Tenafly
PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Dyslexia

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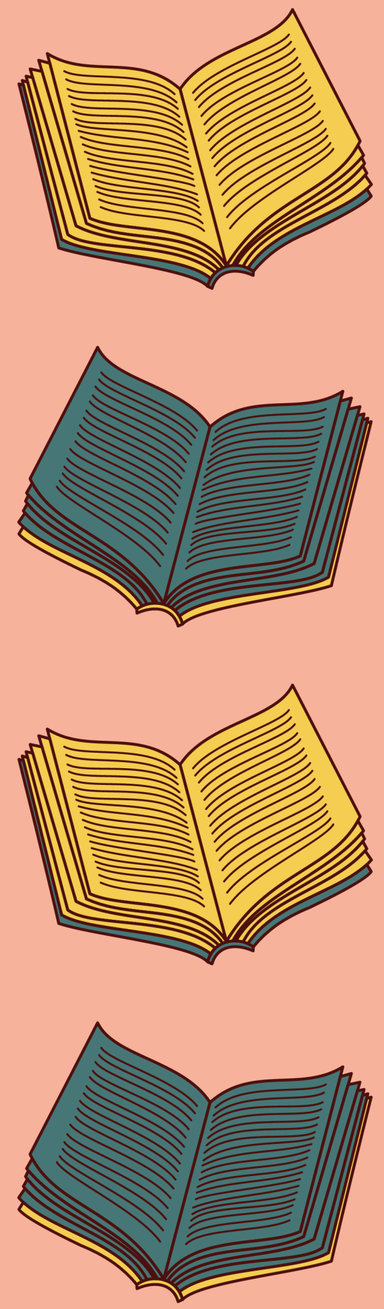
Learning Disabilities Teacher Consultants

What is dyslexia?

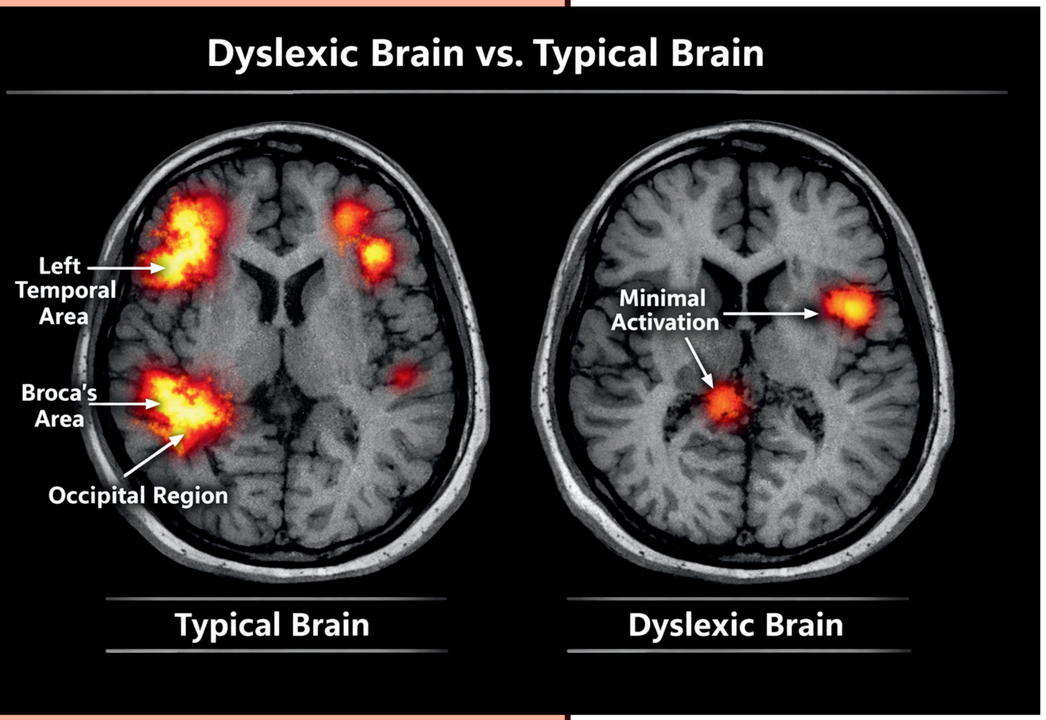
"Dyslexia" means a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language 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.

