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What is dyslexia?

The student who struggles with reading, writing, and/or 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 Texas Education Code Section: 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 imperceptions, dysphasia, specific developmental dyslexia, developmental dysgraphia, and developmental spelling disability.

The current definition from the International Dyslexia Association:

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge. (Adopted by the International Dyslexia Board of Directors, November 12, 2002).

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

The following are the 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.

Common Signs of Dyslexia

The following signs may be associated with dyslexia if they are unexpected for the individual’s age, educational level, or cognitive abilities.

Pre-school:
• May talk later than most children
• May have difficulty with rhyming
• May have difficulty pronouncing words (i.e., busgetti for spaghetti, mawn lower for lawn mower)
• May have poor auditory memory for nursery rhymes and chants
• May be slow to add new vocabulary words
• May be unable to recall the right word
• May have trouble learning numbers, days of the week, colors, shapes, and how to spell and write his or her name

Kindergarten through third grade:
• Fails to understand that words come apart; for example, that snowman can be pulled apart into snow and man and, later on, that the word man can be broken down still further and sounded out as: /m/ /æ/ /n/
• Has difficulty learning the letter names and their corresponding sounds
• Has difficulty decoding single words (reading single words in isolation) – lacks a strategy
• Has difficulty spelling phonetically
• Reads dysfluently (choppy and labored)
• Relies on context to recognize a word.

Fourth grade through high school:
• Has a history of reading and spelling difficulties
• Avoids reading aloud
• Reads most materials slowly; oral reading is labored, not fluent
• Avoids reading for pleasure
• May have an inadequate vocabulary
• Has difficulty spelling; may resort to using less complicated words in writing that are easier to spell
How are Dyslexia Students Served?

Dyslexia services for students are provided during the regular school day. Dyslexia teachers design specific, individualized intervention which is delivered in a small group setting. A team that is knowledgeable about the student, the meaning of the evaluation information, and instructional components and approaches for students with dyslexia (including the regular classroom teacher(s) and the dyslexia teacher) will collaborate on instructional decisions for students with dyslexia.

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
- Strategy-oriented instruction in the process or strategies students use for decoding, encoding, word recognition, fluency, and comprehension that students need to become independent readers.
Tips for Parents of Children with Dyslexia

Learn about dyslexia.
- Expand your knowledge by reading
- Attend conferences and presentations by professionals in the field.

Understand your child and help your child understand.
- Acknowledge your child’s difficulty with reading.
- Demystify dyslexia with open discussion about the learning disorder and its effect on your child.
- Explain that individuals learn differently.
- Encourage questions and discussion about concerns and problems with learning.
- Encourage your child to learn through listening, talking, observing, and experiencing.
- Maintain high expectations for content learning despite reading and writing limitations, while emphasizing others ways to learn.
- Set standards, goals, and expectations of achievement within reach of your child’s abilities.

Support your child.
- Respect your child and value his/her uniqueness.
- Focus on your child’s abilities.
- Encourage development of hobbies, interests, and talents.
- Allow and encourage originality and creativity.
- Initiate a variety of learning experiences (museums, historical sites and places where there are “hands-on” learning opportunities, etc.)
- READ, READ, READ, aloud to your child for information, literacy appreciation and recreation.
- Plan activities and tasks that assure successful experiences.
- Organize your child’s environment and agree upon a regular routine for meals, homework, recreation, chores, bedtime, etc.
- Offer frequent and specific praise to your child for good effort as well as for success.

Collaborate with educators.
- Gain knowledge about the schools’ responsibilities and your child.
- Act as liaison between school and child, adding the positive dimension for both.
- Communicate your child’s special learning needs to the school.
- Develop an on-going communication system between home and school.
- Establish a team approach planned by teacher, parent, and student for developing study skills and assisting with schoolwork.
  - Designate a time and place for homework.
  - Devise a plan for completing long assignments.
  - Develop strategies for complex assignments.
  - Read aloud to your child or contact “Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic” to request assistance with services available.
  - Incorporate technology for efficient and effective learning.
  - Act as your child’s secretary by writing assignments he or she dictates.
  - Exhibit enthusiasm and interest in your child’s learning.
  - Encourage ways of teaching and learning that optimize your child’s abilities.
Difficulties Associated with Dyslexia

Difficulties of Dyslexia are often associated with Dyslexia if they are unexpected for the individual’s age, educational level, or cognitive abilities.

