

# Rusk Independent School District

## Dyslexia Handbook

### Procedures Concerning Dyslexia and Related Disorders

In accordance with the program approved by the State Board of Education, the board of trustees of each school district shall provide for the treatment of any student determined to have dyslexia or a related disorder. Rusk Independent School District will provide an organized system of reading support to students who continue to struggle to read, despite conventional or intensified instruction.

#### DEFINITIONS OF DYSLEXIA

The student who struggles with reading, writing, and/or spelling often puzzles teachers and parents. The student displays average intelligence and receives the same classroom instruction that benefits most children. Still the student struggles with some or all of the many facets of reading, writing, and/or spelling. This student may be identified as a student with dyslexia.

As defined in TEC §38.003:

- (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.

The working definition of the International Dyslexia Association states:

*Dyslexia is one of several distinct learning disabilities. It is a specific language-based disorder of constitutional origin characterized by difficulties in single-word decoding, usually reflecting insufficient phonological processing. These difficulties in single-word decoding are often unexpected in relation to age and other cognitive and academic abilities: they are not the result of generalized developmental disability or sensory impairment. Dyslexia is manifested by variable difficulty with different forms of language, often including, in addition to problems with reading, a conspicuous problem with acquiring proficiency in writing and spelling (International Dyslexia Association Research Committee in collaboration with the National Center for Learning Disabilities and the National Institutes of Child Health and Human Development, April 1994).*

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

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF DYSLEXIA**

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

- Difficulty reading single words in isolation;
- Difficulty accurately decoding nonsense or unfamiliar words;
- Slow, inaccurate, or labored oral reading (lack of reading fluency); and/or
- Difficulty with learning to spell.

The reading/writing/spelling characteristics are the result of:

- Difficulty with the development of phonological awareness, including segmenting, blending, and manipulating sounds in words;
- Difficulty learning the names of letters and their associated sounds;
- Difficulty with phonological memory (holding information about sounds and words in memory); and/or
- Difficulty with rapid naming of familiar objects, colors, or letters of the alphabet.

The reading/writing/spelling characteristics of dyslexia lead to:

- Variable degrees of difficulty with word recognition in isolation or in context;
- Variable difficulty with aspects of reading comprehension;
- Variable difficulty with aspects of written composition; and/or
- A limited amount of time spent in reading activities.

## **ISSUES RELATING TO KINDERGARTEN, GRADE 1 & 2**

Some students struggle during early reading acquisition. Others do not struggle until the later grades when they face more complex language demands (e.g., reading textbooks; grammar). The most common source of instructional help for early struggling readers is through TEC 28.006. Rusk Independent School District will administer early reading instruments to all students in kindergarten and grades 1 and 2 to diagnose their reading development and comprehension. If, on the basis of the reading instrument results, students are determined to be at risk for dyslexia or other reading difficulties, the district must notify the students' parents/guardians. The district will implement an accelerated (intensive) reading program that appropriately addresses the students' reading difficulties (TEC 28.006(g) and enables them to "catch up" their typically performing peers.

During kindergarten and grades 1 and 2 some students will demonstrate the characteristics of dyslexia or may struggle with reading, writing, and spelling during the intensive reading instruction provided through TEC 28.006. The district will initiate procedures to recommend these students for assessment for dyslexia. The information from the early reading instruments will be one source of information in deciding whether or not to recommend a student for assessment for dyslexia but will not be the only measured used. Some may be non-English speakers who struggle to read in their native language and/or English language learners (ELL) who struggle to read despite having appropriately developed oral English language. This includes students in all grades, non-English speakers, and ELL.

## **PROCEDURES AND MEASURES FOR ASSESSING STUDENTS FOR READING DIFFICULTIES AND/OR DYSLEXIA**

At any time that a student continues to exhibit a learning difficulty with one or more components of reading, the district will collect additional information about the student. The district will use this information to evaluate the student's academic progress and determine what actions are needed to ensure the student's improved academic performance. Information to be considered includes the results from some or all of the following:

- Vision screening (school may conduct screening);
- Hearing screening (school may conduct screening);
- Teacher reports of classroom concerns;
- Basal reading series assessment;
- Accommodations and modifications provided by classroom teachers;
- Academic progress reports (report cards);
- Samples of school work;
- Parent conferences;
- The K-2 reading instrument as described in TEC §28.006;
- State student assessment program as described in TEC §39.022 (and achievement tests if available); and/or
- Evidence of average intelligence as observed by the committee of knowledgeable persons;
- Texas English Language Proficiency System (TELPAS) Reading test;
- Testing for limited English proficiency; and/or
- Speech and language screening through a referral process.