The dyslexia definition in New Jersey special education law mirrors the International Dyslexia Association definition and was formally incorporated into N.J.A.C. 6A:14-1.3 effective February 2016.

Source: N.J.A.C. 6A:14-1.3 (NJDOE, 2016)



Some facts. . .



*__Dyslexia is a neurological condition__ associated with differences in how the brain processes language.

*There is **no cure for dyslexia**, but individuals can learn effective strategies and skills to read, write, and spell successfully.

***Dyslexia is not related to intelligence.** Individuals with dyslexia have average to above-average intelligence and are neither more nor less intelligent than the general population.

*Research and experience suggest that **some individuals with dyslexia develop strengths** in areas such as problem-solving, creativity, big-picture thinking, and innovation, which can contribute to success.

Possible signs vs. Developmentally appropriate

Preschool/Kindergarten

Possible signs of Dyslexia:

- Delay in talking
- Difficulty with recognizing and producing rhymes
- Difficulty remembering rote information, such as letter names (also phone number and address)
- Difficulty remembering and following directions

Developmentally appropriate errors:

- Frequent letter reversals (b/d, p/q) and inconsistent letter formation (sizes, floating baseline, sequence)
- May write right to left; difficulty writing full alphabet consistently
- Uses only initial sounds when spelling (K for cat)
- Struggles with phonological awareness (blending sounds, isolating ending/medial sounds)
- Limited sight word recognition (usually just own name)

Possible signs vs. Developmentally appropriate

Grades 1-3

Possible signs of Dyslexia:

- Difficulty learning and remembering letter sounds
- Confusion of visually similar letters (b/d, p/q, w/m) and auditorily similar sounds (d/t, b/p, f/v)
- Difficulty with segmenting and blending sounds
- Trouble remembering basic sight words, including high-frequency words (the, of, said)
- Errors involving sequencing: reversals (past/pats), omissions (tip/trip), additions (slip/sip), substitutions (rip/rib), transpositions (stop/pots)
- Omission of grammatical endings (s, ed, ing)
- Difficulty retaining spelling words over time and applying spelling rules consistently

Developmentally appropriate errors:

- Phonetic/invented spelling (sed for said, luv for love)
- Omits vowels or uses incorrect vowel patterns
- Occasional letter reversals still common (b/d, p/q)
- Inconsistent capitalization and punctuation
- Run-on sentences and inconsistent paragraph structure
- Spelling errors with complex patterns (silent e, vowel teams, irregular words)
- Homophone confusion (there/their/they're)
- Limited descriptive vocabulary and verb tense inconsistency

Possible signs vs. Developmentally appropriate

Grades 4-8

Possible signs of Dyslexia:

- Significant difficulty reading and spelling, especially multisyllabic words
- Frequent misreading of common sight words (where, there, when)
- Slow, word-by-word reading with poor fluency
- Reading comprehension difficulties due to word recognition problems
- If oral language weaknesses exist, text comprehension is further impacted
- Significant writing difficulties related to spelling and organization of ideas
- Reluctance to read due to ongoing struggles

Developmentally appropriate errors:

Grades 4-6:

- Spelling errors with advanced vocabulary and patterns
- Overuse of simple sentences or run-ons; difficulty organizing
- Weak introductions, conclusions, and paragraph transitions
- Inconsistent punctuation (commas, semicolons, colons)
- Inconsistent verb tense and difficulty paraphrasing

Grades 7-8:

- Difficulty with symbolism, themes, and textual analysis
- Superficial interpretation; weak integration of evidence
- Inconsistent formal academic tone and writing voice
- Difficulty evaluating source credibility
- Difficulty synthesizing multiple sources
- Citation format errors and overreliance on direct quotes
- Common homophone errors and comma splices in complex sentences

