Dyslexia Handbook

PROCEDURES CONCERNING DYSLEXIA AND RELATED DISORDERS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

GUIDELINES

Guidelines in the Texas Education Agency Dyslexia Handbook, revised in 2018, are followed in establishing district procedures for assessment, identification and placement of students.

https://www.region10.org/r10website/assets/File/2018-Dyslexia-Handbook_Approved_Accomodated_12_11_2018.pdf

DEFINITIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS 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 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 imperceptions, dysphasia, specific developmental dyslexia, developmental dysgraphia, and developmental spelling disorder.
  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 neurological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.

(Adopted by the International Dyslexia Association Board of Directors, November 12, 2002)

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)
- Difficulty spelling

It is important to note that individuals demonstrate differences in degree of impairment.

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

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.

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/ /?/ /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., "sed" for "said")

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)
- 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 with written assignments
- Tendency to avoid reading (particularly for pleasure)
- Difficulty learning a foreign language

POSTSECONDARY
Some students will not be identified prior to entering college as having dyslexia. 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 may 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)

ASSOCIATED ACADEMIC DIFFICULTIES AND OTHER CONDITIONS
The behaviors in the previous sections represent common difficulties that students with dyslexia may exhibit. In addition, students with dyslexia may have problems in written expression, reading comprehension, and mathematics, as well as other complicating conditions and/or behaviors.

+

PROCEDURES FOR THE SCREENING, ASSESSMENT, AND IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA

Dyslexia is a neurological, language-based disability that persists over time and interferes with an individual's learning, therefore, it is critical that identification and intervention occur as early as possible.

SCREENING (KINDERGARTEN, FIRST GRADE, AND SEVENTH GRADE)

Kindergarten students will be screened at the end of the year using information and data collected in the student's classroom. Screeners will address: Phonological Awareness, Phonemic Awareness, Sound-Symbol Recognition, Letter Knowledge, Decoding Skills, Rapid Naming, Spelling, and Listening Comprehension. Students who are at risk, or show to have possible characteristics of dyslexia, will attend intervention during their first-grade year and progress will be monitored by the classroom teacher and campus CARE Team.

First grade students will be screened at the middle of the school year using information and data collected in the student's classroom. Screeners will address: Phonological Awareness, Phonemic Awareness, Sound-Symbol Recognition, Letter Knowledge, Decoding Skills, Rapid Naming, Spelling, Reading Rate, Reading Accuracy, and Listening Comprehension. CARE Team meetings will be held for students who show possible characteristics of dyslexia and appropriate documents will be sent home to begin the dyslexia evaluation process.

Students who do no pass the sixth grade STAAR will be screened for dyslexia characteristics at the beginning of their seventh grade year. Students determined to be at risk for dyslexia will be evaluated for Dyslexia.

CARE TEAM AND MONITORING

In Commerce ISD, there is a focus on a Response to Intervention (RtI) or tiered intervention process for meeting the academic and behavioral needs of all students. Through the RtI process, schools can document students' learning difficulties, provide ongoing assessment, and monitor reading achievement progress for students at risk for dyslexia or other reading difficulties.

At any time that a student continues to struggle with one or more components of reading, the general education classroom teacher will submit the student's information to the campus CARE Team. The CARE Team will use the 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 may include the results from some or all of the following:

- Vision screening
- Hearing screening
- Teacher reports of classroom concerns
- Classroom reading assessments
- Accommodations or interventions provided
- Academic progress reports (report cards)
- Gifted/talented assessments
- Samples of schoolwork
- DRA
- TPRI
- STAAR
- Observations of instruction provided to the student
- Full Individual Evaluation (FIE)
- Outside evaluations
- Speech and language assessment
- School attendance
- Curriculum-based assessment measures
- Instructional strategies provided and student's response to the instruction
- RtI progress monitoring
- Parent Survey

Among the actions that the CARE Team has available for the student is a recommendation that the student be assessed for dyslexia. The CARE Team recommends assessment for dyslexia if the student demonstrates the following:

- 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.

