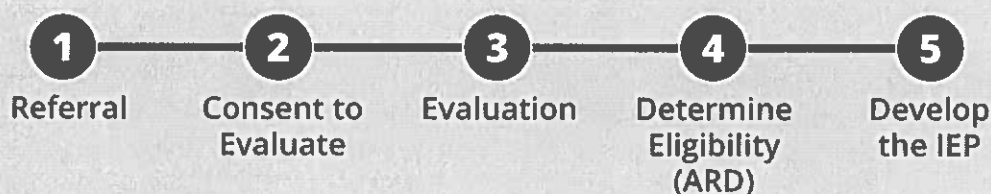


- ▶ If your child is eligible for special education services, your child will have access to services and supports that are specially designed to meet your child's unique needs.
- ▶ Special education services provide individualized programming at NO cost to you and may include special education teachers and service providers such as occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech-language pathologists, and providers of dyslexia instruction.

SPECIAL EDUCATION PROCESS:

Parents have a right to request a special education evaluation at any time. Schools are required to refer a student for an evaluation when a disability is suspected that might require special education services. It's important to understand the steps of the **special education process**.

Steps to Begin Special Education:



Receiving Special Education Services:



More information about your rights as a parent can be found below:



spedtex.org
1-855-773-3839

SPEDTEX
Special Education Information Center

**Special Education
Help for Parents**



Parents Guide to the ARD Process
bit.ly/ParentsARD



Notice of Procedural Safeguards
bit.ly/ParentsNPS

While there are other federal laws that also offer certain protections for students with disabilities - such as Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 - IDEA has specific rights only available under that law. This document summarizes those rights.

1

REFERRAL FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION EVALUATION IS MADE.



A referral is:

- ▶ Required by law when a public school feels that your child may have a disability that requires special education services to be successful.
- ▶ Called a *request* for a special education evaluation when a parent makes it. A request should be made in writing to the proper staff member. The school will respond with information on whether it will proceed with an evaluation.

The school must respond in writing within 15 school days.



2

YOU WILL BE ASKED WHETHER YOU **CONSENT** FOR THE SCHOOL TO EVALUATE YOUR CHILD.



Consent to evaluate is:

- ▶ Permission you choose to give for specially trained personnel to evaluate and assess your child in specific areas.
- ▶ Used by the school to start the timeline by which the school must complete your child's evaluation.

With some exceptions, an evaluation must be completed within 45 school days.



3

EVALUATION IS DONE BY A GROUP OF TRAINED PROFESSIONALS.



An evaluation is:

- ▶ Called a *Full Individual and Initial Evaluation* (FIIE), which includes a written report of education recommendations and information about your child's strengths, interests, and challenges. Professionals with training in the suspected disability must participate, e.g., someone like a licensed dyslexia therapist if dyslexia is suspected.
- ▶ Done at no cost to you. If you do not agree with the school's evaluation, you may ask for an *Independent Educational Evaluation* (IEE). This would be done by someone who is not employed by the school.

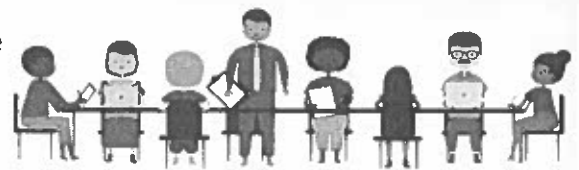


4

ADMISSION, REVIEW AND DISMISSAL (ARD) COMMITTEE MEETS TO DETERMINE IF YOUR CHILD IS ELIGIBLE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES.

The ARD committee is:

- ▶ A team, including you, teachers, school administrators, those with special expertise about your child, and professionals with special training about the suspected disability.
- ▶ In this meeting, discussing your child's evaluation report, identifying your child's strengths and areas of need, and then determining whether your child has a disability and the need for special education services.



Once the evaluation report is done, an ARD committee typically has 30 calendar days to determine eligibility and develop the IEP.



5 IF YOUR CHILD IS ELIGIBLE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES, THEN THE ARD COMMITTEE WILL ALSO DEVELOP AN **INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP)**.



An IEP is:

- ▶ A collection of information that identifies your child's disability, shows your child's current strengths and areas of need, identifies goals to be worked on, and shows the special education and related services that are required for your child to be successful.
- ▶ A document that a school must follow once the process for developing it is complete, and you consent to your child receiving services. Services would begin as soon as possible.

You have the right to participate in the development of the IEP and agree or disagree to your child getting special education services.

→ **MOVING FORWARD: RECEIVING SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES**

Once an IEP has been developed, it is the school's responsibility to implement the IEP. Schools must offer the services, accommodations, and supports described in the IEP, and school staff will monitor your child's progress toward the goals in the IEP.

- ▶ You will receive progress reports on your child's IEP goals at least once each grading period.
- ▶ The ARD committee will meet and review your child's IEP at least annually.
- ▶ As a member of the ARD committee, you will discuss the need for an updated evaluation at least every three years.
- ▶ You can ask for an ARD committee meeting at any time.
- ▶ You can revoke your consent to special education services. In other words, you can tell the school in writing that you want your child's special education services to stop being provided.
- ▶ Special rules are in place for school discipline. If your child's disability is found to be the reason why the misbehavior occurred, then the ARD committee may, in certain situations, change the disciplinary consequence.



IF DISAGREEMENT OCCURS:

During each ARD committee meeting, you will be an active participant, discussing your child's specific needs with school staff as you work to come to a consensus on the best path forward. But from time to time, you may disagree with school decisions. Under the federal law IDEA, you have formal rights to disagree with special education decisions made by the school, both in the *steps to begin special education* and while *receiving special education services*. Dispute resolution options include filing state complaints, requesting mediation, and requesting a due process hearing. State facilitators are also available to help ARD committees reach consensus on IEPs.

WHAT IS IN AN IEP?:

The IEP must address certain elements for your child, including:

PLAAFP

- » *Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP)*: The ARD committee writes down your child's skills, abilities, and challenges based on the evaluation report and other data.

Goals

- » Measurable annual **goals**: Goals are developed to focus on your child's specific needs and to describe when your child is expected to make progress.
 - If your child has dyslexia, for example, a goal might focus on improvement in a specific area of reading development or fluency within a certain amount of time.

Instruction & Services

- » A description of the **specially designed instruction, related services, and supplementary aids and services** that will be provided. The instruction and services will vary based on the specific needs of your child. For example, if your child has been identified with dyslexia:
 - The specially designed instruction would likely include a regularly scheduled time for instruction by a highly trained provider using a program that has been shown to help students with dyslexia and in accordance with the Dyslexia Handbook.
 - Related services might include support to improve your child's fine motor skills from an occupational therapist if he or she also struggles with handwriting; and
 - Supplementary aids and services might include documenting your child's need for speech to text options for writing assignments.

Assessments

- » Information on how your child will participate in state and districtwide **assessments**, including whether accommodations like extra time are necessary.

Transition

- » **Transition** services: When your child turns 14, the IEP must begin to document plans for your child after high school and how your child's special education services will be adjusted to work on those plans.

Placement

- » The IEP notes the educational **placement** of your child. Placement decisions are guided by a requirement to provide education in the least restrictive environment (LRE). The goal of LRE is to have your child included in classrooms and settings with children without disabilities as much as appropriate based on your child's unique needs.



This form is a summary of rights, required to be given to parents after a referral has been made. Your signature serves only as acknowledgment that you received the form. For more information about your rights, review the [Notice of Procedural Safeguards](#) and the [Parent's Guide to the ARD Process](#).

Student Name:

Student ID Number:

Parent Name

Parent Signature

Date