A PARENT'S GUIDE TO DYSLEXIA
AND THE
WOODSBORO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

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WOODSBORO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
408 S. KASTEN STREET
WOODSBORO, TEXAS 78393

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A PARENT'S GUIDE TO DYSLEXIA AND THE WOODSBORO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

1. What is Dyslexia?

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

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

(1) "'*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.

(2) '*Related Disorders'* includes 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)

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.

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2. **What is *NOT* dyslexia?**

Dyslexia is ***NOT***:

- It is not a sign of poor intelligence.
- It is not the result of laziness or not caring.
- It cannot be "cured with pills, diets, or medical treatment."
- It is not an eye (visual) problem.
- It is not outgrown, although individuals with dyslexia can be taught *how* to learn.
- It is not writing letters and words backward. *"While it is true that children with dyslexia have difficulties attaching the appropriate labels or names for letters and words, there is no evidence that they actually see letters and words backward."* (*Overcoming Dyslexia, 2nd Edition*, Sally Shaywitz, M.D., 2020, pg. 120.)

The good news is that with appropriate education, understanding, and time, many individuals with dyslexia learn to read and write and to develop their special abilities and talents. Many successful scientists, artists, athletes, and world leaders are people with dyslexia.

(*Basic Facts About Dyslexia: What Every Lay Person Ought to Know.* The Orton Emeritus Series, The International Dyslexia Association, Baltimore, MD. 2nd Edition, 1998.)

3. Who is considered an individual with dyslexia?

Research is ongoing and some results vary. The National Institutes of Health and other reputable agencies estimate that between 10% and 15% of the men, women, and children in this country may have dyslexia. Nancy Mather and Barbara Wendling report recent estimates suggest approximately 5% to 8% of the school age population have dyslexia. Some people may have severe problems, in several areas, such as reading, spelling, remembering, listening, and sequencing. Other people may have less severe or even mild difficulty in just one or two areas. Dyslexia occurs among all groups of the population, from young children to adults. Dyslexia is ***NOT*** related to race, age, or income.

(*Basic Facts About Dyslexia: What Every Lay Person Ought to Know.* The Orton Emeritus Series, The International Dyslexia Association, Baltimore, MD. 2nd Edition, 1998.)
(Mather, N., & Wendling, B.J. (2012). *Essentials of Dyslexia Assessment and Intervention*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

4. What are the characteristics of dyslexia? (It is important to note that individuals demonstrate differences in degree of impairment.)

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

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

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

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

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Consequences of dyslexia may include the following:

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

(*The Dyslexia Handbook: Procedures Concerning Dyslexia and Related Disorders* – 2021 Update. Texas Education Agency, Austin, Texas. September 2021, pgs. 1 – 2.)

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 in 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 book is read aloud)

Kindergarten and First Grade:

- Difficulty breaking words into smaller parts (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

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- 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 (e.g., 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 with 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 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)

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(Fact Sheets - *Dyslexia Basics,* The International Dyslexia Association, May 2012, https://dyslexiaida.org/dyslexia-basics/
(*Overcoming Dyslexia*, *2nd Edition,* Sally Shaywitz, M.D., 2020.)
(*The Dyslexia Handbook: Procedures Concerning Dyslexia and Related Disorders* – 2021 Update. Texas Education Agency, Austin, Texas. September 2021, pgs. 3 – 4.)

5. What causes dyslexia?

Dyslexia results from differences within the organization of the brain. Why these differences occur and what they mean for understanding dyslexia are questions yet to be answered. People with dyslexia are born with this condition, and it tends to run in families. The exact causes of dyslexia re still not completely clear, but anatomical and brain imagery studies show differences in the way the brain of a person with dyslexia develops and functions. Moreover, most people with dyslexia have been found to have difficulty with identifying the separate speech sounds within a word and/or learning how letters represent those sounds, a key factor in their reading difficulties. Dyslexia is not due to either lack of intelligence or desire to learn; with appropriate teaching methods and remediation, individuals with dyslexia can learn successfully.

(*Frequently Asked Questions about Dyslexia,* The International Dyslexia Association, 2022)

6. Who can make a referral for consideration of dyslexia?

Anyone can refer a child for evaluation and consideration of dyslexia. In addition, students who have not reached age-appropriate developmental milestones with the use of scientifically, research-based interventions and/or remediation, and who display characteristics of dyslexia should be referred for consideration of a dyslexia evaluation as outlined in TEC §29.0031 that now states dyslexia is an example of and meets the definition of a Specific Learning Disability under IDEA/Special Education.

