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Dyslexia Overview

The overview and segments presented below is taken from ‘The Dyslexia Handbook’ 2024 Update, Procedures Concerning Dyslexia and Related Disorders. Tioga ISD follows the ‘The Dyslexia Handbook’ 2024 Update for all guidance and regulations concerning dyslexia and related disorders.

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

I. DEFINITION OF 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:

“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

II. CHARACTERISTICS & CONSEQUENCES OF DYSLEXIA

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.

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

It is important to note that 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 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)

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

Sources for Characteristics and Consequences of Dyslexia

Branum-Martin, L., Fletcher, J. M., & Stuebing, K. K. (2013). Classification and identification of reading and math disabilities: The special case of comorbidity. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 12, 906–915.

Fletcher, J. M., Lyon, G. R., Fuchs, L. S., & Barnes, M. A. (2007). *Learning disabilities: From identification to intervention*. 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/21gdk2k1p3bnagdfz1xy0v98j5yt11w>.

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

III. STATE AND FEDERAL LAWS CONCERNING DYSLEXIA

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 below.

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 then again during first grade.

Districts and charter schools must implement a screening program that includes each of the following:

- Screening of **each** student in kindergarten at the end of the school year;
- Screening of **each** student in the first grade no later than January 31 (Dyslexia Handbook, 2021, Chapter 2).

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. Therefore, research-based interventions are to be provided to all students experiencing difficulties in reading, including ELs, 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.

IV. SCREENING

Local District Requirements

In accordance with 'The Dyslexia Handbook' 2024 Update, Procedures Concerning Dyslexia and Related Disorders; each district may have additional policies and procedures in place regarding screening and evaluating student for dyslexia and related disorders. This handbook reflects the procedures used in Tioga ISD for the screening, evaluation and identification of students with dyslexia and related disorders.

Texas Education Code §38.003

Texas Education Code §38.003 requires school districts to screen all public kindergarten and first grade students for dyslexia and related disorders. Kindergarten students must be screened by the end of the year and first grade students no later than January 31st.

- In accordance with TEC §38.003, Screening and Treatment for Dyslexia, Tioga ISD administers the mCLASS Universal Screener to all kindergarten and first grade students at the beginning, middle, and end of year. Kindergarten students are required to be screened at the end of the year and first grade students no later than January 31st. This screener is administered by an individual who is certified/licensed in dyslexia; or the classroom teacher who holds a valid certification for kindergarten and grade 1. End of Kindergarten screening results as well as first grade middle of year screening results are reported through PEIMS.
- mCLASS addresses:
 - Kindergarten
 - Letter Sounds Knowledge or Letter Naming Fluency *
 - Phonological Awareness *
 - Nonsense word fluency
 - Word reading fluency

- Spelling
- Rapid Automatic Naming
- First Grade
 - Word Reading Accuracy or Fluency*
 - Phonological Awareness *
 - Letter Naming Fluency
 - Nonsense word Fluency
 - Spelling
 - Rapid Automatic Naming

*Required by the Texas Dyslexia Handbook, 2024 Update

- Student behaviors that may be observed during the administration of the screening and which should be documented include:
 - Lack of automaticity
 - Difficulty sounding out words left to right
 - Guessing
 - Self-correcting
 - Inability to focus on reading

Texas Education Code §28.006

Texas Education Code §28.006, Reading Diagnosis, requires each school district to administer to students in kindergarten, first grade, and second grade a reading instrument to diagnose student reading development and comprehension. This law also requires school districts to administer a reading instrument at the beginning of seventh grade to students who did not demonstrate reading proficiency on the sixth-grade state reading assessments.

- In accordance with TEC §28.006, Tioga ISD administers mCLASS Universal Screener, a Texas Commissioner early reading instrument, in kindergarten, first, and second grades to determine students’ reading development and comprehension at the beginning, middle, and end of year.
- In accordance with TEC §28.006, Tioga ISD administers iStation, a Texas Commissioner approved reading instrument to any seventh grader that did not demonstrate reading proficiency on the sixth-grade state reading assessment at the beginning of the year; within the first 45 days of school.

