Utah State Board of Education | Special Education Services

THE DYSLEXIA HANDBOOK: GUIDANCE FOR EFFECTIVE LITERACY INSTRUCTION FOR GENERAL EDUCATION AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

A Utah State Board of Education Technical Assistance Document

January 2025

Sydnee Dickson, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

Leah Voorhies, PhD
Assistant Superintendent of Student Support

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SPECIAL THANKS

A group of individuals with diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise were instrumental in creating the Utah Dyslexia Handbook. We would like to give acknowledgment to the following members of the Utah Dyslexia Handbook task force.

Utah State Board of Education Staff

Ellen Bailey

Holly Bell

Julie Clark

Jennie DeFriez

Marianne Farnsworth

Kim Fratto

LauraLee Gillespie

Maria Hawley

Krista Hotelling

Leah Voorhies

Naomi Watkins

Consultants

Karee Atkinson

Stacy Hurst

Nancy Mather

Louisa Moats

Donell Pons

Stephanie Stollar

Acknowledgments

Pheobe Beacham

Kathy Tenney

Decoding Dyslexia Utah

Utah Literacy Coalition

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INTRODUCTION

The Dyslexia Handbook is meant to offer guidance to teachers, educators, and parents working with any students who are struggling with reading, not just those students who have had a formal diagnosis of dyslexia.

Though called the *Dyslexia Handbook*, the guidance provided here is intended to help improve reading outcomes for all students. While dyslexia is the most common and best validated learning disorder, there are many other reasons that students might struggle with reading. For instance, other difficulties may include learning English as another language or a lack of early exposure to alphabetic principles, etc. As Dr. Sally Shaywitz, a leading expert on reading and dyslexia, explains in *Overcoming Dyslexia*, "Many children whom an arbitrary cutoff does not 'qualify' as dyslexic might still require and benefit from help in reading" (p. 28). The good news is that the evidence-based interventions necessary for students with dyslexia can also improve reading outcomes for all students with reading challenges. All students can become better at reading through early screening for reading difficulties and by providing effective literacy instruction in a general education classroom.

The Dyslexia Handbook has been designed using evidence-based information to assist educators, administrators, parents, and guardians in implementing effective literacy instruction and services in the general education classroom. These practices are intended for both students with dyslexia as well as any student who is struggling with reading.

The goal of the Dyslexia Handbook is to ensure that students with dyslexia, as well as any student facing reading challenges, have access to equal educational opportunities, thereby improving student academic outcomes and well-being. This handbook focuses on effective literacy instruction for all in addition to offering information about dyslexia and its characteristics, eligibility determination for special education services, interventions and assessments, self-advocacy, and other related resources.

DYSLEXIA AND OTHER READING CHALLENGES

Reading is an essential skill for both academic and life-long success. In the digital age, this has become more true than ever as vast amounts of information are produced and shared online every day. Successfully navigating digital spaces, as well as school, work, and social engagements, depends on students having independent reading skills. For students with dyslexia and students who struggle with reading, these spaces can present a particular set of challenges. Their struggle to successfully engage in these spaces will impact not only their self-esteem and success in school but also their future employment and beyond. Without proper instruction and resources, students with dyslexia and those who struggle with reading may be vulnerable to school failure and may face an increased likelihood of unemployment.

WHAT ARE READING CHALLENGES?

Though dyslexia is one of the most common reading challenges and one of the best-validated learning disorders, others can impact students' reading skills. David A. Kilpatrick notes that according to the simple view of reading, reading comprehension—which is the overriding goal of reading—can be divided into two broad skills: word-level reading and language comprehension (2015). So, while reading challenges are complex, they are usually distinguished either as originating in one of these two skills: either a word recognition challenge or a language comprehension disorder. Certain students might have both or a mix of the two, as well as co-existing challenges due to other disorders, such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (see the Co-Existing Disabilities and Disorders section for more information).

Addressing these challenges is central to providing students the support they need to be successful readers. As Kilpatrick explains, the simple view of reading, i.e. reading comprehension through the development of word-level reading skills and language comprehension, has:

> . . . the potential of driving our Tier 1 instruction. Doing so would ensure that each of the key components involved in learning to read would receive

> proper instructional attention. It should also drive our assessments of children with reading difficulties. This would allow us to pinpoint the reason why a student struggles. Tier 2 and 3 instruction/intervention can focus on addressing the specific components that are compromising the student's reading development (p. 77)

WHAT IS DYSLEXIA?

