

**A PARENT'S GUIDE TO  
DYSLEXIA  
AND  
THE CYPRESS-FAIRBANKS INDEPENDENT  
SCHOOL DISTRICT**



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## 1. What is Dyslexia?

The student who struggles with reading and spelling often puzzles teachers and parents. The student displays average 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.

As defined in the Texas Education Code:

- (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 current definition from the International Dyslexia Association states:

*“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 (decoding), reading fluency, and spelling. Consequences of dyslexia 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. *“From a practical perspective this means that the weakness in reading is isolated and circumscribed, reflecting a local rather than generalized cerebral dysfunction. A child who is slow in all cognitive skills would **not** be eligible for consideration of dyslexia; a dyslexic child has to have some cognitive strengths, not only depressed reading functions.”* (Overcoming Dyslexia, Sally Shaywitz, M.D., 2003.) Additionally, there is often a **family history** of similar difficulties.

## 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, Sally Shaywitz, M.D., 2003.)*

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. 2<sup>nd</sup> 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. 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. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 1998.)**

### **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)

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. Texas Education Agency, Austin, Texas.**

### **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).

## 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., “to,” “said,” “been”)

## 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
- 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., 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 note taking
- Difficulty with written production
- Difficulty remembering sequences (e.g., mathematical and/or scientific formulas)

**(Fact Sheets - *Dyslexia Basics*, The International Dyslexia Association, May 2012, <https://dyslexiaida.org/dyslexia-basics/> ) (*Overcoming Dyslexia: A New and Complete Science-based Program for Reading Problems at any Level*, Sally Shaywitz, M.D., 2003.) (*The Dyslexia Handbook: Procedures Concerning Dyslexia and Related Disorders – Texas Education Agency, Austin, Texas.*)**

### **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. Most individuals with dyslexia have been found to have difficulty identifying the separate speech sounds within a word and/or learning how letters represent those sounds, a key factor in their reading difficulties. Some adults may not realize that their difficulties are due to dyslexia. Even students in colleges or graduate schools who are having difficulty may be dyslexic and have gone undiagnosed. 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, 2018)**

### **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 instruction, and who display characteristics of dyslexia should be referred for consideration of a dyslexia evaluation as outlined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

**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 in *The Dyslexia Handbook*.

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 IDEA. **Progression through tiered intervention is NOT required in order to begin the identification of dyslexia.**

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

#### **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*

These programs are intensive, utilize multi-sensory teaching methods and meet the state required descriptors. Instructional 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 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.)*

#### **9. What testing accommodations are available for students identified with dyslexia taking the state student assessment program – STAAR (State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness)?**

Please check the TEA website for the most current information.

[www.tea.texas.gov/student.assessment/accommodations/staar-telpas](http://www.tea.texas.gov/student.assessment/accommodations/staar-telpas)

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

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:

[www.tea.texas.gov/student.assessment/accommodations/staar-telpas](http://www.tea.texas.gov/student.assessment/accommodations/staar-telpas)

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, the school must follow a specific process.

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?
- 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.)
- 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;
- Provide current information;
- Provide relevant educational, developmental, and medical history;
- Show that diagnosis is supported;
- Describe the functional limitations;
- Describe the specific accommodations requested and state why the student needs the specific accommodation; **and**
- Establish the professional credentials of the evaluator
- 

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

- Extended time;
- Use of a computer;



- Reading and seeing accommodations; and
- Extra and extended breaks.

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](http://www.collegeboard.com). For information about testing accommodations for the ACT, go to: [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org).

**11. 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*, Texas Education Agency.)**

**To learn more about dyslexia and service agencies, contact:**

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

Texas Education Agency  
1.512.463.9581  
<https://tea.texas.gov/academics/dyslexia/>

Texas Dyslexia Helpline  
1.800.232.3030  
<https://www.region10.org/programs/dyslexia-statewide/overview/>

Texas Regional Education Service Centers  
[Education Service Centers](#)  
[ESC Region 4 Dyslexia Department](#)

**For additional information regarding the  
Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District Dyslexia Program, contact:**

**Dyslexia Program**  
**Stefanie Ware**  
**Director of Dyslexia & Section 504 Services**  
**(281) 517-6568**

**§504 District Coordinator**  
**Stefanie Ware**  
**Director of Dyslexia & Section 504 Services**  
**(281) 517-6568**

**Special Education Programs**  
**Lauri Barnes**  
**Director of Special Education**  
**(281) 897-6404**

## **Audio Book Options**



<https://learningally.org/>



<https://www.bookshare.org/cms/>

### Talking Books

[\*\*https://www.tsl.texas.gov/tbp/index.html\*\*](https://www.tsl.texas.gov/tbp/index.html)

An advertisement for the Talking Book Program. On the left is the Texas State Library Archives Commission logo. In the center is a stylized sunburst icon above the text "Talking Book Program". On the right is a photograph of a young girl sitting cross-legged and holding a tablet displaying a digital audiobook player interface with buttons for "Section", "RW", "Play", "FF", and a "Speed" slider. Below the icons is the heading "Student Resources for Reading Disabilities".

**Student Resources for Reading Disabilities**

The Talking Book Program (TBP) offers students with reading disabilities – such as dyslexia – a variety of reading materials, from Pre-K to young adult. Digital audiobooks allow students to read the latest bestseller or a classic book needed for a classroom assignment.

Qualified students can apply to the free program.

For more information or for questions, visit [www.texastalkingbooks.org](http://www.texastalkingbooks.org) or call 1-800-252-9605 or 512-463-5458 in Austin.