Possible signs vs. Developmentally appropriate

High School and beyond

Possible signs of Dyslexia:

- Continued difficulty with word recognition, which affects acquisition of knowledge and ability to analyze written material
- Slow reading rate
- Continued difficulty with spelling and written composition
- Stronger listening comprehension
- Difficulty with note-taking
- Trouble learning a second language
- Difficulty with automaticity and fluency

Developmentally appropriate errors:

- Difficulty analyzing complex symbolism, abstract themes, and figurative language
- Trouble evaluating source credibility/identifying bias
- Difficulty synthesizing information from multiple texts and distinguishing main ideas from details
- Struggles with specialized language (archaic literary texts, academic journals, legal/technical documents)
- Limited background knowledge affecting comprehension of content-specific texts
- Poor reading strategies (skimming too quickly, missing details, weak time management)

Staff Training

New Jersey mandates early dyslexia screening, structured interventions, and ongoing teacher training in evidence-based reading instruction.

- All K - 6 teachers are trained yearly in dyslexia and foundational literacy including LEARning about Literacy professional learning series from NJDOE
- All elementary special education and kindergarten teachers received IMSE (Institute for Multi-Sensory Education) training this year
- Staff continues to receive training on evidence-based reading instruction to ensure best practices are implemented in the classrooms





Dyslexia Screening



All K-3 students + all newly enrolled 4th & 5th graders get universal screening (DIBELS)

1

- K-3 students are screened three times per year and newly enrolled 4th and 5th graders are screened once per year.

2

Skills assessed by DIBELS:

- Letter Naming Fluency (LNF)
- Phonemic Awareness (PSF)
- Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF)
- Word Reading Fluency (WRF)
- Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)
- Maze Assessment (MAZE)

3

Screening results are shared with parents through Genesis under the Assessment tab.

Tiered Support and General Education Interventions



Tier I Classroom Supports

- Differentiated instruction
- breaking tasks into smaller chunks
- graphic organizers
- visual aids
- simplify/repeated directions
- repetition, reinforcement, wait time, etc.

Tier II / III Interventions

- Kindergarten Intervention
  - Small groups targeting specific skills
- Reading Recovery
  - a short-term, one-on-one intervention for the lowest-achieving first-grade students
- Academic support groups by grade
  - 3-5 times a week to work on targeted skills

Progress Monitoring

- Need for Tier 2 intervention is determined by reviewing data from DIBELS, iReady (2nd grade and up), teacher input, work samples, NJSLA scores, etc.
- Students are referred to the Intervention and Referral Services (I&RS) team.
- In addition to the DIBELS screenings, intermediate progress monitoring is conducted at regular intervals.
- The academic support teachers, along with the I&RS team, regularly review student data to determine whether services need to be adjusted.

Evaluation for a Suspected Reading-Based Disability

1) The I&RS team reviews the student's response to supports over time and determines how to proceed:
    a. Adjust classroom interventions and supports and continue the I&RS plan
    b. Referral for a 504 Plan
    c. Referral to Special Services

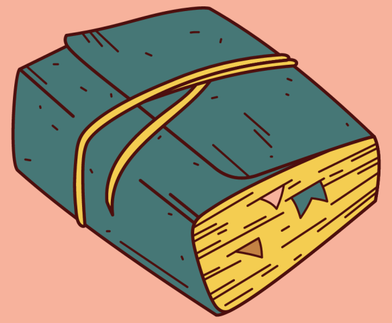
2) Once a student is referred to Special Services, a Child Study Team is assigned.
   The CST meets with the family at an Identification Meeting.

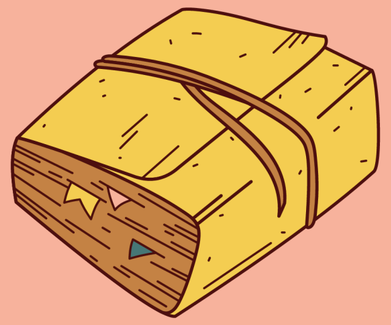
3) If the team determines that evaluations are warranted, and the suspected area of disability is reading, the team will likely recommend both a **psychological evaluation** and an **educational evaluation**.