As stated above, dyslexia is one of the most common reading challenges. It is a language-based condition, not a vision-based condition. Like other disorders, dyslexia occurs on a continuum. One person might have mild dyslexia, and another may have profound dyslexia. Today's definitions of dyslexia are based on research and science. According to the International Dyslexia Association Board of Directors (2002):

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

This definition is widely used throughout the world. However, the Utah Code Annotated (UCA) states:

> Dyslexia means a specific *learning disorder* that is neurological in origin and characterized by difficulties with accurate or fluent word recognition and poor spelling and decoding abilities, and typically results 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. (Utah Code 53E-4-307).

Please note, how the use of the word disability has been replaced with the word disorder in the UCA.

It is significant that the UCA distinguishes dyslexia as a disorder rather than a disability because **not all students with dyslexia will qualify for special**

education services. Therefore, **all educators should** be aware of and prepared to **instruct students with dyslexia in general education classrooms.**

Characteristics of Dyslexia

Students with dyslexia are unique individuals with personal strengths and weaknesses. However, they may share common characteristics such as a lack of phonological awareness (difficulty manipulating spoken parts of words and language), slow acquisition of letter names and sounds, poor spelling, and poor ability to rhyme. Phonemic awareness (difficulty manipulating individual sounds or phonemes) is necessary for reading, and reading, in turn, improves phonemic awareness even further. The 30 percent of students who still cannot separate the sounds in spoken words after a year of reading instruction reflect the 20 to 30 percent of students who go on to experience dyslexia (Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2020, *Overcoming Dyslexia*, p. 54). A family history of dyslexia or reading failure is often cited as a significant risk factor for students with dyslexia. However, genetic risk factors may be more complex than previously thought.

That does not mean that there is no genetic influence in dyslexia but rather that the influences are complex (perhaps, many, many genes, each contributing a small fraction of risk) and/or that other, non-genetic contributions play an important role (Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2020 *Overcoming Dyslexia,* p. 119).

In general, students with dyslexia perform poorly on measures of phonological processing, decoding words, and acquiring a sufficient bank of sight words. Such difficulties lead to a slow reading rate, inaccurate word reading, inadequate reading comprehension, and difficulty with written and/or spoken language. In these areas, individuals with dyslexia may present as mild, moderate, or severe. According to the *New Jersey Dyslexia Handbook* (2017), other potential indicators among students with dyslexia may include:

- Unexpected reading difficulties given the student's chronological age, educational opportunities, or intellectual abilities and are not due to a lack of intelligence
- Reading difficulties that significantly interfere with academic achievement or activities of daily living

- Learning challenges that begin during the school-age years but may not manifest until the demands of the affected academic skills exceed the student's coping abilities
- Secondary complications, including difficulties comprehending text and significantly less time spent reading, which may interfere with the development of vocabulary and background knowledge

The following links provide more information about signs and characteristics of dyslexia (see Appendix B for more resources):

- The Yale Center for Dyslexia & Creativity: Signs of Dyslexia
- The Minnesota Department of Education: Teacher Checklist for Characteristics of Dyslexia

The word "dyslexia" has been used and misused for many years. To have an informed discussion about dyslexia and how to address it, it is important to first identify some common myths associated with dyslexia. Examples of some of the common myths are found in Appendix D and the University of Florida Literacy Institute's Dyslexia Myths and Facts.

Dyslexia and Students Learning English

Dyslexia is not specific to the English language. People throughout the world study it and it exists in all languages, although the symptoms may vary depending on the written system of the language (Mather & Wendling, 2024; Pugh & Verhoeven, 2018). Students who are learning English are a large and fast-growing student demographic in public schools throughout the United States (NCES, 2023). Students who do not speak English as their first language are often referred to as students who are English Learners (EL) or multilingual learners (ML), which emphasizes the student's unique assets (WIDA, 2024), and some of these students have dyslexia. If a student with limited English proficiency struggles academically, it can be challenging to differentiate if language proficiency is interfering with academic growth or masking a learning disorder, adding complexity to the identification process (Solari et al., 2014). Longitudinal and cross-sectional data indicate that students who are both EL and LD have lower reading proficiency in the secondary grades and are at a higher risk of being placed in special education and dropping out of school when compared to their monolingual peers (Solari et al., 2014; Cho et al., 2021).