The campus academic team, consisting of at least the campus administrator and/or designee, counselor, and teacher, will convene to review data collected. A decision will be made regarding appropriate intervention options for the student. Appropriate interventions may include:

### **Remedial Strategies:**

The district will provide an accelerated (intensive) reading program that appropriately addresses students' reading difficulties (TEC §28.006) and enables them to "catch up" with their typically performing peers. This may include, though not be limited to:

- Classroom modifications
- Tutorials
- Compensatory Programs
- Accelerated Reading Instruction Program
- Summer School
- ESL
- Extended Day
- RtI

### **Dyslexia Instructional Program:**

If a student does not make appropriate academic progress after receiving intensive reading instruction, the student may be recommended for screening for the Dyslexia Instructional Program.

## **PROCEDURES FOR DYSLEXIA ASSESSMENT**

Students enrolling in public schools in Texas 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 additional reading instruction (if placed in additional reading instruction), teachers' input, and parents' input. Additionally, the appropriate time for assessing is early in a student's school career (19 TAC §74.28), the earlier the better. While earlier is better, students should be recommended for assessment for dyslexia even if the reading difficulties appear later in a student's school career.

The district or school recommends assessment for dyslexia if the student demonstrates the following:

- Poor performance in one or more areas of reading and/or the related areas of writing and spelling that is unexpected for the student's age/grade, and;
- Some or all of the characteristics of dyslexia.

When the district recommends that a student be assessed for dyslexia, the district proceeds using the following procedures:

- Notify parents or guardians of proposal to assess student for dyslexia (§504) (within three days of committee recommendation);
- Inform parents or guardians of their rights under §504;
- Obtain written parent permission to assess the student for dyslexia at least five school days before any evaluation or identification procedure is used; and
- Administer measures only by individuals/professionals who are trained in assessments to evaluate students for dyslexia and related disorders (19 TAC §74.28) in a timely manner not to exceed 6 weeks.

Tests, assessments, and other evaluation materials must:

- Be validated for the specific purpose for which they are used (§504);
- Include material tailored to assess specific areas of educational need and not merely materials that are designed to provide a single general intelligence quotient (§504);
- Be selected and administered so as 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 or achievement level, or whatever other factor the test purports to measure, rather than reflecting the student's impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills (§504);
- Include multiple measures of a student's reading abilities such as informal assessment information (which may or may not include anecdotal records, lists of books the student has read, audio recordings of the student's oral reading) (§504); and

- Be administered by trained personnel and in conformance with the instructions provided by the producer of the evaluation materials (§504).

### **Domains to Assess**

In a timely manner, following receipt of parental permission to screen for dyslexia, the district will administer measures that are related to the student's educational needs. Depending upon the student's age and stage of reading development, the following are the areas related to reading that should be assessed.

- Reading single words in isolation;
- Word decoding (real and nonwords);
- Phonological awareness;
- Letter knowledge (name and associated sound);
- Rapid naming;
- Fluency/rate and accuracy;
- Reading comprehension; and/or
- Spelling.

Based on the student's academic difficulties and characteristics, additional areas that can be assessed include vocabulary, written expression, handwriting, and mathematics. For non-English speakers who struggle to read in their native language, similar measures in the student's native language would be used as appropriate. This may require that dyslexia personnel to work with a bilingual staff member to administer the measures and determine if student performance is lower than what would be expected for the student's age/grade.

A team or committee of knowledgeable persons determines if the student has dyslexia. The team must be knowledgeable about:

- The student being assessed;
- The reading process;
- Dyslexia and related disorders;
- Dyslexia instruction;
- District, state, and federal guidelines for assessment;
- The assessments used; and
- The meaning of the collected data.