If, on the basis of the reading instrument results, students are determined to be at risk for dyslexia and other reading difficulties, the students’ parents/guardians are notified.

Students Identified at Risk

For students who are identified as at risk for dyslexia, Tioga ISD will provide targeted intervention provided by the appropriate staff. Tioga ISD will continue the data collection and evaluation process. Both quantitative and qualitative data will be collected including, but not limited to:

Quantitative Information

- Current screening instruments
- Previous screening instruments
- Formal and informal classroom reading assessments
- Additional brief and targeted skill assessments

Qualitative Information

- Observations of student during screening
- Other observations of student progress
- Teacher observations
- Parent/guardian input (e.g., family history, early language skills)
- Current student work samples
- Work samples from earlier grade(s)
- Intervention history

The Early Intervention Team, consisting of the classroom teacher, administrator, dyslexia therapist, counselor, and special education teacher, will meet to discuss the screening results as well as all other data collected and determine as a team if the student will be referred for a Dyslexia Evaluation through a Full Individual Initial Evaluation under IDEA after parent consent is received.

Universal Screening and Data Review for Reading Risk Procedures

Tioga ISD follows the Universal Screening and Data Review for Reading Risk Procedures as outlined in the Texas Dyslexia Handbook, 2024 Update, p.20.

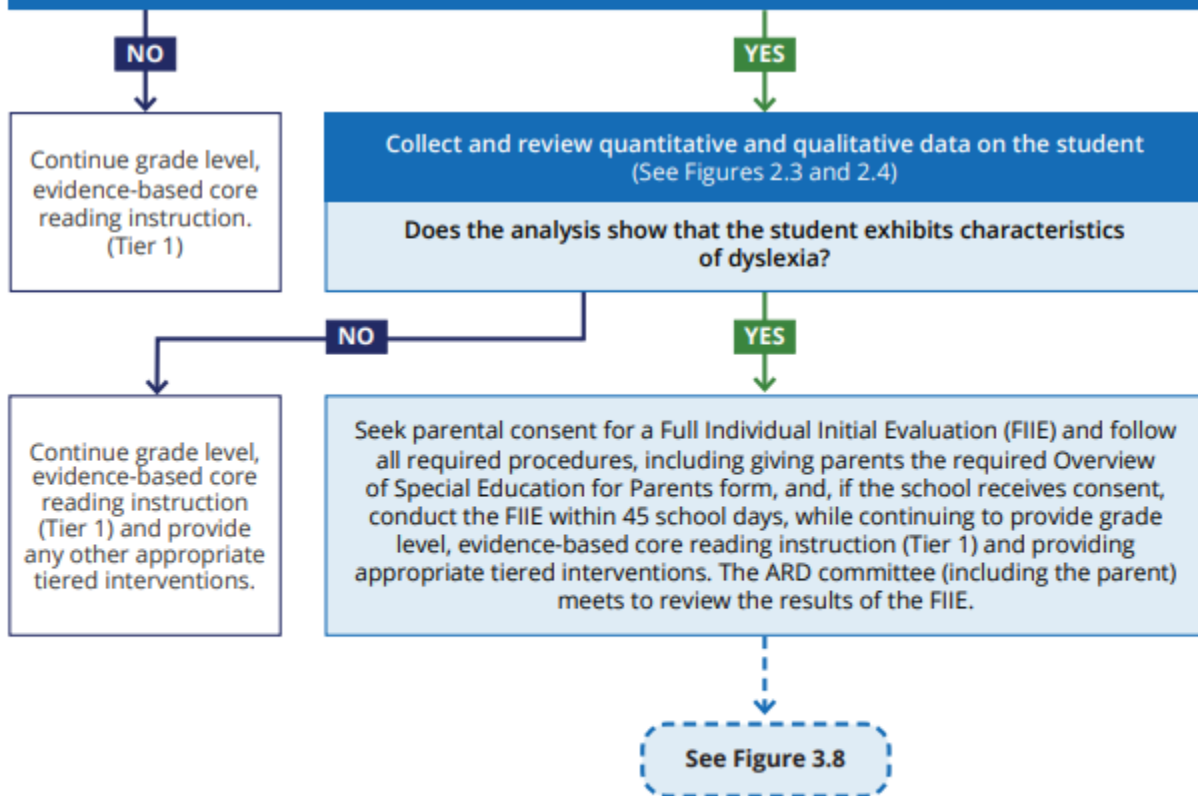
Figure 2.5 Universal Screening and Data Review for Reading Risk