The longer students who are learning English and have learning disabilities go without services, "the farther these students can get behind their peers. This can result in the student suffering emotionally and socially, and the student potentially developing an aversion to school and learning" (Rodriguez & Rodrigues, 2017, p. 102). A struggling student who is learning English, whether a student with dyslexia or not, benefits from Structured Literacy[1] instruction that includes explicit instruction, guided practice, peer practice, assessment of content learning, and building background knowledge to support the four domains of language, including listening, speaking, reading and writing (for more information see the WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework).

Explicit instruction for students who are learning English should include sensory supports such as pictures, real-life objects, and models; graphic supports, which may include charts, diagrams, and graphic organizers; and interactive supports such as pairing with partners, small groups, cooperative group structures, and adult prompting and modeling (WIDA, 2020). This approach to teaching reading has been shown to benefit all students. Instruction and academic interventions for students who are learning English require early, explicit, and intensive instruction in phonological awareness and phonics.

Before determining if a student who is learning English is eligible for special education, it is important that pre-referral evidence-based interventions are frequent and consistent and that they target the gaps in the student's missing knowledge and skills. Also, regular progress monitoring data should be collected to determine a student's success or failure to respond to sequential tiers of evidence-based instruction and intervention. Students who fail to respond will exhibit little or no progress after receiving frequent research-based interventions (Barrera, 2006). Eligibility decisions can only be made when sufficient data has been collected to point out a student's strengths and areas of challenge.

The IEP team should be prepared to accurately and appropriately assess and intervene with culturally diverse students, using nondiscriminatory assessments and practices to distinguish between second language development and learning disabilities. An appropriately trained school psychologist may need to assess language proficiencies in both the native and secondary language. Classroom observations are also important in determining whether a student has been given

[1] Structured Literacy is a trademarked

ample opportunities to learn in a culturally responsive classroom environment. After students who are learning English are identified as having a learning disability, it is essential to build their vocabulary as a foundation of their literacy instruction and reading interventions (Cardenas-Hagen, 2018).

GENERAL EDUCATION AND DYSLEXIA

EDUCATOR KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE STANDARDS

There is a consensus among researchers that the best way to address the negative effects of reading challenges is through providing effective instruction with sufficient intensity. The International Dyslexia Association has developed Knowledge and Practice Standards for teachers of reading, which explains what teachers should know and do to adequately teach students reading skills. Teachers responsible for teaching reading to students with dyslexia and other reading difficulties need supervised practicum experiences to become proficient with the content and methods in these standards.

To encourage educators to receive this type of professional development, the state of Utah offers a Literacy Specialist K-12 Endorsement and a Secondary Literacy Interventionist Endorsement.

When teachers receive training and hands-on practice focused on intervening with students with reading challenges, it enables them to understand reading development and why evidence-based instructional practices are beneficial to students (Porche, Pallante, & Snow, 2012). Researchers have also found that paraprofessionals, when adequately trained and supported, can be instrumental in improving young students' reading abilities (Samson, Hines, & Li, 2015).

EFFECTIVE LITERACY INSTRUCTION

Not every student comes to school prepared to read. Many students may not have received prior exposure to reading concepts and others may have language-based learning challenges that will complicate the process of reading. Reading research indicates that every student should be taught using evidence-based instructional practices. The earlier a student begins the reading process, the better the reading outcomes (Kilpatrick, 2015).

Best practice in reading is achieved by teaching the essential component areas through Structured Literacy that ensures concepts are being taught systematically (in a well-designed order) and cumulatively (building on each other) with opportunities for practice using a variety of text. A successful reading program acknowledges that teaching students to read is a process.

According to Reid Lyon (1998) of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHHD), reading is the major foundational skill for all school-based learning and without it, the chances for academic or occupational success are limited. "When children do not learn to read, their general knowledge, their spelling and writing abilities, and their vocabulary development suffer in kind" (U. S. Department of Education, 1998, p. 3).