In order to formally assess a student for dyslexia, the CARE Team must:

- Notify parents/guardians of the proposal to assess student for dyslexia (§504 or IDEA).
- Inform parents/guardians of their rights under §504 or IDEA.
- Obtain permission from parents/guardians to assess the student for dyslexia of an FIE.
- 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).

Note: The §504 process is used most frequently unless a referral to special education (IDEA) is indicated. The individual needs of the student will determine the appropriate evaluation/identification process to use.

If the student is being assessed as part of a special education evaluation or is already served in special education and a dyslexia evaluation is requested, IDEA 2004 procedures must be followed.

ASSESSMENT AND IDENTIFICATION

Test instruments and other evaluation materials must meet the following criteria:

- Be validated for the specific purpose for which the tests, assessments, and other evaluation materials are used
- Include material tailored to assess specific areas of educational need and not merely materials that are designed to provide a single general intelligence quotient
- 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, achievement level, or whatever other factor the test purports to measure, rather than reflecting the student's impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills
- Be 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 assessments, results of informal reading inventories, classroom observations)
- Be administered by trained personnel and in conformance with the instructions provided by the producer of the evaluation materials
- Be used for the purpose for which the assessment or measures are valid or reliable
- Be 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

Based on the student's academic difficulties and characteristics and/or language acquisition, additional areas related to vocabulary, listening comprehension, oral language proficiency, written expression, and other cognitive abilities may need to be assessed. Areas for assessment are provided below.

ACADEMIC SKILLS	COGNITIVE PROCESSES	POSSIBLE ADDITIONAL AREAS
- Letter knowledge (name and associated sound) - Reading words in isolation - Decoding unfamiliar words accurately - Reading fluency (both rate and accuracy are assessed) - Reading comprehension - Spelling	- Phonological/phonemic awareness - Rapid naming of symbols or objects	- 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

The identification of dyslexia is made by a §504 committee or, in the case of a special education referral, the admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee. For students designated as English Language (Els), a member of the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee, or LPAC, must be part of either the Section 504 or ARD committee.

To appropriately understand evaluation data, the committee of knowledgeable persons (Section 504 or 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. The Section 504 or ARD committee must first determine if a 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)

The evaluation data collected may also include information on reading comprehension, mathematics, and written expression. Dyslexia often coexists with learning difficulties in these related areas.

SPECIALIZED DYSLEXIA INSTRUCTION

The components of dyslexia instruction will include additional specialized instruction as appropriate for the reading needs of the student. Instructional decisions for a student with dyslexia must be made by a committee (§504 or ARD) that is knowledgeable about the instructional components and approaches for students with dyslexia. In accordance with 19 TAC §74.28(c), the district has implemented a reading program for students with dyslexia and related disorders that incorporates all the components of instruction in the following areas

- Phonological awareness
- Sound-symbol association
- Syllabication
- Orthography
- Morphology
- Syntax
- Reading comprehension
- Reading fluency

In addition, other areas of language processing skills, such as written expression will be incorporated into dyslexia instruction. Both the teacher of dyslexia and the general education teacher will provide multiple opportunities to support intervention and to strengthen these skills.

Effective intervention for dyslexia students requires highly structured and systematic delivery in a small group setting. Dyslexia teachers are highly trained in dyslexia instruction and the programs used in the district. Students in need of dyslexia instruction may be removed from their general education setting for periods of time throughout the school day.

INSTRUCTION ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

By receiving specialized instruction, the student with dyslexia is better equipped to meet the demands of grade-level or course instruction. In addition to specialized instruction, accommodations provide the student with dyslexia effective and equitable access to grade-level or course instruction in the general education classroom.