Universal Screening and Data Review for Reading Risk

In kindergarten and first grade, universal screening for reading and dyslexia is administered as required by TEC §28.006 and §38.003(a)

- Kindergarten students must be administered a reading instrument at the beginning of the year (BOY), and may be administered a reading instrument at middle of year (MOY), and end of year (EOY)
- Kindergarten students must be screened for dyslexia at the end of the school year.
- First grade students must be administered a reading instrument at BOY and may be administered a reading instrument at MOY, and EOY
- First grade students must be screened for dyslexia not later than January 31.

Does the screener show the student MAY be at risk for reading difficulties?



Progress Monitoring

In accordance with TEC §38.003(a), Tioga ISD evaluates for dyslexia at appropriate times. If regular progress monitoring reflects a difficulty with reading, decoding, and/or reading comprehension, it is appropriate to evaluate for dyslexia and/or other learning disabilities.

V. Referral Process

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. At any time that the Tioga ISD Early Intervention Team determines that a student needs a dyslexia evaluation or a student continues to struggle with one or more components of reading and spelling that is unexpected for the student's age/grade or shows characteristics and risk factors of dyslexia, Tioga ISD will collect additional information about the student. Parents/guardians also have the right to request a referral for a dyslexia evaluation at any time. Once a parent has made a request for a dyslexia evaluation, 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.

Data Gathering

The collection of various data will provide information regarding factors that may be contributing to or primary to the student's struggles with reading and spelling.

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. Additional information to be considered includes the results from some or all of the following:

- Vision screening
- Teacher reports of classroom concerns
- Accommodations or interventions provided
- Academic progress reports (report cards)
- Gifted/talented assessments
- Parent conference notes
- Previous evaluations
- Curriculum-based assessment measures
- Results of kindergarten-grade 1 universal screening as required in TEC §38.003
- Home Language Survey
- LPAC documentation
- TELPAS Testing
- K–2 reading instrument results as required in TEC §28.006 (English and native language, if possible)
- Hearing screening
- Classroom reading assessments
- Screening data
- Parent survey
- Samples of schoolwork
- Speech and language assessment
- Outside evaluations
- School attendance
- Universal Screening
- Oral Language Proficiency Tests

- 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
- Instructional strategies provided and student's response to the instruction
- Information regarding a child's early literacy experiences, environmental factors, and socioeconomic status

Evaluation of Collected Data

Tioga ISD's Early Intervention Team will evaluate the collected data and make a recommendation for further assessment when these criteria are met.

- Data supports the student received conventional (appropriate) instruction and that the difficulties are not primarily the result of sociocultural factors which include language differences, irregular attendance, or lack of experiential background.
- 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 I: Definitions & Characteristics of Dyslexia (Texas Dyslexia Handbook, 2024 Update) including:
 - Difficulty reading words in isolation
 - Difficulty accurately decoding unfamiliar words
 - Difficulty with oral reading (slow, inaccurate, or labored without prosody)
 - Difficulty spelling

Individuals demonstrate differences in degree of impairment and may not exhibit all the characteristics listed above.

English Language Learners

It is important to note that much diversity exists among English Language Learners. A student's language proficiency may be impacted by 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). The identification and service delivery process for dyslexia must be aligned to the student's linguistic environment and educational background. The Tioga ISD LPAC (Language Proficiency Assessment Committee) will be involved in the decision making process for all ELLs in the district.