Reading allows students to extract meaning from print but is dependent on the ability to perceive and discriminate symbols and associate them with speech sounds and the structure of language. Students with dyslexia who need support in these areas of literacy need an explicit, direct, systematic, cumulative approach to reading instruction to overcome these deficits.

It is critical to remember that effective literacy instruction occurs in the general education classroom given that not all students with dyslexia will qualify to receive special education services.

COMPONENT AREAS

The National Reading Panel (2000) identified **five component areas of reading** that must be taught, sometimes referred to as the Big 5. These are:

- **Phonemic Awareness**—The ability to manipulate phonemes within words by isolating sounds and blending them

- **Phonics**—The relationship between phonemes and printed letters and the use of this knowledge to read and spell
- **Fluency**—The effortless reading of text with adequate rate, accuracy, and expression to support comprehension
- **Vocabulary**—The knowledge of words and their meanings
- **Comprehension**—The ability to extract and construct meaning from text

Additionally, effective writing instruction (which includes spelling instruction) and oral language practice are essential components of reading instruction and should be integrated throughout the other component areas.

- **Writing**—The ability to communicate knowledge, ideas, and feelings in written form (including spelling and handwriting)
- **Oral Language**—The spoken language used to express knowledge, ideas, and feelings. Oral language should be integrated into the other six component areas of literacy

These component areas should not be taught in isolation but woven throughout daily literacy instructional cycles. Daily literacy instructional cycles work to develop the two broad skills associated with reading: **language comprehension** and **word recognition**. Within these two domains are the specific skills that students need to learn to achieve reading proficiency. These skills enable an understanding of how proficient readers develop, as well as how the development of these skills may differ for students with reading challenges.

Hollis Scarborough (2001), a reading research and developmental psychologist, illustrated how these skills, or strands, intertwine to create skilled reading in the "Scarborough Reading Rope" (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Scarborough Reading Rope

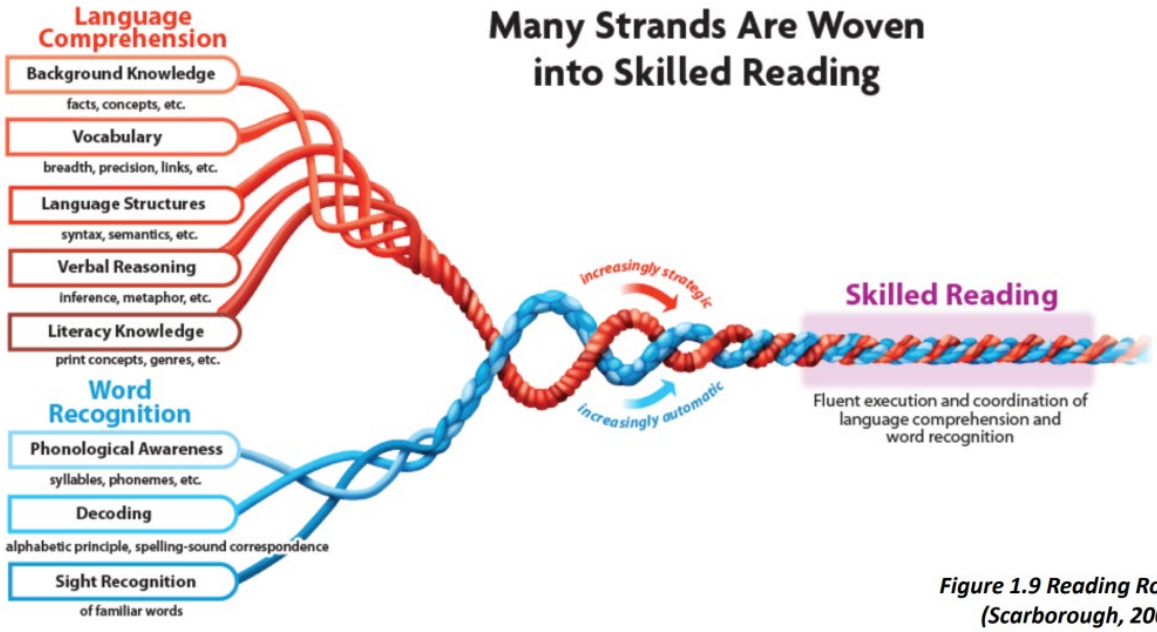


Figure 1.9 Reading Rope (Scarborough, 2001)

The figure above depicts the two domains and their component skills as separate strands. On the language comprehension side (depicted as red strands), there are five skills:

- Background Knowledge (facts, concepts, etc.)
- Vocabulary (breadth, precision, links, etc.)
- Language Structures (syntax, semantics, etc.)
- Verbal Reasoning (inference, metaphor, etc.)
- Literacy Knowledge (print concepts, genres, etc.)