Parents/guardians always have the right to request a referral for a dyslexia evaluation at any time. Once a parent request for dyslexia evaluation has been made, the school district is obligated to review the student's data history (both formal and informal data) to determine whether there is reason to believe the student may have a disability. If a disability is suspected, the student needs to be evaluated following the guidelines outlined by IDEA.

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.

Additional information to be considered includes the results from some or all of the following: vision screening; hearing screening; teacher reports of classroom concerns; accommodations or interventions provided; academic progress reports (report cards); gifted/talented assessments; samples of school work; 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 §39.022; observations of instruction provided to the student; previous evaluations; outside evaluations; speech and language assessment; school attendance;

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curriculum-based assessment measures; instructional strategies provided and student's response to the instruction; screening data; and parent survey.

If a parent requests a referral for evaluation and consideration of dyslexia, and the school district refuses, the school district ***must*** provide the parent with the rationale for refusal and notice of their due process rights under the IDEA or Section 504. **Progression through tiered intervention is *NOT* required in order to begin the identification of dyslexia.**

(***The Dyslexia Handbook: Procedures Concerning Dyslexia and Related Disorders – 2021 Update.*** **Texas Education Agency, September 2021.)**

7. How does a district address the instructional needs of identified and eligible students with dyslexia?

Instructional decisions for a student with dyslexia must be made by a committee (ARD **or** §504) that is knowledgeable about the instructional components and approaches for students with dyslexia. In accordance with 19 TAC §74.28(e) districts shall purchase or develop a reading program for students with dyslexia and related disorders that incorporates all the components of instruction and instructional approaches outlined in TEA's ***The Dyslexia Handbook: Procedures Concerning Dyslexia and Related Disorders – 2021 Update, Chapter 4***.

These programs are individualized, intensive, utilize multi-sensory teaching methods, contain writing and spelling components, and meet the state required descriptors. In addition, the student will be provided appropriate instructional strategies including accommodations/interventions to be utilized throughout the school day. Instructional and accommodation decisions for students must be determined by the Special Education ARD Committee or the Section 504 Committee and be designed to meet the student's individual needs and provide the student with a free appropriate public education.

8. As a parent, what can I do at home to assist my child?

As a parent, it is important that you:

- Establish good study habits for the child. Consider a regular study schedule and a quiet study environment to address possible attention interference. Monitor nightly study to verify work is progressing or is completed.
- Consider establishing a system of reinforcers, either tangible or intangible, to encourage the child to be more successful in reading. Student can participate in these choices.
- Listen to your child's feelings.
- Encourage child to discuss and talk about his/her feelings.
- Reward effort and not just the "product" of school.
- Stress improvement and not just the grades.
- Encourage the child to succeed in other areas such as talents in athletics, the arts, mechanics, volunteer work, and community service.
- Help the child to set realistic goals.

(*The Other Sixteen Hours: The Social and Emotional Problems of Dyslexia.* The Orton Emeritus Series, The International Dyslexia Association, Baltimore, MD, 1997.)

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9. What testing accommodations are available for students identified with dyslexia taking the state student assessment – STAAR (State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness)? Please check the TEA website for the most current information.
https://tea.texas.gov/student-assessment/testing/student-assessment-overview/accommodation-resources

Accommodations for students with disabilities provide students with effective and equitable access to grade-level or course curriculum and assessments. For the purposes of the statewide assessments, students needing accommodations due to a disability include:

- 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 met established eligibility criteria for certain 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, the decision to use a particular accommodation with a student should be made on an individual basis. An educator's ability to meet the individual needs of a student with dyslexia should not be limited by whether an accommodation is allowable on a state assessment. An educator should take into consideration both the needs of the student, and whether the student routinely receives the accommodation in classroom instruction and testing. If a student receives special education services or Section 504 services, all accommodations must be documented in the student's individualized education program (IEP) or Section 504 plan.

For specific accommodation descriptions, STAAR assessments, student eligibility criteria, and the committee that has the authority for decision-making and the required documentation, view the TEA Accommodation information at:

https://tea.texas.gov/student-assessment/testing/student-assessment-overview/accommodation-resources

Once on this link, "click" each specific accommodation being considered to access further detail.

10. Are testing accommodations available for the ACT or SAT?

YES. A student with a documented disability ***may*** be eligible for accommodations on College Board tests. A *Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) Student Eligibility Form* must be submitted for each student requesting accommodations. If the student is requesting accommodations that require a nonstandard administration of the test, there is a specific process that schools must follow. Just because you have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Section 504 plan does ***not*** automatically guarantee that you are eligible for accommodations.