Accommodations are changes to materials, actions, or techniques, including the use of technology, that enable students with disabilities to participate meaningfully in grade-level or course instruction. The use of accommodations occurs primarily during classroom instruction as teachers use various instructional strategies to meet the needs of each student. A student may need an accommodation only temporarily while learning a new skill, or a student might require the accommodation throughout the school year or over several years.

Accommodations are not a one size fits all; rather, the impact of dyslexia on each individual student determines the accommodations. Decisions about which accommodations to use should be made by that student's ARD or Section 504 committee, as appropriate. 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
- Audio books
- Text to speech
- Electronic spellers
- Electronic dictionaries
- Formula charts

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, a teacher'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. Accommodation decisions for a student with dyslexia must be made by a committee (§504 or ARD).

ACCESS TO INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Accessible instructional materials (AIM) are textbooks and related core instructional materials that have been converted into specialized formats (e.g., Braille, audio, digital text, or large print) for students who are blind or have low vision, have a physical disability, or have a reading disability such as dyslexia. Digital books or text-to-speech functions on computers and mobile devices provide access to general education curriculum for students with dyslexia. Bookshare and Learning Ally provide electronic access to digitally recorded materials for students with print disabilities. TEA provides links to these resources as well as other accessible instructional materials for students with disabilities at

http://www.tea.state.tx.us /index2.aspx?id=2147487109.

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. Recent research in the field of dysgraphia has prompted the addition of the following guidance regarding the evaluation, identification, and provision of services for students with dysgraphia.

DEFINITION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF DYSGRAPHIA

Difficulty with handwriting frequently occurs in children with dyslexia. When Texas passed dyslexia legislation, the co-existence of poor handwriting with dyslexia was one reason why dysgraphia was called a related disorder. Subsequently, dyslexia and dysgraphia have been found to have diverse co-morbidities, including phonological awareness (Döhla and Heim, 2016). However, dyslexia and dysgraphia are now recognized to be distinct disorders that can exist concurrently or separately. They have different brain mechanisms and identifiable characteristics.

Dysgraphia is related to dyslexia as both are language-based disorders. In dyslexia, the impairment is with word-level skills (decoding, word identification, spelling). Dysgraphia is a written language disorder in serial production of strokes to form a handwritten letter. This involves not only motor skills but also language skills—finding, retrieving and producing letters, which is a sub word-level language skill. The impaired handwriting may interfere with spelling and/or composing, but individuals with only dysgraphia do not have difficulty with reading (Berninger, Richards, & Abbott, 2015).

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 EVALUATIONS

The first step in the evaluation process, data gathering, should be an integral part of the district's or charter school's process for any student exhibiting learning difficulties. 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

The district or charter school must make data-informed decisions that reflect the input of staff and parents for every student on an individual basis, every time. They must consider all resources and services based on student need. The district or charter school should carefully consider all of the relevant student data to gauge the level of impact that a student's specific presentation of dysgraphia will have on his or her ability to access and make progress in the general curriculum. If it is suspected that the student may have dysgraphia and may need special education services because of dysgraphia, the student should be evaluated under IDEA. If the district or school suspects that the student may need interventions and accommodations specific to dysgraphia rather than special education services, then the student should be evaluated under Section 504.

Students who are currently eligible under IDEA and have an IEP and who are now suspected of having dysgraphia must undergo a reevaluation under IDEA.

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.

In compliance with IDEA and Section 504, test instruments and other evaluation materials must meet the following criteria
- Be used for the purpose for which the evaluation or measures are valid or reliable Include material tailored to assess specific areas of educational need and not merely materials that are designed to provide a single general intelligence quotient
- Be 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
- Be selected and administered in a manner that is not racially or culturally discriminatory
- Include multiple measures of a student's writing abilities such as informal assessment information (e.g., anecdotal records, district universal screenings, progress monitoring data, criterion-referenced evaluations, samples of written work, classroom observations)
- Be administered by trained personnel and in conformance with the instructions provided by the producer of the evaluation materials
- Be 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