As these skills develop into a single unified language comprehension strand, they become increasingly strategic.

On the word recognition side (depicted as blue strands), there are three skills:

- Phonological Awareness (syllables, phonemes, etc.)
- Decoding (alphabetic principle, spelling sound correspondence)
- Sight Recognition (of familiar words)

As these skills develop into a single unified word recognition strand, they become increasingly automatic.

These two strands are woven together into **skilled reading**, which is the fluent execution and coordination of both language Comprehension and word Recognition.

For more information regarding the essential skills to assess when reading challenges are identified, see the Essential Reading Skills Chart in Appendix H.

Structured Literacy

Many students with dyslexia are not determined eligible for special education services and will receive literacy instruction in the general education classroom. Therefore, the focus in Utah schools should be on early intervention, which requires implementing effective screening, diagnostic assessment, reading instruction, and progress monitoring using a Structured Literacy approach. The term Structured Literacy was chosen and adopted by the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) Board of Directors to unify the methods of reading instruction that conform to IDA's *Knowledge and Practice Standards*. It is an umbrella term used to describe programs and methods that teach reading in the same way.

Structured Literacy is an explicit, direct, systematic, cumulative, and diagnostic approach to teaching reading. Effective approaches to teaching reading are defined through specific crucial elements, including phonology, sound syllable association (phonics), morphology, syntax, and semantics (Cowen, 2016). According to Mather and Wendling (2024):

> These types of approaches teach students how oral language consists of specific patterns of speech sounds (phonology); how language is represented in writing, including the spelling patterns and the rules for punctuation and capitalization (orthography); how word parts are combined to form words (morphology); the rule system that underlies the structure of sentences (syntax); the study of word and phrase meanings (semantics); and the organization of spoken and written discourse. (p. 132)

For further information about Structured Literacy, see Structured Literacy Instruction: The Basics.

Principles in Teaching Structured Literacy

Cowen (2016) defines the principles that guide how Structured Literacy's elements are taught. These principles include:

- **Systematic and Cumulative:** Structured Literacy instruction is systematic and cumulative. Systematic means that the organization of material follows the logical order of the language. The sequence must begin with the easiest and most basic concepts and elements and progress methodically to more difficult concepts and elements. Cumulative means each step must be based on concepts previously learned.
- **Explicit Instruction:** Structured Literacy instruction requires the deliberate teaching of all concepts with continuous student-teacher interaction. It is not assumed that students will naturally deduce these concepts on their own.
- **Diagnostic Teaching:** The teacher must be adept at individualized instruction. That is, instruction that meets a student's needs. The instruction is based on careful and continuous assessment, both informally (i.e., observation) and formally (i.e., with standardized measures). The content presented must be mastered to the degree of automaticity. Automaticity is critical to freeing all the student's attention and cognitive resources for comprehension and expression.

To learn more about any of the components of Structured Literacy and for tools educators can use in their classrooms, see Appendix I.

As stated above, it is critical that any program used be implemented with fidelity.

Spelling and Written Language

Spelling is a complex process for students with dyslexia and other reading difficulties. Students with reading challenges do not benefit from memorizing lists of words for weekly spelling tests, as this process relies on rote memorization and visual recall. Instead, students with reading difficulties should be taught using the factors governing spelling.

The action of writing words is related to sound sequences, letter patterns, and morphemes (base words and affixes). Spelling involves knowledge about the

sounds of the language, the most frequent and reliable letter patterns, and rules of English orthography, morphology, and word origins.

