

# **Dyslexia and Related Disorders**



**Valley View Independent School District  
Valley View, Texas**

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## Purpose for a Dyslexia Program

Valley View ISD believes that dyslexic students have talents that may not always be evident in an academic setting. The students' difficulty with academic tasks is not an indicator of their intelligence, but of a difficulty with words and/or language that is not within the students' control. Valley View ISD desires to help such students attain academic success. All pertinent staff shall be made aware of a student's difficulties and shall then help each student to deal with such difficulties effectively. Staff shall also encourage and assist students to develop their talents while helping the students achieve academic success in school.

## Definitions and Characteristics of 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* include disorders similar to or related to dyslexia such as developmental auditory imperception, dysphasia, specific developmental dyslexia, developmental dysgraphia, and developmental spelling disability.

The current definition from the International Dyslexia Association states:

*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).

The primary 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 primary reading/spelling characteristics of dyslexia:

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

The reading/spelling characteristics are the result of difficulty with the following:

- The development of phonological awareness, including segmenting, blending, and manipulating sounds in words;
- Learning the names of letters and their associated sounds;
- Phonological memory (holding information about sounds and words in memory);
- Rapid naming of familiar objects, colors, or letters of the alphabet.

Secondary consequences of dyslexia may include the following:

- Variable difficulty with aspects of reading comprehension;
- Variable difficulty with aspects of written composition;
- 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/ /ă/ /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.

## Section 504

Students with dyslexia and related disorders may qualify as persons with disabilities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This federal law is a civil rights statute designed to protect qualified persons with disabilities from discrimination in any program that receives federal funding. Although sometimes confused with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the law is not an entitlement or funding statute. It does, however, provide certain procedural protections for persons with disabilities to ensure that their needs are met as adequately as are the needs of nondisabled persons. Some students with dyslexia may qualify under IDEA (Special Education); if so, the requirements under IDEA apply. A student with dyslexia may be considered to have a disability under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 if the condition substantially limits the student's learning activities. If a student's dyslexia substantially limits the student's learning, a referral to the Section 504 committee is appropriate.

Some students with less severe learning disabilities or dyslexia may not require special education services and should benefit from specific assistance within regular or remedial programs. If a student's dyslexia substantially limits his/her learning, a referral to Section 504 is appropriate. The Committee or individual should contact the Section 504 Coordinator.

The interface of Section 504 with the dyslexia guidelines established by the State Board of Education of Texas is crucial. Section 504 requires each school to:

- Conduct an unbiased evaluation of a child who has a disability, has a record of such a disability, or is regarded as having a disability.
- Make placement decisions using a team of persons knowledgeable about the student and the assessment data.
- Offer due process procedures for the resolution of disputes.

For more information regarding Section 504 and its interface with the Dyslexia program, please see the attachments area for the booklet "The Dyslexia Handbook" which is produced by the Texas Education Agency.

### Valley View ISD Dyslexia Program Process

There are three steps in the identification of a child with dyslexia: **data gathering, screening, and assessment/evaluation**. Each step is separate but may use data from the other steps. If it is determined that a child does not have dyslexia, all three steps may not be completed. Even after all three steps are completed, it may still be determined that a child does not have dyslexia.

These procedures must be followed:

- Notify parents or guardians of proposal to assess student for dyslexia (§504);

- Inform parents or guardians of their rights under §504;
- Obtain permission from the parent or guardian to assess the student for dyslexia;
- 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).

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

- The student being assessed;
- The reading process;
- Dyslexia and related disorders;
- Dyslexia instruction;
- District or charter school, state, and federal guidelines for assessment;
- The assessments used;
- 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 or charter school staff, and/or parent/guardian;
- 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);
- Data-based documentation of student progress during instruction/intervention;
- The results of administered assessments;
- Language Assessment Proficiency Committee (LPAC) documentation, when applicable;
- All other accumulated data regarding the development of the student's learning and his/her educational needs.

The student's difficulties in the area of reading will reflect one or more of the primary characteristics of dyslexia with unexpectedly low performance for the student's age and educational level in the following areas:

- Reading real words in isolation;
- Decoding nonsense words;
- Reading fluency (both rate and accuracy);
- Written spelling (an isolated difficulty in spelling would not be sufficient to identify dyslexia).