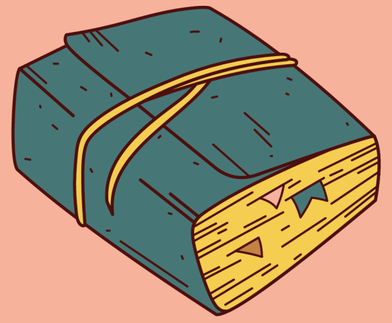
   a. Psychological evaluations are administered by school psychologists.
      → Verbal Reasoning, Visual-Spatial Processing, Fluid Reasoning, Working Memory, and Processing Speed.

   b. Educational evaluations are administered by the Learning Disability Teacher-Consultants (LDT-C).

The results of all evaluations completed as part of the referral process are sent home via email and results are communicated to families during the Eligibility Meeting that is held when evaluations are complete.







Educational Evaluations - Reading

During an educational evaluation, the areas of reading assessed are:

1. Basic Reading Skills (Word Reading/Decoding)
2. Reading Fluency
3. Reading Comprehension
4. Phonological/Phonemic Awareness
5. Rapid Automatized Naming (RAN)
6. Oral Language
7. Written Expression & Spelling

The specific test battery and subtests given depend on the student's age, referral concerns, and what areas need investigation based on classroom data.

Special Education Eligibility for a Student with Dyslexia

NJ does not have a separate classification for dyslexia; students may qualify under the Specific Learning Disability (SLD) classification, provided that:

1) The student has documented deficits in at least one of the following areas involved in understanding or using language:

- Basic Reading Skills
- Reading Fluency
- Reading Comprehension
- Oral Expression
- Listening Comprehension
- Written Expression

2) The student demonstrates a severe discrepancy between intellectual ability – as measured by a psychological evaluation – and achievement in one or more of the areas listed above, and,

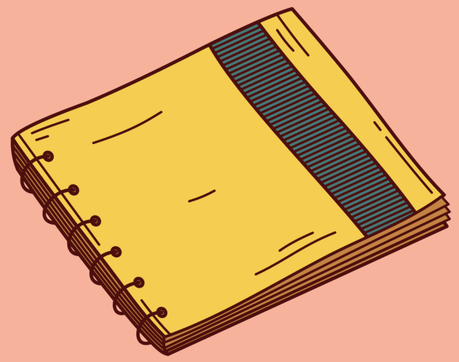
3) The disability adversely affects educational performance and requires specially designed instruction for the student to access the curriculum

Special Education Programs and Services

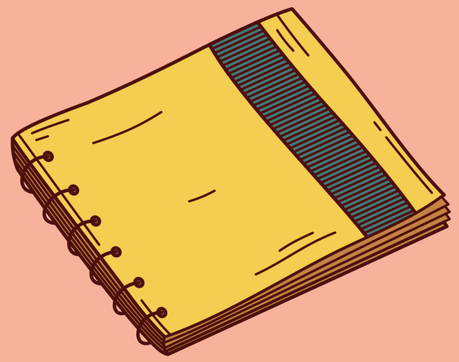
- Pull-Out Resource Replacement in Reading and Writing
  - Small group instruction taught by special education teachers
  - Utilizes multisensory approach

- Multisensory Reading
  - Taught by Orton-Gillingham certified teachers

- Fundations Program
  - Part of the Learning or Language Disabilities classroom reading program
  - Uses a multisensory, systematic, and sequential approach grounded in the "science of reading"