If the Early Intervention Team suspects that the student has dyslexia, a related disorder, or another disability included within the IDEA, 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 will 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 the team determines that the data does not give the members reason to suspect that a student has dyslexia, a related disorder, or other disability, 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.

It is important to remember that at any point in the data review process a referral for a FIE under the IDEA may be initiated. Parents also have the right to request a FIE at any time. Regardless of the process in place for screening and data review, whenever accumulated data indicate that a student continues to struggle with one or more of the components of reading, despite the provision of adequate instruction and intervention, the student must be referred for a full individual and initial evaluation under the IDEA.

VI. Formal Evaluation

A formal evaluation 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. 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, Tioga ISD's multi-disciplinary evaluation team will also include members who have specific knowledge regarding-

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

Students enrolled in Tioga ISD shall 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 or guardians. Additionally, the appropriate time for assessing is early in a student's school career (19 TAC §74.28). 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.

The procedures followed for assessment include:

1. Notify parents or guardians of proposal to assess student for dyslexia
2. Obtain parent or guardian consent to assess the student for dyslexia
3. Inform parents or guardians of their rights under IDEA.
4. Assess student, being sure that individuals/professionals who administer assessments have training in the evaluation of students for dyslexia and related disorders (19 TAC §74.28).
5. Review and interpret data and evaluations

Notifications and Permissions

When a formal evaluation is recommended, Tioga ISD will complete the evaluation process as outlined in the IDEA. Procedural safeguards under IDEA will be followed. Anytime the Local Education Agency (LEA) suspects that the student has dyslexia or a related disorder, the LEA must seek parental consent for a Full Individual Initial Evaluation (FIIIE) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Test Instruments and Evaluation materials

In compliance with 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

Domains to Assess Specific to Dyslexia

Tioga ISD administers measures that are related to the student's educational needs. The following areas will be assessed dependent on the student's age and stage of reading development:

Academic Skills

- 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

Cognitive Processes

- Phonological/phonemic awareness
- Rapid naming of symbols or objects

Possible Additional Areas

- 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

Considerations for Assessing English Language Learners

- Comprehensive oral language proficiency testing should be completed in English and the student's native language whenever possible
- If the student has received academic instruction in his/her native language, as well as English, then the "Domains to Assess" need to be completed in both languages to the appropriate extent.
- 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.

Review and Interpretation of Data and Evaluations

To appropriately understand evaluation data, the 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 the condition of dyslexia, in addition to required ARD committee members, the Tioga ISD committee will also include the Tioga ISD dyslexia therapist who has specific knowledge regarding the reading process, dyslexia and related disorders, and dyslexia instruction as well as a member of the LPAC when an English Language Learner has been evaluated. The committee must be knowledgeable about:

- The student being assessed
- The reading ability
- Dyslexia instruction
- The assessments used
- The meaning of the collected data

The Tioga ISD ARD committee will first make a determination regarding whether the 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)

Tioga ISD ARD committee will also consider the student's linguistic background when interpreting test results.

Should the Tioga ISD ARD committee determine that the student exhibits weaknesses in reading and spelling, the committee will then examine 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. Therefore, it is not one single indicator but a preponderance of data (both informal and formal) that provide the committee with evidence for whether these difficulties are unexpected.

VII. Identification of Students with Dyslexia

Once all gathered data has been reviewed and interpreted by knowledgeable individuals of the ARD committee, and it is found that the student's difficulties are unexpected in relation to other abilities, the ARD committee must then determine if the student has dyslexia. Tioga ISD will follow the guidelines in the Texas Dyslexia Handbook (2024 Update) to determine the identification of dyslexia.

The following list of questions must be considered when making a determination regarding dyslexia.

- Do the data show the following characteristics of dyslexia?
 - o Difficulty with accurate and/or fluent word reading
 - o Poor spelling skills
 - o 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? Again, it is not one single indicator but a preponderance of data (both informal and formal) that provide the committee with evidence for whether these difficulties are unexpected.