The various Structured Literacy teaching methods use slightly different approaches to spelling instruction. A Structured Literacy approach to spelling should teach students the common orthographic patterns of English (graphemes) as well as the use of affixes and spelling rules, including etymology, morphology, and orthography. Structured literacy approaches can be taught to young students.

There are several important accommodations that can be made when teaching spelling to students with dyslexia (Washinton Branch of the International Dyslexia Association, 2011, p. 39):

- Focus on one or two spelling combinations of a typical sound, for example, “oy” and “oi” for the /oy/ sound, with a focus on any guiding principles associated with letter usage (e.g., “oy” is typically spelling for the /oi/ sound at the end of the word)
- Limit the number of words to five to ten, depending on the student
- Use an instructional routine that includes asking students to say the word multiple times with attention to listening to the sounds in sequence, thinking about each vowel sound in the word and the letter(s) that represent that sound, and then writing the letters to represent the word given

The IDA gives the following recommendations when modifying spelling tasks for students with dyslexia (2011):

- Focus primarily on content with written work
- Limit rewrites to a reasonable amount
- Provide proofreading assistance
- Encourage students to dictate their thoughts before writing and giving them the spellings of key content words to use in writing
- Allow students in intermediate grades and higher to type exams and papers or to use a voice-translation device on a computer
- Encourage students to hand in early drafts of research papers and essays to allow for revision before grading

TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

"Evidence from many successful schools and from multiple research studies shows that a multi-tiered approach involving high-quality classroom instruction alone and in combination with targeted, small-group interventions can substantially reduce the proportion of students who struggle to read" (Lyon et al., 2004).

It is imperative that students with reading challenges are identified early and receive effective instruction, interventions, and appropriate accommodations. Therefore, providing a multi-tiered system of supports for students with reading challenges is critical for ensuring that students experience success in school and life.

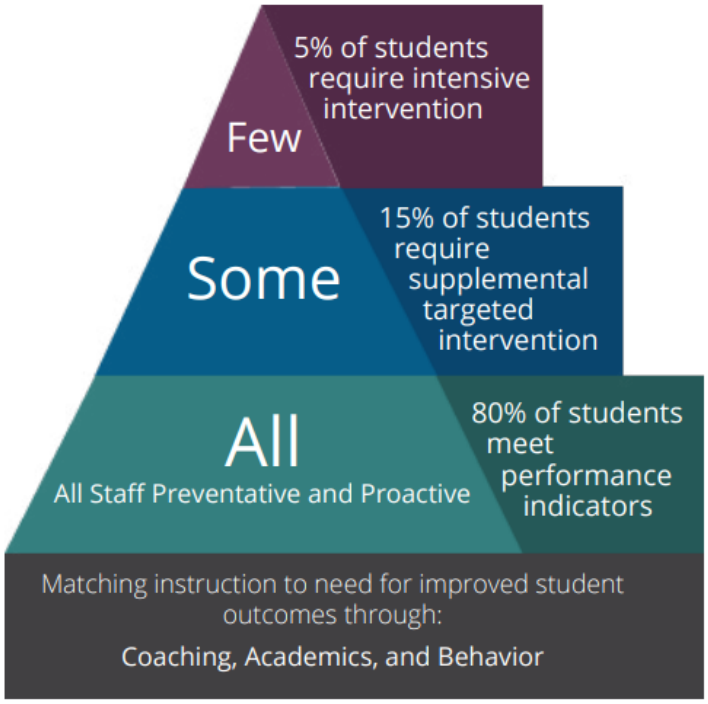
Tiered Reading Instruction in an MTSS Framework

Students with dyslexia have diverse needs and demonstrate characteristics across a broad spectrum of learning. Some students with dyslexia are successful with minimal support and accommodations in the classroom, while some need additional intervention provided through general education, and others need intensive intervention provided through the general education setting and/or special education.

A multi-tiered system of supports and instruction is helpful in creating a plan. Students with dyslexia also benefit from an open environment where speech pathologists, reading specialists, general education teachers, reading paraprofessionals, and administrators have many opportunities to discuss students with reading challenges and share ideas and resources. Because schools have a wealth of knowledge and expertise, frequent collaborative meetings are an invaluable way to plan for staff sourcing and support.