Pre-School Children
- May talk later than most children
- May have difficulty pronouncing words, e.g. “busgetti” for “spaghetti,” “maun lower” for “lawn mower.”
- May be slow to add new vocabulary words.
- May be unable to recall the right word.
- May have difficulty with rhyming.
- May have trouble learning the alphabet, numbers, days of the week, colors, shapes, how to spell and writes his or her name.
- May be unable to follow multi-step directions or routines.
- Fine motor skills may develop more slowly than in other children.
- May have difficulty separating sounds in words and blending sounds to make words.

K-4th Grade Students
- May be slow to learn the connection between letters and sounds.
- Has difficulty decoding single words (reading single words in isolation).
- Has difficulty spelling phonetically.
- Makes consistent reading and spelling errors such as:
  - Letter reversals – “d” for “b” as in: “dog” for “bog”
  - Word reversals – “tip” for “pit”
  - Inversions – “m” for “w,” “u” for “n”
  - Transpositions – “felt” for “left”
  - Substitutions – “house” for “home”
- May confuse small words – “at” for “to,” “said” for “and,” “does” for “goes.”
- Relies on guessing and context.
- May have difficulty learning new vocabulary.
- May transpose number sequences and confuse arithmetic signs (+/-=).
- May have trouble remembering facts.
- May be slow to learn new skills, relies heavily on memorizing without understanding.
- May have difficulty planning, organizing and managing time, materials, and tasks.
- May have poor “fine motor” coordination.
5th-8th Grade Students
- Is usually reading below grade level.
- May reverse letter sequences – “soiled” for “solid,” “left” for “felt.”
- May have difficulty learning prefixes, suffixes, root words, and other reading and spelling strategies.
- May have difficulty spelling; spells same word differently on the same page.
- May avoid reading aloud.
- May have trouble with word problems in math.
- May avoid writing.
- May have poor recall of facts.
- May have trouble with non-literal language (idioms, jokes, proverbs, slang).
- May have difficulty with planning, organizing and managing time and tasks.

High School and College Students
- May read very slowly with many inaccuracies.
- Continues to spell incorrectly, frequently spells the same word differently in a single piece of writing.
- May avoid reading and writing tasks.
- May have trouble summarizing and outlining.
- May have trouble answering open-ended questions on tests.
- May have difficulty learning a foreign language.
- May work slowly.
- May have poor memory skills.
- May misread information.
- May pay too little attention to details or focus too much on them.
- May have inadequate vocabulary.
- May have an inadequate store of knowledge from previous reading.
- May have difficulty planning, organizing and managing time, materials, and tasks.

Adults
- May hide reading problems.
- May spell poorly; relies on others to correct spelling.
- Avoids writing; may not be able to write.
- Often very competent in oral language.
- Relies on memory; may have an excellent memory.
- Often is spatially talented; professions include, but are not limited to, engineers, architects, designers, artists and craftspeople, mathematicians, physicists, physicians (especially surgeons and orthopedists), and dentists.
- May be very good at “reading” people (intuitive).
- In jobs is often working below their intellectual capacity.
- May have difficulty with planning, organization and management of time, materials, and tasks.
- Often entrepreneurs.

Sources:
Basic Facts about Dyslexia: What Every Layperson Ought to Know
The International Dyslexia Association
Learning Disabilities: Information, Strategies, Resources
Coordinated Campaign for Learning Disabilities
Factors for Success

- A consistently supportive adult in the environment over time
- “You can” messages from supportive adults, parents, teachers, peers.
- Provide the gift of time (reduced workload, longer time to “grow up”, longer time to process, organize, and execute tasks).
- Development of a talent or special skill and take advantage of the opportunity to “teach” it to others.
- Frankly and directly addressing problems (enormous relief comes from knowing what you know, what you don’t know, and why you don’t know or can’t do).
- Order, routine, and clear instructions
- Complicated tasks simplified by being broken down into small, manageable chunks.
- Assistance in prioritizing and sequencing events and tasks.
- Assistance in planning and managing time.
- Development of problem-solving skills, and strategies for academics as well as interpersonal relationships.
- Learning experientially by doing and through formats other than books and lectures.
- Intellectual stimulation beyond basic skills development.
Resources

Internet Resources for Dyslexia and Related Disorders

Academic Language Therapy Association (ALTA)
http://www.ALTAread.org

Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD)
http://ahead.org

Center for Academic and Reading Skills (CARS)
http://carsuth.tmc.edu

Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder (CHADD)
http://chadd.org

