

The Learning Therapy Center at SMU strives to provide research-backed curriculum instruction to all parties interested in helping to prepare individuals identified with dyslexia and other related disorders to be successful, lifetime readers and writers. The Diagnostic Center for Dyslexia and Related Disorders at SMU strives to provide quality evaluation services to help individuals and their loved ones understand and successfully manage possible learning differences.

Dyslexia Defined

The Texas Education Code (TEC) §38.003 defines dyslexia 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.

<http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/ED/htm/ED.38.htm#38.003>

The current definition from the International Dyslexia Association states the following:

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurological 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, Nov. 12, 2002)

Legal Codes for Dyslexia

Dyslexia Handbook, Procedures Concerning Dyslexia and Related Disorders, Revised 2007, Updated 2010

- Students with dyslexia or related disorders, determined to have an educational need, are protected under §504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This federal law is a civil rights statute designed to protect those with disabilities from discrimination.
- A set of rules, for the implementation of state law concerning dyslexia, was approved by the Texas State Board of Education in May 1986, as “Procedures Concerning Dyslexia”. These Procedures were revised in 2007, and updated in September 2010. These specific procedures outline the identification, evaluation, and placement processes, as well as the procedural safeguards to parents and descriptors for appropriate implementation of dyslexia treatment.

- Texas Education Code § 36.003 Dyslexia defined: “a disorder of constitutional origin manifested by a difficulty in learning to read, write, and spell, despite conventional instruction, adequate intelligence, and sociocultural opportunity.”
- Related disorders defined: “includes disorders similar to or related to dyslexia, such as developmental auditory imperception, dysphasia, specific developmental dyslexia, developmental dysgraphia, and developmental spelling disorder.”
- Texas Administrative Code § 74.28 The board of trustees of a school district must ensure that procedures for identifying a student with dyslexia or a related disorder and for providing appropriate instructional services to the student are implemented in the district. This implementation must follow the strategies described in the “Procedures Concerning Dyslexia and Related Disorders”. This code also ensures parent notification prior to identification and assessment of an individual child. Services must be available on the child’s campus, unless parent permission is granted for other arrangements.

Characteristics of Dyslexia

The primary difficulties of a student identified as having dyslexia occur in phonemic awareness and manipulation, single-word decoding, reading fluency, and spelling. Secondary consequences of dyslexia may include difficulties in reading comprehension and/or written expression. These difficulties are unexpected for the student’s age, educational level, or cognitive abilities. Additionally, there is often a family history of similar difficulties.

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

- Difficulty reading real words in isolation
- Difficulty accurately decoding nonsense words
- Slow, inaccurate, or labored oral reading (lack of reading fluency)
- Difficulty with learning to spell

The reading/spelling characteristics are the result of difficulty with the following:

- The development of phonological awareness, including segmenting, blending, and manipulating sounds in words
- Learning the names of letters and their associated sounds
- Phonological memory (holding information about sounds and words in memory)
- Rapid naming of familiar objects, colors, or letters of the alphabet
- Secondary consequences of dyslexia may include the following:
 - Variable difficulty with aspects of reading comprehension
 - Variable difficulty with aspects of written composition
 - A limited amount of time spent in reading activities

General Dyslexia Assessment Components

Note: All test administrations used will comply with the instructions of the test manual as well as the identification components outlined in the *Dyslexia Handbook; Procedures Concerning Dyslexia and Related Disorders Revised 2007, Updated 2010*.

Areas to be evaluated include:

- **Strengths and Weaknesses**
- **Alphabet Recognition and Sequencing**
- **Rapid Automatic Naming**
- **Phonological Awareness Assessment**
- **Word Recognition**
- **Word Attack (Decoding)**
- **Reading Comprehension**
- **Reading Accuracy & Fluency**
- **Spelling**
- **Listening**
- **Oral and Written Expression**

General Dyslexia Intervention and Remediation

The major instructional strategies used in an effective dyslexia remediation program utilize individualized, intensive, multisensory methods containing writing and spelling components, and include the following descriptors:

- Graphophonemic Knowledge - explicit, synthetic and analytic phonics
- Linguistic - patterns of language
- Meaning based - purposeful reading and writing
- Multisensory - simultaneous use of more than one sensory pathway
- Phonemic Awareness - detect, segment, blend, and manipulate sounds in spoken language
- Process Oriented - decoding & encoding which lead to word recognition, reading fluency and reading comprehension
- Language Structure - morphology, semantics, syntax and pragmatics
- Explicit and Direct Instruction - systematic, sequential and cumulative
- Individualized Instruction - small group instruction to meet the needs of individual students
- Intensive, Highly Concentrated Instruction - containing components of Instruction as mandated in 19 TAC §74.28

Dyslexia Identification within a Texas Public School

The following are general guidelines that public school districts may implement. Please contact your specific school or school district to find out their policies for Dyslexia identification.