Utah's P-12 Literacy Framework (USBE 2024) states that a multi-tiered system of supports for literacy includes the following:

Figure 2: Multi-Tiered System of Supports



TIER 1: CORE INSTRUCTION FOR ALL STUDENTS

- Educators provide whole group instruction to all students, including students with disabilities and multilingual learners, using grade level standards and content while providing appropriate scaffolding and customized support as needed
- Educators use small group instruction and differentiate instruction to accelerate or enhance learning based on student needs and interests
- Educators use evidence-informed curriculum

Dosage, Frequency, and Duration

- 120 minutes (about 2 hours) daily, including writing

Instructional Delivery

- Explicit systematic instruction is provided in both whole group and small group settings with the classroom teacher and other supporting personnel

Assessment

- Benchmark Assessment: Acadience Reading
- Progress Monitoring: As needed

Additional Notes

- If Tier 1 Core instruction is effective, 80% of students are proficient by the end of the school year
- Depending on the school population, the approximate time of literacy (120 minutes) may not be sufficient

Tier 2: Students Identified as Having Some Risk

- Students who are not making adequate progress with Tier 1 instruction and have demonstrated below and/or well-below benchmark on Acadience Reading
- Educators administer an Early Literacy Diagnostic Assessments and Progress Monitoring to identify the student's literacy skill area(s) of need
- When a student has three consecutive progress-monitoring scores in the "At or Above" benchmark category and is making "Above Typical" or "Well Above Typical" progress, supports can be faded

Dosage, Frequency, and Duration

- 15-60 minutes per session for a minimum of 10-14 weeks are recommended
- Three to five instructional sessions per week is recommended
- If necessary, sessions may need to increase to twice daily if student response is slower than desired

Instructional Delivery

- The group size recommendation is a teacher to student ratio of 1:5
- Instruction may be provided by a classroom teacher, reading specialist, specifically trained paraprofessionals, or other specifically trained support personnel
- **Instruction should be:**
    - Explicit
    - Aligned to students identified literacy skill needs
    - Offer timely feedback
    - Provide multiple examples
    - Provide ample independent practice for students

- Instruction requires the use of evidence-based instructional strategies and/or curriculum

Assessment

- Administering a diagnostic assessment is necessary
- Conducting progress monitoring every two to four weeks, as necessary

Additional Note

- Tier 2 instruction should be provided in addition to Tier 1 instruction

Tier 3: Students Identified as Having a High-Risk

- Students not making adequate progress with Tier 1 instruction and have demonstrated below and/or well-below benchmark on Acadience Reading assessment
- Students are given Early Literacy Diagnostic Assessments and Progress to identify their literacy skill area(s) of need
- Students receiving Tier 3 interventions can be evaluated for high-risk when they have three consecutive progress monitoring scores in the "at" or "above" benchmark categories and are making "above" or "well above" typical progress

Dosage, Frequency, and Duration

- 15-60 minutes per session for a minimum of 10-14 weeks is recommended
- Three to five instructional sessions per week is recommended
- If necessary, sessions may need to increase to twice daily if student response is slower than desired

Instructional Delivery

- The group size recommendation is a teacher to student ratio of 1:3.
- In some cases, the teacher to student ratio may need to be 1:1
- Instruction may be provided by a classroom teacher, reading specialist, specifically trained paraprofessional, or other specifically trained support personnel
- **Instruction should be:**
    - Explicit
    - Aligned to students identified literacy skill needs

    - Offer timely feedback
    - Provide multiple examples
    - Provide ample student independent practice
- Instruction should use evidence-based instructional strategies and/or curriculum

Assessment

- Administering a diagnostic assessment is necessary
- Conducting progress monitoring every one to two weeks is necessary and students may need survey-level (out of grade-level) progress monitoring

Additional Notes

- Tier 3 instruction should be provided in addition to Tier 1 instruction
- The student may not need to receive Tier 2 prior to Tier 3
- Tier 3 instruction should be provided to and is not solely available to students also receiving special education services

For more information on diagnostic assessments and progress monitoring, see USBE's list of Early Literacy Diagnostic Assessments and Progress Monitoring.

Parents and educators should be aware of the literacy requirements for their students. For more information see the Utah State Standards for English Language Arts.