This unexpectedly low reading performance will be the result of a deficit in phonological processing, including the following:

- Phonological awareness;
- Rapid naming;
- Phonological memory.

Many students with dyslexia will have difficulty with the secondary characteristics of dyslexia, including **reading comprehension** and **written composition**.

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

- The student has received conventional (appropriate) instruction;
- The student has an unexpected lack of appropriate academic progress (in the areas of reading and spelling);
- The student has adequate intelligence (an average ability to learn in the absence of print or in other academic areas);
- The student exhibits characteristics associated with dyslexia;
- The student's lack of progress is not due to sociocultural factors such as language differences, irregular attendance, or lack of experiential background.

Based on the above information and guidelines, the committee of knowledgeable persons determines whether the student has dyslexia. If the student has dyslexia, the committee of knowledgeable persons also determines whether the student has a disability under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, §504. Not all students with dyslexia are automatically 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.

### REFERRAL TO PROGRAM

Any teacher or parent may refer a student for evaluation through the VVISD Dyslexia Program by completing the Consideration Form (**Attachment #1**). Once referred, the three steps in the identification (**data gathering, screening, and assessment/evaluation**) will begin.

### DATA GATHERING

Data gathering includes obtaining the **following information**:

- Results of a vision screening;
- Results of a hearing screening;
- Results of any speech and language screening that may have been done through a special education referral process;
- Information regarding student attendance and behavior;
- Academic progress reports (report cards);
- Teacher reports of aptitude, behavior, and problems;
- Information obtained through any parent communication regarding the child's health, behavior, etc.;
- Results of the state student assessment program (TAKS) and/or similar district assessment program;
- Information regarding any testing for limited English proficiency;
- Information regarding whether or not the student has participated in the district's reading improvement program and in what grades;
- Results of any basal reading series assessment;
- Results of phonics assessments or other language arts assessments;

- Results of any intellectual ability tests;
- Results of the K-2 Reading instrument (TPRI); and
- Results of any accommodations provided by classroom teachers.

The **order of forms to be used** and **who completes the forms** is as follows:

1. Consideration Form--Attachment # 1  
Completed by: Person making referral
2. Forms to be received/completed by teachers:  
Dyslexia Information--Attachments # 2, 3  
Teacher Checklist--Attachment # 5  
Sample Request--Attachment # 7
3. Forms to be received/completed by parents:  
If making referral, Consent for Testing—Attachments #2 and 8  
If teacher referral, Consent for Testing—Attachments #2 and 9  
Dyslexia Program Information--Attachment # 10  
Parent Information Form--Attachment # 11
5. Vision, Hearing, and Health History--Attachment # 12  
Completed by: Vision/Hearing test administrator
6. School Information Form--Attachment # 13  
Completed by: School secretary/aide

Any other data needed may be copied and attached to the **Dyslexia Consideration folder and sheet for each child**. All information obtained shall be placed on the **Data Gathering for Dyslexia Program form, Attachment # 14**.

If a parent chooses to not have his/her child screened/evaluated, a **Denial of Screening/Evaluation form (Attachment # 15)** needs to be completed and returned within one week. This Denial form shall be kept in the **Dyslexia Consideration folder** for that child until he/she graduates.

### SCREENING

All students suggested for the Dyslexia program will be screened within **four weeks of the data gathering process being completed**. Screening shall consist of the following:

- Information obtained from the data gathering process and plotted on **Attachments # 14**.
- An **Alphabet Screening (Attachment # 16)**.
- Past teacher checklists obtained from the Dyslexia Consideration folder for each child and a teacher checklist completed by the current classroom teacher and any reading improvement teacher (**Attachment # 5**).

- Samples of student work obtained from the classroom teacher. Samples should include papers of unedited writing, math, and any others the teacher feels is pertinent.

After all above information has been compiled, the district's Dyslexia Committee shall meet and review all data. Copies of **Attachments # 14** should be made for each committee member. The committee shall review the information and determine appropriate action for each student. Actions taken may include:

- further assessment and evaluation for the dyslexia program;
- referral to remediation/reading improvement programs;
- referral to special education programs;
- referral to speech programs;
- obtaining vision/hearing correction;
- retention;
- rearrangement of class assignments;
- tutoring;
- English As A Second Language (ESL) placement;
- summer school;
- "red-flag" students to be considered again during the next school year;
- suggest modifications, additional helps that the classroom teacher can employ; and/or
- continue with current placement.