A student needing accommodations on a College Board exam ***must*** first meet the basic eligibility requirements. The requirements include (but are not limited to):

- Does the student have a disability that makes it difficult to learn?

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- Does the disability make it hard to take tests in the traditional manner?
- Does the student receive accommodations for the tests they currently take in school? (Extra time, a different version of the test, etc.)
- Is the student part of a resource room or special education class?
- Does the student have documents on file at the student's school that show the student has a disability that requires test accommodations?

If the student answers *"YES"* to any of the above questions, they ***may*** be eligible for accommodations. Additionally, the documentation on file at the student's school of secondary education needs to:

- State the specific disability, as diagnosed;
- Be current – in most cases, the evaluation should be completed within three years of the request for accommodations;
- Provide relevant educational, developmental, and medical history;
- Describe the comprehensive testing and techniques used to arrive at the diagnosis (including evaluation dates and test results with subtest scores from measures of cognitive ability, current academic achievement, and information processing);
- Describe the functional limitations supported by the test results;
- Describe the specific accommodations requested, and state why the student's disability qualifies the student for such accommodations on standardized tests; ***and***
- Establish the professional credentials of the evaluator, including information about license or certification and area of specialization.

Accommodations that may be available include (but are not limited to):

- Extended testing time;
- Enlarged print;
- Testing across more than one day;
- Alternative test formats; and
- Assistance marking their responses.

Accommodations requested may vary depending on the specific disability and documentation provided.

For information about testing accommodations for the SAT, go to: www.collegeboard.com.
For information about testing accommodations for the ACT, go to: www.actstudent.org.

11. Are accommodations available for students with dyslexia participating in U.I.L. (University Interscholastic League)?

YES. The University Interscholastic League will consider requests to accommodate a student with a physical or mental impairment. Requests for accommodations must be submitted on the ***UIL Request for Accommodation*** form with the appropriate signatures a **minimum of two weeks before** the contest in which the accommodation is sought. Requests submitted after that time, absent extenuating circumstances, will **NOT** be granted. The request shall adhere to the accommodations provided by the student's Section 504 and/or ARD Committee.

For information about U.I.L. accommodations, go to:
www.uiltexas.org/academics/meets/request-for-accommodation

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12. Will the district test my child for dyslexia *after* graduation from high school?

NO. Although colleges frequently require students to provide a professional evaluation and assessment scores, a district is ***NOT*** required by any state regulation to provide this service. According to the Office of Civil Rights, neither the high school nor the postsecondary school is required to conduct or pay for a new evaluation to document a student's disability and need for accommodations.

(Appendix H: *Students with Disabilities Preparing for Postsecondary Education: Know Your Rights and Responsibilities.* OCR 2011. *The Dyslexia Handbook: Procedures Concerning Dyslexia and Related Disorders – 2041 Update,* Texas Education Agency, September 2024.)

In addition, the TEC §28.006 (g-2) *"requires school districts to notify the parent or guardian of each student determined, on the basis of a screening under TEC §38.003 or other basis, to have dyslexia or a related disorder, or determined, on the basis of reading instrument results to be at-risk for dyslexia or other reading difficulties, of the program maintained by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission providing students with reading disabilities the ability to borrow audiobooks free of charge."* The program is referred to as the **Talking Book Program**. Students who have been determined to have a reading disability or dyslexia can be certified and apply for services. For more information, visit www.tsl.texas.gov/tbp/reading_disabilities, send an email to tbp.services@tsl.texas.gov, or call 1-800-252-9605. TBP staff will be happy to answer your questions and help you apply for service.

To learn more about dyslexia and service agencies, contact:

The Dyslexia Handbook, 2024 Update –
https://tea.texas.gov/academics/special-student-populations/special-education/texas-dyslexia-handbook.pdf

The Dyslexia Handbook, 2021 Update: Important Changes –
https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/2021_dyslexia_handbook_important_changes_for_families.pdf

The International Dyslexia Association
40 York Road, 4th Floor
Baltimore, MD 21204
(410) 296-0232
https://dyslexiaida.org

Learning Disabilities Association of Texas (LDAT)
P.O. Box 831392
Richardson, TX 75083-1392
www.ldatx.org

For additional information regarding the Woodsboro ISD Dyslexia Program, contact:

Dean Carter
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or
Crystal Escobar (Secondary)
Marla Crawford (Elementary)
Dyslexia Coordinators

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