If, through the evaluation process, it is established that the student has the condition of dyslexia, as described in the Texas Dyslexia Handbook (2024 Update), then the student meets the first prong of eligibility under the IDEA (identification of condition).

Once the condition of dyslexia has been identified, a determination must be made regarding the most appropriate way to serve the student. If a student with dyslexia is found eligible for special education (i.e., student requires specially designed instruction), the student’s IEP must include appropriate reading instruction. Appropriate reading instruction includes the components and delivery 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.

VIII. Dyslexia Program Description

Once the student has been identified with dyslexia, Tioga ISD shall provide the student with an appropriate instructional program and access to the services of a teacher trained in dyslexia and related disorders in accordance to SBOE rules 19 TAC §74.28. Instructional decisions for a student with dyslexia will be made by the ARD committee that is knowledgeable about the instructional components and approaches for students with dyslexia.

Providers of Dyslexia Instruction

Tioga ISD will employ highly trained individuals to deliver dyslexia instruction. At a minimum these educators will have additional documented dyslexia training aligned to 19 TAC §74.28(c) and must deliver the instruction with fidelity. This includes training in critical, evidence-based components of dyslexia instruction such as phonological awareness, sound-symbol association, syllabication, orthography, morphology, syntax, reading comprehension, and reading fluency. In addition, they must deliver multisensory instruction that simultaneously uses all learning pathways to the brain, is

systematic and cumulative, is explicitly taught, uses diagnostic teaching to automaticity, and includes both analytic and synthetic approaches. All Tioga ISD dyslexia providers will be fully trained in the adopted dyslexia program.

Dyslexia Program

In accordance with 19 TAC §74.28(e), Tioga ISD will purchase or develop an evidence-based reading program for students with dyslexia and related disorders. Tioga ISD currently uses Take Flight: A Comprehensive Intervention for Students with Dyslexia written by the staff of Luke Waites Center for Dyslexia and Learning Disorders at Scottish Rite for Children. Take Flight incorporates all the components of instruction and instructional approaches described below.

- Phonological awareness
- Sound-symbol association
- Syllabication
- Orthography
- Morphology
- Syntax
- Reading Comprehension
- Reading Fluency

Tioga ISD's dyslexia instruction provides evidence-based, multisensory structured literacy instruction for students with dyslexia. A standard protocol dyslexia instructional program must be explicit, systematic, and intentional in its approach. This instruction is designed for all students with dyslexia and will often take place in a small group setting. Standard protocol dyslexia instruction must be—

- evidence-based and effective for students with dyslexia;
- taught by an appropriately trained instructor; and
- implemented with fidelity.

The delivery of the Tioga ISD dyslexia program will be consistent with research-based practices including—

- **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).
- **Systematic and cumulative**— “The sequence will 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).

Dyslexia Program - Progress Monitoring

Tioga ISD will conduct regular progress monitoring of students in the dyslexia program. Parents will receive dyslexia progress reports at least once per grading period.

IX. Program Exit Criteria and Student Monitoring

No one factor is sufficient to warrant exiting a student from direct Dyslexia services. Dismissal is determined by consensus of the committee of knowledgeable persons. The committee considers the following factors when recommending exiting or reduction of dyslexic services:

- completion of the district dyslexia program;
- student demonstrating success in grade level material;
- the post-testing of student shows student growth to meet grade level proficiency standards
- passing STAAR;
- recommendation by the dyslexia teacher;
- committee recommendation;
- parent request;
- moved from TISD; and
- lack of appropriate progress within the dyslexia curriculum.

If a student has shown substantial progress and the committee of knowledgeable persons determines the student is ready to be dismissed completely from the program, the committee may recommend monitoring services instead of direct services. When a child is exited from the dyslexia program, a dismissal form will be completed and placed in the child’s cumulative folder. Students that are exited from the Tioga ISD dyslexia program will receive regular monitoring during the first year. Students will continue to receive any accommodations and/or modifications that they need to be successful in the classroom.