A committee of knowledgeable persons determines the identification of dyslexia after reviewing all accumulated data including the following areas:

- The observations of the teacher, district staff, and/or parent;
- Data gathered from the classroom (including student work and the results of classroom measures) and information found in the student's cumulative folder (including the developmental and academic history of the student);
- the student);

- The results of administered assessments; and
- All other accumulated data regarding the development of the student's learning and his/her educational needs (including testing from sources outside school).

The student's reading difficulties and characteristics of dyslexia will be reflected or supported by low performance for the student's age and educational level in some or all of the following areas:

- Reading single words in isolation;
- Word decoding (real and nonwords);
- Phonological awareness;
- Letter knowledge (name and associated sound);
- Rapid naming;
- Fluency/rate and accuracy;
- Reading comprehension; and
- Spelling.

A committee of knowledgeable persons must also incorporate the following guidelines from TEC §38.003 and 19 TAC §74.28:

- The student's unexpected lack of appropriate academic progress;
- The student's exhibiting characteristics associated with dyslexia;
- The student's having average intelligence, the ability to learn;
- The student's receiving conventional instruction; and
- The student's lack of progress not being due to sociocultural factors such as language differences, irregular attendance, and lack of experiential background.

Based on the above information and guidelines the committee of knowledgeable school personnel makes the final determination whether the student has dyslexia. If the student has dyslexia, the committee also determines whether the student has a disability under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, §504. (Not all students with dyslexia are necessarily eligible for §504.) A student is considered to have a disability under §504 if the condition substantially limits the student's learning. Students with additional factors that complicate their dyslexia may require additional support or referral to special education.

### **Assessment for Current Performance Levels and Accommodations**

Students that are identified with Dyslexia will be given a battery of test during their 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> grade year to evaluate current performance levels and review decisions regarding accommodations needed in the classroom and on assessments. These assessment results will be used along with the initial assessment results for any post-secondary institution requiring documentation of Dyslexia Evaluation Results.

### **INSTRUCTION FOR STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA**

Once it has been determined that a student has dyslexia, the school district shall provide an appropriate instructional program for the student. As stated in TEC §38.003:

*“In accordance with the program approved by the State Board of Education, the board of trustees of each school district shall provide for the treatment of any student determined to have dyslexia or a related disorder.”*

The following procedures will be followed:

- Instructional decisions for a student with dyslexia are made by a team that is knowledgeable about the student, the meaning of the evaluation information, and instructional components and approaches for students with dyslexia.
- In accordance with 19 TAC §74.28, Rusk ISD will offer a multifaceted instructional program which includes the components:
  1. phonemic awareness
  2. graphophonemic knowledge
  3. language structure
  4. linguistic patterns
  5. processes

Instructional approaches include explicit, individualized, and multisensory instruction.

- Each campus will provide each identified student access at his or her campus to the services of a teacher trained in dyslexia and related disorders. The school district may, with the approval of each student’s parents or guardians, offer additional services at a centralized location. Such centralized services shall not preclude each student from receiving services at his or her campus (19 TAC §74.28).
- Parents/guardians of students eligible under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, §504, will be informed of all services and options available to the student under that federal statute.
- Teachers who provide the appropriate instruction for students with dyslexia will be trained in instructional strategies that utilize individualized, intensive, multisensory, phonetic methods and a variety of writing and spelling components (19 TAC §74.28).
- Teachers who provide the appropriate instruction for students with dyslexia must be trained in the professional development activities specified by each district and/or campus planning and decision making committee (19 TAC §74.28).

The district may provide a parent education program for the parents/guardians of students with dyslexia and related disorders. The program may include:

- Characteristics of dyslexia and related disorders;
- Information on assessment and diagnosis of dyslexia;
- Information on effective strategies for teaching dyslexia; and
- Awareness of information on classroom modifications and especially of modifications allowed on standardized testing (19 TAC §74.28).

### **Components of Instruction**

The instructional program will be offered in a small class setting and include reading, writing, and spelling as appropriate. The major instructional strategies will utilize individualized, intensive, and multisensory methods as appropriate.