The following domains should be assessed
- Cognitive Processes
- Academic Skills

PROCEDURES FOR IDENTIFICATION
The identification of dysgraphia is made by either the ARD committee under IDEA or Section 504 committee under Section 504. To make an informed determination, either committee must include members who are knowledgeable about the following
- Student being assessed
- Evaluation instruments being used
- Interpretation of the data being collected

Additionally, the committee members should have knowledge regarding
- the handwriting process;
- dysgraphia and related disorders;
- dysgraphia instruction, and;
- district or charter school, state, and federal guidelines for evaluation.

REVIEW AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA AND EVALUATION
To appropriately understand evaluation data, the committee of knowledgeable persons (ARD or Section 504) 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. The ARD or Section 504 committee must first determine if 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 committee (Section 504 or ARD) 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. For example, the student may exhibit strengths in areas such as reading comprehension, listening comprehension, oral verbal ability, or math reasoning yet still have difficulty with writing and spelling. Therefore, 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 Section 504 or ARD committee must then determine if the student has dysgraphia. The following questions must be considered when making a determination regarding dysgraphia

- Do the data show a pattern of low writing and spelling ability that is unexpected for the student in relation to the student's other cognitive abilities and provision of effective classroom instruction?
- Does the pattern indicate the student has dysgraphia?
- Does the student meet eligibility as a student with a disability under Section 504 or IDEA?

Once dysgraphia has been identified, there are further eligibility questions the Section 504 or ARD committee must still consider. These considerations are discussed in greater detail below.

REVIEW OF EVALUATION BY SECTION 504 COMMITTEE

If the Section 504 committee determines the student has dysgraphia, the committee must also determine whether the student has a disability under Section 504. A student has a disability 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 65 ameliorating effects of any mitigating measures that student is using. If the Section 504 committee does not identify dysgraphia, but the student has another condition or disability that substantially limits the student, eligibility for Section 504 services related to the student's other condition or disability should be considered.

The Section 504 committee will also consider whether the student requires additional accommodations and/or related services for the provision of FAPE. Revision of the Section 504 Plan will occur as the student's response to instruction and 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).

REVIEW OF EVALUATION BY THE ADMISSION, REVIEW, AND DISMISSAL (ARD) COMMITTEE

Within 30 calendar days of completion of the written evaluation report, 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. The October 23, 2015 letter from the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) (Dear Colleague: Dyslexia Guidance) states that dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia are conditions that could qualify a child as a child with a specific learning disability under IDEA. The letter further states that there is nothing in the IDEA that would prohibit the use of the terms dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia in IDEA evaluation, eligibility determinations, or IEP documents. For more information, please visit

https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/guidance-on-dyslexia-10-2015.pdf

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.

INSTRUCTION AND SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH DYSGRAPHIA

Between 10% and 30% of students struggle with handwriting. Early difficulties in this area are significantly correlated with poorer performance on composition tasks. The following are research-based elements of effective handwriting instruction.

These elements, which apply to both manuscript and cursive handwriting, may not necessarily apply to an entire class but instead may be used to support instructional methods delivered in small groups with students whose penmanship is illegible or dysfluent.

- Show students how to hold a pencil.
- Model efficient and legible letter formation.
- Provide multiple opportunities for students to practice effective letter formation.
- Use scaffolds, such as letters with numbered arrows showing the order and direction of strokes.
- Have students practice writing letters from memory.
- Provide handwriting fluency practice to build students' automaticity.
- Practice handwriting in short sessions. —Adapted from Berninger et al., 1997; Berninger et al., 2006; Denton, Cope, & Moser, 2006; Graham et al., 2012; Graham, Harris, & Fink, 2000; Graham & Weintrub, 1996.

