2025-26

Evaluation of the Dyslexia Services Department: Key Findings

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DALLAS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT | Program Evaluation

Website:

The Dyslexia Services (DS) Department's mission is to assist students with dyslexia in the achievement of independent literacy skills by providing service and support to students, their parents, and school personnel through identification, instruction, and community awareness. **Campus-based Dyslexia Interventionists (DIs)** provide specialized programming services to students with dyslexia across the district. Interventionists also offer training to support parents and campus staff. **The 2025-26 budget** for Dyslexia Services (central and campus-based) was $15,243,158 from the district general operating funds.

Key Findings

Implementation

- In 2025-26, students with dyslexia made up 6% of the student population.
- Fifty-two percent of students with dyslexia participated in an intervention program, 87% of whom used the Wilson program.
- Dyslexia services were carried out by a team of 129 campus-based Interventionists and 21 central staff members.

Stakeholder Feedback

- While a large majority of staff agreed that they understood policies and procedures and had adequate resources and training, a smaller majority felt they had adequate time for planning and preparation. The majority of staff comments relayed challenges with case management responsibilities and large multi-level grouping impeding the ability to deliver programs with fidelity.
- The majority of respondents managed caseloads of 31+ students, served multiple campuses, and scheduled services for 45 minutes four days a week. While intervention programs were seen as effective, favorable responses were lower for implementation fidelity, scheduling, and managable group sizes.
- Suggestions for improvement focused on increasing staff and restructuring roles in order to meet case management requirements while prioritizing serving students with fidelity. Additional suggestions called for increased communication and collaboration, support in scheduling, and caseload considerations.

Student Outcomes

Word Identification Spelling Test (WIST)

- FLAI Standard Score Averages increased by nearly 10%, but fell short of the 10-point improvement goal.
- Elementary SSK Standard Score Averages increased by 13%, narrowly missing the 10-point growth target, while secondary scores grew by 21%, exceeding the goal.
- From BOY to EOY, the proportion of elementary students achieving "average or above" FLAI standard scores increased by over 70%, while the secondary proportion grew by over 75%.
- From BOY to EOY, the proportion of elementary students achieving "average or above" SSK standard scores increased by 68%, while the secondary proportion grew by over 120%.
- As the largest grade-level cohort, the proportion of 6th graders scoring "average or above" more than doubled on the FLAI and nearly quadrupled on the SSK from BOY to EOY.

i-Ready: Reading Language Arts

- In 2026, the proportion of students receiving dyslexia programming who placed at "On Grade-Level" or "Above Grade Level" increased significantly from BOY to EOY across language and grade level groups.
- While all grade spans and languages began the year with at least 62% of students "Two or More Grade Levels Below" proficiency, over half of those K–8 students assessed in English and over 70% of those K-5 students assessed in Spanish gained one or more reading levels by EOY.
- Across grade levels, 53% of English testers met 100% of their typical growth targets.

i-Ready: Reading Language Arts - Longitudinal

- Compared to 2025, the proportion of students with dyslexia in Grades K-5 with EOY Relative Placement "On or Above Grade Level" in reading decreased 3 percentage points, while performance in Grades 6–8 remained flat.
- While most students met their typical growth goal in both 2025 and 2026, overall attainment decreased by 20%.
- Students achieving 100% of their stretch growth goal dropped by one-third.

State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

- Students receiving dyslexia programming performed below district averages across all *STAAR* Reading and *STAAR EOC* English subtests. The gap at Approaches+ ranged from 27 percentage points in Grade 4 to 38 percentage points in Grade 3.
- Among those receiving programming, Grade 5 was the largest participating cohort and achieved the highest Meets+ rate (20%). Grade 8 was the only grade level where a majority achieved Approaches+ (51%).
- Students with dyslexia in Grades 6–8 demonstrated consistent, multi-year gains across 8 of 9 metrics. Over three years, Grade 7 recorded the largest gain in Approaches+, with 35% relative growth, and Grade 8 achieved peak performance, with 65% at Approaches+ and 11% at Masters.
- Grade 6 students with dyslexia at Approaches+ dipped slightly in 2025–26, but remained higher than 2023–24.
- Following sharp gains in 2024–25, Grades 3–5 performance for students with dyslexia contracted in 2025–26 across 6 of 9 metrics (most notably Grade 3 Approaches+). However, 7 of 9 standards maintained net 2-year gains over 2023–24 results.
- Overall performance for students with dyselxia on *English I* and *English II EOCs* reached 3-year highs, driven by strong 2-year gains in Approaches+ and Meets+.
- Dyslexia program participants outperformed districtwide peers in Accelerated progress in Grade 8 and *English II*, while driving total *English II* student growth (Expected + Accelerated progress) to 67% vs. 58% districtwide.

Recommendations

Improve Data Collection for Actionable Insights

Ihe Dyslexia Services department should continue building on its efforts toward implementing a more robust and efficient system for collecting and managing student data. In 2025-26, the department began addressing this issue both internally and with an external district partner. The end-goal of a **centralized data system** is streamlined documentation processes as well as more reliable data. It is critical that such a system be centered on an **efficient, user-friendly platform** for tracking student services, given dyslexia staff feedback about being overextended. Having a centralized data system and improved data collection will allow the department to **track student progress over multiple years** and examine the **impact of dyslexia interventions** on student outcomes over time. While the broader system buildout continues, the department should also implement an immediate internal improvement for 2026–27: **standardizing administration and documentation practices** for the Word Identification and Spelling Test (WIST). Enforcing consistent testing windows and logging exact administration dates will ensure high data integrity, yielding a reliable proximal measure to evaluate intervention efficacy both annually and longitudinally.

Align Organizational Structure and Establish Achievable SMART Goals

Recent policy and structural shifts - including HB 3928, the intensity-of-service funding model, department reorganization, and deeper Special Education collaboration - present a key opportunity to **optimize roles and safeguard quality student services**. To build a strategic, data-driven framework, the department should re-examine roles, case management duties, and service workflows within realistic staffing, time, and budget constraints. Since 2025–26 survey and outcome data indicate that reduced staffing and increased administrative duties compromised intervention fidelity, new program goals must be both **Achievable** and **Time-Bound.** The department should expand its SMART goals to include operational implementation metrics (such as staffing, service scheduling, and student grouping) and establish 2025–26 data as a baseline for setting incremental, multi-year targets toward its long-term vision.