After the committee has determined the appropriate action for each student, the dyslexia coordinator will send letters to the parents and classroom teachers notifying them of the action taken (**Attachments # 17 and 18**). Parents and teachers may review the information the committee used to determine the action taken and request a meeting with the committee or ask the committee to review their child again for the program. If at any time a student continues to have difficulty making academic progress, he/she may again be considered for placement in the district's dyslexia program. A form regarding the screening of the child will be placed in his/her permanent folder (**Attachment # 19**).

#### ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION

Once a student has been screened and the Committee determines that he/she shows some signs of dyslexia, the student will be further assessed and evaluated. This shall occur within **two weeks of the Committee's Screening meeting**.

A student must be assessed with instruments that measure the following:

- intellectual ability;
- phonological awareness;
- rapid naming;
- letter knowledge (name and associated sound);
- word attack skills and word identification including reading real and nonsense words in isolation (decoding);

- reading comprehension;
- reading fluency (rate and accuracy); and
- written spelling.

A student's math skills may also be assessed as may his/her oral vocabulary, attention, and behavior/emotions. All information will be plotted on the **Student Profile Form (Attachment # 20)**. Information regarding characteristics of dyslexia will also be noted on the **Comparison Chart for Differential Diagnosis (Attachment # 21)**. Copies of the completed profile form and chart should be made for each Dyslexia Committee member for each student being considered.

The Dyslexia Committee will then meet and evaluate the students based on how well they fit the profile of dyslexia based on individual results and the comparison chart. The Committee may also refer to the **Considerations for Confirmation form (Attachment # 22)**. Based on this information, the Committee will make a preliminary diagnosis of "dyslexia" or a preliminary diagnosis of "non-dyslexic".

If the Committee determines that a student has dyslexia, the parents will be notified via **letter (Attachment #23)**. A **letter** regarding the set-up of the program should also be sent (**Attachment #24**) along with a **suggestion sheet and Resources list (Attachments #25 and #30)**. The classroom teachers will also be notified and have access to a **suggestion sheet (Attachment #26)**.

Parents of students not diagnosed as dyslexia will also be notified **by letter (Attachments #17 and 18)**. All students will have a permanent file **form (Attachment #27)** placed in their cumulative folders.

#### Outside Testing

VVUSD will review testing from outside assessors, including tests used to determine the diagnosis and the results. VVUSD is not required to accept or act on the diagnosis, results, or recommendations of the outside testing. However, VVUSD will take the testing into consideration in determining the appropriate action to take regarding a student's diagnosis.

## **REFERRAL FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES**

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, students with severe dyslexia or related disorders 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 a child with a disability within the meaning of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA) (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 Curriculum section or in Chapter IV on Instruction for Students with Dyslexia in "The Dyslexia Handbook" by TEA.**

If a student with dyslexia is referred for special education, districts and charter schools follow the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA). In IDEIA, §1401 (30), dyslexia is considered one of a variety of etiological foundations for "specific learning disability." 34 CFR 300.8(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 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.

## **CURRICULUM**

Once the identification of dyslexia or a related disorder has been made, the school district shall provide for the treatment of a student so identified.

Treatment will include the following components of instruction:

- Phonemic awareness: instruction that enables students to detect, segment, blend, and manipulate sounds in spoken language.
- Graphophonemic knowledge (explicit, synthetic and analytic phonics): instruction which takes advantage of the letter-sound plan in which words which carry meaning are made of sounds, 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.

- Strategy-oriented instruction in the strategies students use for decoding, encoding, word recognition, fluency, and comprehension that students need to become independent readers.
- Explicit direct instruction: instruction which is systematic (structured), sequential, and cumulative, and is organized and presented in a way that follows a logical sequential plan and fits the nature of language (alphabetic principle), with no assumption of prior skills or language knowledge.
- 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 which is directed toward purposeful reading and writing, with an emphasis on comprehension and composition.
- Multisensory: instruction which incorporates the simultaneous use of two or more sensory pathways (auditory, visual, kinesthetic, tactile) during presentations and practice.