Some students who struggle with handwriting may actually have dysgraphia. Dysgraphia may occur alone, or with dyslexia. An assessment for dysgraphia, as it relates to dyslexia, is important in order to determine whether children need additional explicit, systematic instruction in handwriting only; handwriting and spelling; or handwriting, spelling, and written expression along with word reading and decoding (IDA, 2012).

While it is important for students with dysgraphia to receive the research-based elements of handwriting, spelling, and written language instruction as part of the core curriculum, for those students who require additional supports and services for dysgraphia, instructional decisions must be made by a committee (either Section 504 or ARD) that is knowledgeable about the instructional elements and delivery of instruction that is consistent with research-based practice.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACCOMMODATIONS FOR THE STUDENT WITH DYSGRAPHIA

By receiving instruction based on the elements described in this chapter, a student with dysgraphia is better equipped to meet the demands of grade-level or course instruction. In addition to targeted instruction, accommodations provide the student with dysgraphia effective and equitable access to grade-level or course instruction in the general education classroom. Accommodations are not a one size fits all; rather, the impact of dysgraphia on each individual student determines the accommodation. When considering accommodations for the student with dysgraphia, consider the following

- The rate of producing written work
- The volume of the work to be produced
- The complexity of the writing task
- The tools used to produce the written product
- The format of the product (Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children, 2018, p. 5).

Listed below are examples of reasonable classroom accommodations for a student with dysgraphia based on the above considerations

- Allow more time for written tasks including note taking, copying, and tests
- Reduce the length requirements of written assignments
- Provide copies of notes or assign a note taking buddy to assist with filling in missing information
- Allow the student to audio record important assignments and/or take oral tests
- Assist student with developing logical steps to complete a writing assignment instead of all at once
- Allow the use of technology (e.g., speech to text software, etc.)
- Allow the student to use cursive or manuscript, whichever is most legible and efficient • Allow the student to use graph paper for math, or to turn lined paper sideways, to help with lining up columns of numbers
- Offer an alternative to a written project such as an oral report, dramatic presentation, or visual media project

Accommodations are changes to materials, actions, or techniques, including the use of technology, that enable students with disabilities to participate meaningfully in grade-level or course instruction. The use of accommodations occurs primarily during classroom instruction as educators use various instructional strategies to meet the needs of each student. A student may need an accommodation only temporarily 71 while learning a new skill, or a student might require the accommodation throughout the school year or over several years including beyond graduation.

Decisions about which accommodations to use are very individualized and should be made for each student by that student's ARD or Section 504 committee, as appropriate. Students can, and should, play a significant role in choosing and

using accommodations. Students need to know what accommodations are possible, and then, based on knowledge of their personal strengths and limitations, they select and try accommodations that might be useful for them. The more input students have in their own accommodation choices, the more likely it is that they will use and benefit from the accommodations. 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 dysgraphia or provide support for the use of an accommodation should not be limited by whether an accommodation is allowable on a state assessment.

In order to make accommodation decisions for students, educators should have knowledge of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and how a student performs in relation to them. Educators should also collect and analyze data pertaining to the use and effectiveness of accommodations (e.g., assignment/test scores with and without the accommodation, observational reports from parents and teachers) so that informed educational decisions can be made for each student. By analyzing data, an educator can determine if the accommodation becomes inappropriate or unnecessary over time due to the student's changing needs. Likewise, data can confirm for the educator that the student still struggles in certain areas and should continue to use the accommodation.

For more information about accommodations, see At a Glance: Classroom Accommodations for Dysgraphia, available at https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/partnering-with-childs-school/instructionalstrategies/at-a-glance-classroom-accommodations-for-dysgraphia

TECHNOLOGY TOOLS
There are many technology resources to assist a student with dysgraphia. The Technology Integration for Students with Dyslexia online tool (TEC §38.0031) is a resource developed to support school districts and charter schools in making instructional decisions regarding technology that benefit students with dyslexia and related disorders.

<div align="center">
For more information and to view this source, visit
https://www.region10.org/programs/dyslexia/techplan/
</div>