Monitoring may include, but is not limited to the collection/evaluation of:

- progress reports

- report cards
- state assessment data
- teacher reports/checklists
- parent reports/checklists
- counselor reports
- other program reports
- additional assessment data

Students qualifying for dyslexia services will follow monitoring/re-evaluation requirements outlined in federal law.

Student Accommodations

Accommodations are not a one size fits all; rather, the impact of dyslexia on each individual student determines the 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

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 should not be limited by whether an accommodation is allowable on a state assessment.

X. *Parent Education*

Tioga ISD will provide parent education on dyslexia and related disorders for the parents/guardians of students enrolled in the district. The parent education information will include:

- Characteristics of dyslexia and related disorders
- Information on evaluation and identification of dyslexia and related disorders
- Information on effective instructional strategies for teaching students with dyslexia and related disorders
- The qualifications of and contact information for PDIs at each school
- Information on audiobooks, specifically Texas Talking Books and Learning Ally
- Awareness of information on classroom modifications/accommodations and especially of accommodations allowed on standardized testing (19 TAC §74.28)
- Monthly newsletters related to dyslexia
- The steps in the special education process, as described in the form developed by TEA to comply with TEC §29.0031 (a) (1)
- Information on how to request a copy and access the electronic version of the Handbook.

XI. Dysgraphia

Texas state law requires districts and charter schools to identify students who have dyslexia and related disorders. Texas Education Code §38.003 identifies the following examples of related disorders: developmental auditory imperception, dysphasia, specific developmental dyslexia, developmental dysgraphia, and developmental spelling disability.

Definition and Characteristics of Dysgraphia

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).

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 will be data gathering.

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

Tioga ISD collects data on all students to ensure that instruction is appropriate and scientifically based. Any time from kindergarten through grade 12 a student continues to struggle with one or more components of writing, Tioga ISD must collect additional information about the student. Tioga ISD will 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 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 Tioga ISD 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 will 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.

- Vision screening
- Classroom handwriting assessments
- Accommodations or interventions provided
- Outside evaluations
- Curriculum-based assessment measures
- Parent survey
- Full Individual and Initial Evaluation
- Parent reports of concerns about handwriting, spelling, or written expression
- Samples of written work (e.g., journal, story responses, writing samples, etc.)
- Samples of written schoolwork (both timed and untimed)
- State student assessment program results as described in TEC §39.022
- Observations of instruction provided to the student
- Instructional strategies provided and student's response to the instruction
- Teacher reports of classroom concerns
- Classroom spelling assessments
- Academic progress reports (report cards)
- Speech and language assessment
- School attendance
- Gifted/talented assessments
- Universal screening

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 formal evaluation is recommended, the school completes the evaluation process as outlined in IDEA. Procedural safeguards under the IDEA must be followed.

Review and Interpretation of Data and Evaluation

To appropriately understand evaluation data, the 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 ARD committee determine that the student exhibits weakness in writing and spelling, the committee will then examine 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. ***It is not one single indicator, but a preponderance of informal and formal data that provide the committee 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. Tioga ISD will consider the questions outlined in the Texas Dyslexia Handbook, 2024 Update when making a determination regarding 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?

Once dysgraphia has been identified, a determination must be made regarding the most appropriate way to serve the student. 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. 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 not considered a student with a disability under the IDEA (because the student does not need specially designed instruction), then the student may receive appropriate accommodations and services under Section 504. Students are protected under Section 504 if the physical or mental impairment (dysgraphia) substantially limits one or more major life activities, such as the specific activity of writing. Additionally, the Section 504 committee, in determining whether a student has a disability that substantially limits the student in a major life activity (writing), must not consider the ameliorating effects of any mitigating measures that student is using. Revision of the Section 504 Plan will occur as the student's response to instruction and to the use of accommodations, if any, is observed. Changes in instruction and/or accommodations must be supported by current data (e.g., classroom performance and dyslexia program monitoring).

References:

TEA. (2024). *2024 Dyslexia Handbook - Texas Education Agency*. TEA Dyslexia Handook.
<https://tea.texas.gov/academics/special-student-populations/special-education/texas-dyslexia-handbook.pdf>