Council of Educators of Students with Disabilities (CESD)
www.504IDEA.org

Dyslexia Defined

Dyslexia Handbook
www.ednet10.net/dyslexia.pdf

Dyslexia Handbook (Spanish edition)
www.ednet10.net/dyslexiaspanish.pdf

Financial Aid for Scholarships
http://www.finaid.org

HEATH Resource Center
http://heath.gwu.edu

International Dyslexia Association
https://dyslexiaida.org/

International Literacy Association (ILA)
http://www.readwritethink.org

Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA)
http://www.Idanatl.org

Learning Disabilities Association of Texas (LDAT)
http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/LDAT

Literacy Education and Academic Development (LEAD)
http://www.leadabcd.com/
National Attention Deficit Association (ADDA)
http://www.add.org

National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD)
http://www.ncld.org

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY)
http://www.nichcy.org

Neuhaus Education Center
http://neuhaus.org

Online Reference Tool
http://confusingwords.com

Just the Facts…Spelling (IDA)

Parents Educational Resource Center (PERC)
http://www.perc-schwabfdn.org

TSRH Children (You Tube Channel)
https://www.youtube.com/user/TSRHChildren

Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity
http://dyslexia.yale.edu/

Recommended Books for Parents and Teachers

About Dyslexia; Unraveling the Myth
Smart Kids with School Problems
Priscilla Vail

All Kinds of Minds
Guidelines to All Kinds of Minds
Educational Care
Keeping a Head in School
Mel Levine, M.D.

Basic Facts about Dyslexia; What Everyone Ought to Know
International Dyslexia Association

Beginning to Read; Thinking and Learning about Print
Marilyn Jager Adams, Ph.D.

Bridges to Reading; What to do When You Suspect Your Child Has a Problem
Parent’s Educational Resource Center

*The Difficult Child*
Stanley Turecki, M.D. and Leslie Tonner

*Dyslexia and Related Disorders*
Texas Education Agency

*The Dyslexic Scholar: Helping Your Child Succeed in the School System*
Kathleen Nosek

*Helping Children Overcome L.D.*
Jerome Rosner

*Helping Me to Help My Child; A Sourcebook for Parents of Learning Disabled Children*
Jill Bloom

*Homework Without Tears*
Lee Cantor and Lee Housner

*The Human Side of Dyslexia*
Shirley Kurnoff

*The Learning Disabled Child; Ways Parents Can Help*
S. Stevens

*The Misunderstood Child*
Larry Silver, M.D.

*No Easy Answers*
Sally Smith

*No One to Play With; Social Problems of LD and ADD Children*
Betty Osman

*The Orton Emertius Series*
The Orton Dyslexia Society

*Overcoming Dyslexia*
Sally Shaywitz, M.D.

*Parents Are Teachers*
Wesley Becker

*Parent Power; A Guide to Responsible Childrearing*
Logan Wright

*Reading for Parents*
Orton Dyslexia Society
The Schools We Need and Why We Don’t Have Them
E.D. Hirsch

Straight Talk about Reading
Susan Hall and Louisa Moats

Teaching Our Children to Read; The Role of Skills in a Comprehensive Reading Program
Bill Honig

Thinking Differently; An Inspiring Guide for Parents of Children with Learning Disabilities
David Flink

To Read or Not to Read
Daphne M. Hurford

What’s Wrong with Me?; Learning Disabilities at Home and at School
Regina Cicci

Your Child’s Growing Mind; A Practical Guide to Brain Development and Learning from Birth to Adolescence
Jane M. Healy, Ph.D.

Recommended Books for Children

Charlie’s Challenge
Ann Root and Linda Gladden

Hank Zipper books by Henry Winkler

How Dyslexic Benny Became a Star; A Story of Hope for Dyslexic Children and Their Parents
Joe Griffith

It’s Called Dyslexia
Jennifer Moore-Mallinos

Josh: A Boy with Dyslexia
Caroline Janover

Keeping A Head in School
Melvin Levine, M.D.

Learning Disabilities and The Don’t-Give-Up Kid
Eagle Eyes; A Child’s View of Attention Deficit Disorder
Jeanne Gehret, M.A.
Putting on the Brakes
Patricia Quinn, M.D. and Judith M. Stein, M.A.

Thank you, Mr. Falker
Patricia Polacco

The Turned-In, Tuned-On Book
Marnell Hayes

Sources for Recorded Books and Tapes

Bookshare
www.bookshare.org

Earful
www.earful.com

Learning Ally
https://www.learningally.org/

Library of Congress-National Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped
www.loc.gov/nls

North Texas Taping and Radio for the Blind
www.readingresource.org

Recorded Books, Inc.
http://www.recordedbook.com

Talking Textbooks on Tape
www.talkingtapes.org

Texas State Library
www.tsl.state.tx.us/tbp/index.html