Identification of dyslexia in public school districts generally follows the procedures outlined under TAC §74.28. All decisions within a school regarding the identification for dyslexia are made by a **committee of knowledgeable persons**. This committee is comprised of such individuals as: the classroom teacher, a dyslexia specialist, a counselor, an administrator, the parent, etc. Parents are provided *Notice of Rights for Disabled Students and their Parents Under §504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973* during the assessment process through Section 504.

Once the dyslexia assessment is completed, the data is presented to both the parent and the §504 Committee and academic decisions are made to most appropriately meet the needs of the student.

Should the student be found to have dyslexia, a §504 Service Plan is developed which includes the consideration of §504 accommodations and dyslexia program placement. The §504 plan is reviewed and updated annually and at any appropriate time. All accommodations listed on the §504 Student Accommodation Plan must be implemented routinely by the classroom teacher/s.

Dyslexia Referral Process within a Texas Public School

The following are general guidelines that public school districts may implement. Please contact your specific school or school district to find out their policies for Dyslexia referral.

A common model for school districts to follow is the Response to Intervention Model (RtI). According to general school board policies, students must be enrolled in their area specific school district to be considered for any dyslexia services (assessment or intervention). Referrals of enrolled students may be made by teachers, parents, students, or any other person. Referrals are brought before the Student Success Team (SST) for consideration to ensure that consistent procedures are followed throughout the district. Contact the campus counselor for specific questions about this process.

School districts are not required to implement services based upon the results and recommendations of outside evaluations; however, such evaluations may be part of the historical data collected and reviewed by the SST or §504 committee in making determinations for appropriate interventions.

Many school districts attempt to identify students with characteristics of dyslexia early in their educational career in order to follow current research findings that such early intervention is a key component of later student success. Struggling students receive intervention based upon district and state criteria.

Students in grades 1-12 who exhibit dyslexia characteristics will be considered for dyslexia assessment should interventions in the RtI (Response to Intervention) process be found inadequate to meet the individual needs of the student after an appropriate period of time.

Books about Dyslexia

- *Basic Facts About Dyslexia and Other Reading Problems* by Louisa Moats and Karen E. Dakin
- *Overcoming Dyslexia* by Sally Shaywitz
- *Parenting A Struggling Reader* by Susan Hall and Louisa Moats
- *Smart Kids with School Problems* by Priscilla Vail
- *The Dyslexic Scholar: Helping your Child Succeed in the School System* by Kathleen Nosek
- *The Secret Life of the Dyslexic Child, How She Thinks, How He Feels, How They Can Succeed* by Robert Frank Ph.D.

Children's Books about Dyslexia

- *Charlie's Challenge* by Linda Gladden
- *Dyslexia Wonders* by Jennifer Smith
- *Hank Zipzer series* by Henry Winkler
- *It's Called Dyslexia* by Jennifer Moore-Mallinos
- *Josh, A Boy with Dyslexia* by Caroline Janover
- *Lily and the Mixed Up Letters* by Deborah Hodge
- *My Name is Brain Brian* by Jeanne Betancourt
- *Thank You Mr. Falker* by Patricia Polacco
- *The Alphabet War* by Diane Burton Robb

Other Resources

- State Dyslexia Hotline 800-232-3030
- Dyslexia Handbook; Procedures Concerning Dyslexia and Related Disorders Revised 2007, Updated 2010 (English)
<http://www.region10.org/Dyslexia/Documents/DyslexiaHandbook11-10-2010.pdf>
- Dyslexia Handbook; Procedures Concerning Dyslexia and Related Disorders Revised 2007, Updated 2010 (Spanish)
<http://www.region10.org/dyslexia/Documents/SpanishDyslexiaHandbookUpdated2010.pdf>
- ALTA Helpline 866-283-7133 <http://www.altaread.org>

- Learning Ally (previously Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic or RFB&D)
<http://www.learningally.org>

Dyslexia Links and Resources

Texas Education Agency
Dyslexia Coordinators:
Virginia Gonzalez - State Dyslexia Consultant
Gina Mitchell - Regional Dyslexia Consultant
<http://www.region10.org/dyslexia>
800-232-3030 ext. 326

Academic Language Therapy Association (ALTA)
Helpline/Hopeline
972-907-3924
<http://www.altaread.org>

Charles Schwab Foundation
<http://www.greatschools.org>

International Dyslexia Association
<http://www.interdys.org>

National Center for Learning Disabilities
<http://www.nclld.org>

National Institutes of Child Health & Human Development
<http://nih.gov>

Texas Scottish Rite Hospital
Luke Waites Child Development Center
<http://www.tsrhc.org>

Learning Ally, (previously Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic or RFB&D)
<http://www.learningally.org>

Texas Talking Books (for free audio novels)
<http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/tbp>