Components of instruction, as appropriate for the reading needs of the student, include:

- **Phonemic awareness instruction** that enables students to detect, segment, blend, and manipulate sounds in spoken language;
- **Graphophonemic knowledge (phonics) instruction** that takes advantage of the letter-sound plan in which words that carry meaning are made of sounds and sounds are written with letters in the right order. Students with this understanding can blend sounds associated with letters into words and can separate words into component sounds for spelling and writing;
- **Language structure instruction** that encompasses morphology (the study of meaningful units of language such as prefixes, suffixes, and roots), semantics (ways that language conveys meaning), syntax (sentence structure), and pragmatics (how to use language in a particular context);
- **Linguistic instruction** directed toward proficiency and fluency with the patterns of language so that words and sentences are the carriers of meaning; and
- **Process-oriented instruction** in the processes or strategies students use for decoding, encoding, word recognition, fluency, and comprehension that students need to become independent readers.

Instructional approaches, as appropriate to meet the instructional needs of the student will include:

- **Explicit, direct instruction that is systematic (structured), sequential, and cumulative.** Instruction is organized and presented in a way that follows a logical sequential plan, fits the nature of language (alphabetic principle) with no assumption of prior skills or language knowledge, and maximizes student engagement. This instruction proceeds at a rate commensurate with students' needs, ability levels, and demonstration of progress;
- **Individualized instruction** that meets the specific learning needs of each individual student in a small group setting; a reading curriculum that matches each student's individual ability level and contains all of the *Components of Instruction* mandated in 19 TAC §74.28;
- **Intensive, highly concentrated instruction** that maximizes student engagement, uses specialized methods and materials, produces results, and contains all the *Components of Instruction* mandated in 19 TAC §74.28;
- **Meaning-based instruction** that is directed toward purposeful reading and writing, with an emphasis on comprehension and composition; and
- **Multisensory instruction** that incorporates the simultaneous use of two or more sensory pathways (auditory, visual, kinesthetic, tactile) during teacher presentations and student practice.

Teachers of students with dyslexia will be prepared to utilize these techniques and strategies. They may also serve as trainers and consultants in the area of dyslexia and related disorders to regular, remedial, and special education teachers.

## **EXIT FROM DYSLEXIA PROGRAM**

Students will be dismissed from the dyslexia remediation program based on the following:

Progress sufficient for the student to achieve at or above grade level in academic skills in the regular classroom with support as measured by:

- Texas Primary Reading Inventory and/or ISIP
- STAAR
- Achievement test
- Performance in the classroom (report card grades, etc.)

Recommendation for dismissal will be made by the Dyslexia Screening Committee. Parents (or legal guardians) will be involved in the decision for dismissal.

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE TEACHER OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA**

As stated in 19 TAC §74.28, the teachers who provide appropriate instruction for students with dyslexia will be trained and be prepared to implement instructional strategies that utilize individualized, intensive, multisensory, phonetic methods and a variety of writing and spelling components. These teachers will also be trained in the professional development activities specified by each district and/or campus planning and decision making committee.

Teachers trained in the appropriate instruction for dyslexia may serve as consultants in the area of dyslexia and related disorders to regular, remedial, and special education teachers.

## **REFERRAL TO SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**At any time during the assessment for dyslexia, identification process, or instruction related to dyslexia, students may be referred for evaluation for special education.** At times, students will display additional factors/areas complicating their dyslexia and requiring more support than what is available through dyslexia instruction. At other times, there will be students with severe dyslexia or related disorders who will be unable to make adequate academic progress within any of the programs described in the procedures related to dyslexia. In such cases, a referral to special education for evaluation and possible identification as disabled within the meaning of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (20 U.S.C. section 1400 et seq.) should be made as needed.

If the student with dyslexia is found eligible for special education, the admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee must include appropriate reading instruction on the student's individualized education program (IEP). Appropriate reading instruction includes the descriptors listed in the chapter on Instruction for Students with Dyslexia.

If a student with dyslexia is referred for special education, districts follow IDEA, 1997. In IDEA, 1997, §1401 (26), dyslexia is considered one of a variety of etiological foundations for "specific learning disability." In general, the term "specific learning disability" means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written. The disorder may manifest itself in imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. A disorder includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.

A disorder does not include a learning problem that is primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

34 CFR 300.7(c)(10) states that a “specific learning disability” means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual disability, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not apply to children who have learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.