Teachers of these classes shall 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.

The number of years required to achieve mastery of the curriculum varies. Some factors that influence the rate of mastery are listed below:

#### STUDENT

- degree of emotional overlay
- degree of severity: mild, moderate, severe
- innate potential
- motivation
- existing knowledge

#### FAMILY

- support and understanding from parents, siblings, others

#### SCHOOL

- instructional grouping: number of students in the group; appropriateness of grouping: homogeneous vs. heterogeneous
- support/accommodations from other teachers
- Teacher: experience teaching the program

## **PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAM**

VVISD's parent education program will consist of an annual dyslexia information meeting that has the following components:

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

In addition, VVISD will post the district handbook on the VVISD website.

## **ACCOMMODATIONS/MODIFICATIONS**

Once a student is diagnosed as dyslexic, it is probable that the student will need continued academic support in order to maintain success until graduation from high school. To address student needs, the dyslexia teacher should be accessible to the district staff. The dyslexia teacher is available to answer questions and concerns related to dyslexia and related disorders. The dyslexia teacher becomes a part of an identified student's interdisciplinary team and is available to assist the student and teachers as needs arise throughout the student's academic career. Some possibilities are found in the Accommodations/Modifications Resource Section in this booklet. **Attachment #31** is available for documentation purposes. This form should be utilized when necessary and given to the student's teachers annually or when changes are made.

## **MONITORING OF THE PROGRAM**

The Valley View ISD Dyslexia Program will be monitored on a yearly basis to check that it is best helping the students of Valley View ISD. The evaluation will be based on the following indicators:

- students' end of year reading grades;
- students' promotion rate to the next grade;
- passing TAKS scores.

If all of these indicators are positive, it will be evidence that the Valley View ISD Dyslexia Program is operating well. If any of these indicators are poor, it will be evidence that the program is not operating well and must improve. At that time, the Committee will need to convene to ascertain what steps need to be taken to improve the program.

## **STUDENT EXITING AND MONITORING PROCEDURES**

No one factor is sufficient to warrant exiting a student from direct Dyslexia services. Dismissal is determined by consensus of the Dyslexia Committee. The

committee considers the following factors when recommending exiting or reduction of dyslexic services:

- The student passed the reading portion of the TAKS, after not previously passing;
- The student has spent a minimum of two years in the program;
- The reevaluation and/or post-testing of student shows student growth to be closer to grade level proficiency standards;
- The student demonstrates self-monitoring/self-correction behaviors as evidenced through informal observation by teacher and/or dyslexia teacher;
- Committee recommendation;
- Parents request in writing that the student exit the program.

If a student has shown substantial progress and the Dyslexia Committee determines the student is ready to be dismissed completely from the program, the committee may recommend monitoring services instead of direct services. When a child is exited from the dyslexia program, a **Dismissal form (Attachment #28)** will be completed and placed in the child's cumulative folder.

Monitoring services: The dyslexia teacher will meet with the student's teacher(s) to ensure the student is continuing to be successful in the classroom without direct intervention from the dyslexia teacher.

Possible monitoring activities can include, but are not limited to:

- Dialoging with the teacher(s) concerning student learning, academic performance, and/or organization within classroom;
- Discussing possible modifications/accommodations with the teacher for the student's continued classroom success;
- Checking with the teacher about the student's grades to ensure the student is passing in reading intensive classes.

## ATTACHMENTS

Along with the forms that are needed to implement the process, several other attachments are included. They are as follows:

- Attachment 30: a resource sheet listing organizations that are involved with dyslexia.
- Accommodations/Modifications Section: a resource for finding appropriate accommodations/modifications for students.
- Parent Packet Section: a copy of the packet given to parents at the annual Dyslexia Meeting, including information on what dyslexia is, the Valley View ISD process, and ways to help their child in school.
- Texas State Law: a copy of the current Texas State Law regarding Dyslexia and Related Disorders.

These packets may be changed based on new information gained and are not static in what they contain. They shall be flexible in the information contained so that the participants can gain the most valuable information.