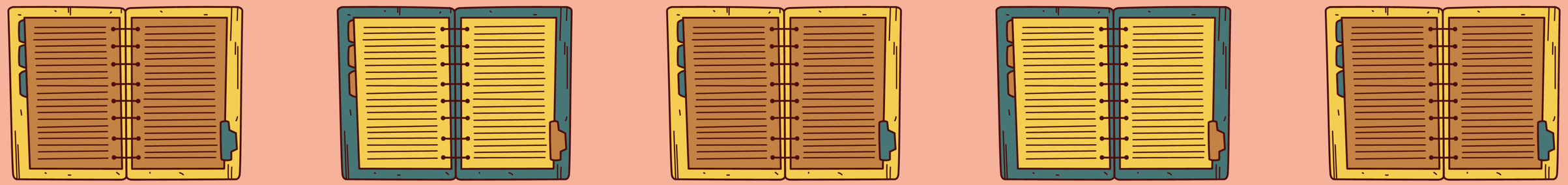




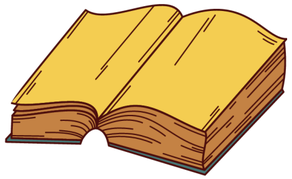


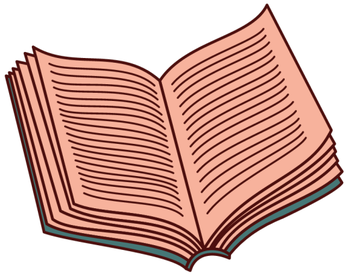
IEPs & SLD

- IEP development is driven by the individual student's needs
- Goals and objectives target the identified areas of difficulty; these are updated yearly
- Progress marks are communicated at regular intervals during the school year
- Appropriate accommodations and modifications are included to allow the student to access the curriculum



What can I do at home to help my child who has dyslexia?

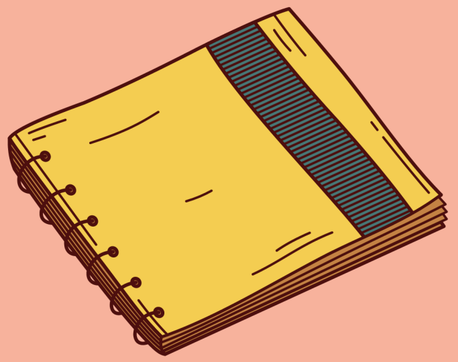




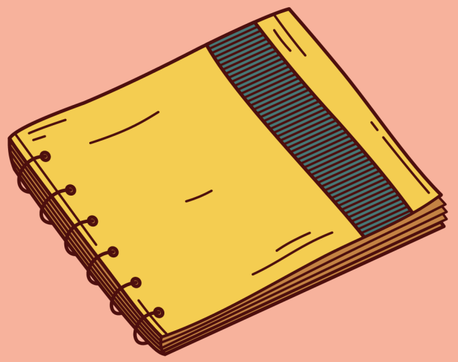
- Read aloud daily, even through high school, to build connections to text.
- For younger students, use games to practice phonics skills.
- Use audiobooks to maintain engagement and grade-level exposure.
- Focus on strengths and interests to build confidence.
- Encourage writing through low-pressure methods like journaling or dictation.
- Avoid homework battles over reading; work with teachers to adjust expectations.
- Communicate with teachers about what is working and what is difficult
- Help your child understand their learning profile to develop self-advocacy.
- Celebrate effort and progress, not just achievement, to maintain motivation.

Assistive Tech Tools

- **Read&Write Extension for Google** - Text-to-speech, word prediction, dictionaries, and study tools that work across Google Docs, web pages, and PDFs.
- **Natural Reader** - Converts text to speech with natural-sounding voices; works with documents, PDFs, and websites.
- **Grammarly** - Checks spelling, grammar, and punctuation in real-time across all writing platforms.
- **Ginger Software** - Grammar and spell checker with text-to-speech, sentence rephrasing, and word prediction features.
- **Google Docs Voice Typing** - Free speech-to-text feature built into Google Docs; students can dictate their writing
- **Microsoft Dictate/Windows Speech Recognition** - Free speech-to-text for Microsoft Word and other applications; built into Windows operating system.







Thank you!