CREATING SYSTEMS OF INTERVENTION

One vehicle for improving services for students with reading challenges is by using School Community Councils (SCCs) to review data and consider the academic areas most in need of improvement. SCCs consist of parents, the school principal, and elected school employees. Parents can help bring schools and communities together to create systems of intervention for students with reading challenges. Funds can be allocated to address specific needs of students with reading challenges such as the purchase, adoption, and training needed to implement Tier 2 and Tier 3 evidence-based structured literacy interventions. For more information regarding SCCs, parents can contact their local education agency.

The Utah State Legislature has allocated the use of Trust Land funds for School Community Councils (SCC) to "improve the education of students" (53G-7-1202). SCCs can allocate Trust Land funds to purchase reading interventions for Tier 2 and Tier 3 instruction as well as pay to train educators and paraprofessionals on proper implementation. Please use this handbook to inform these conversations.

INTERVENTIONS

When discussing interventions, it is critical that interventionists clearly understand the expected grade-level competencies to ensure that the intervention plan for the student with reading challenges is addressing the appropriate reading areas. Students with reading challenges can become competent readers with appropriate intervention and need to make adequate progress to allow them to catch up with their peers.

Students with characteristics of dyslexia who have not made progress in grade-level core instruction should receive interventions that address the specific phonological deficits identified through targeted assessments. If a student is not successful with interventions provided through general education, the student may be referred for an evaluation to consider eligibility for special education services, as this may indicate a possible specific learning disability (SLD).

When a student with dyslexia engages in a multi-tiered intervention process and parents believe their child has special education needs, they have the right to request an evaluation for special education services. Parents have the right to deny a special education evaluation for their child as well. Although the USBE list is a useful guide, it is not meant to be a substitute for researching and understanding a school-wide literacy curriculum. As Kilpatrick (2015) states in *Essentials of Assessing, Preventing, and Overcoming Reading Difficulties*, "We have ample research to show that by making changes in our instructional approaches, we can prevent many reading difficulties as well as substantially accelerate the reading growth of most students with reading difficulties" (p. 23).

When a student score is below or well below benchmark for more than one assessment period (beginning, mid, or end of the year), teachers should schedule a time with the school team and parents to discuss interventions that are being used or will be used to support the student.

Universal Screening Process for Reading Disorders

It is the responsibility of local education agencies (LEAs) to implement effective universal screening processes and use the information they collect to make important determinations about dyslexia, i.e., specific accommodations and interventions for students at-risk for dyslexia. Multiple data sources are required to identify individual student strengths and areas of need. This data will provide LEAs with accurate information to make informed decisions about skill-specific interventions, remediation, reteaching, and enrichment for each student. Understanding how to interpret assessments, such as Acadience Reading, is a best practice for identifying reading failure. Allowing students to maintain a yellow or red status in Acadience Reading, without implementing a tiered plan for reading intervention with ongoing assessments to monitor adequate progress, is not best practice.

The universal screening process for reading disorders is conducted in general education classrooms. This process is administered by LEAs and proceeds along the following steps for grades K-12:

- **Step One:** LEAs should administer a nationally normed, skills-based, universal screener as part of the universal screening process

    - Acadience Reading is an example of this type of screening for Utah students (see USBE's list of Early Literacy Diagnostic Assessments and Progress Monitoring)
- **Step Two:** School teams should consider the results of the skills-based universal screener compared to other classroom-based assessments
    - These may include standards-based assessments, grades, formative assessments, summative assessments, classroom performance, teacher observations, and other relevant information such as medical or family history
- **Step Three:** Students identified as at-risk based on multiple sources of data are to be administered diagnostic assessments to determine each individual student's intervention needs
    - Diagnostic assessments are survey-level assessments for reading and must explicitly measure characteristics of dyslexia including phonemic and phonological awareness, sound symbol recognition, alphabet knowledge, decoding skills, rapid naming, and encoding skills

Please Note: Diagnostic testing identifies areas of weakness in implementing an educational intervention plan and should not be confused with a medical diagnosis. The Utah State Board of Education Special Education Rules (2023) (USBE) state, "The screening of students by a teacher or specialist to determine appropriate instructional strategies for curriculum implementation shall not be considered to be an evaluation for eligibility for special education and related services. Results of screenings should be considered by the LEA for Child Find purposes" (p.46).

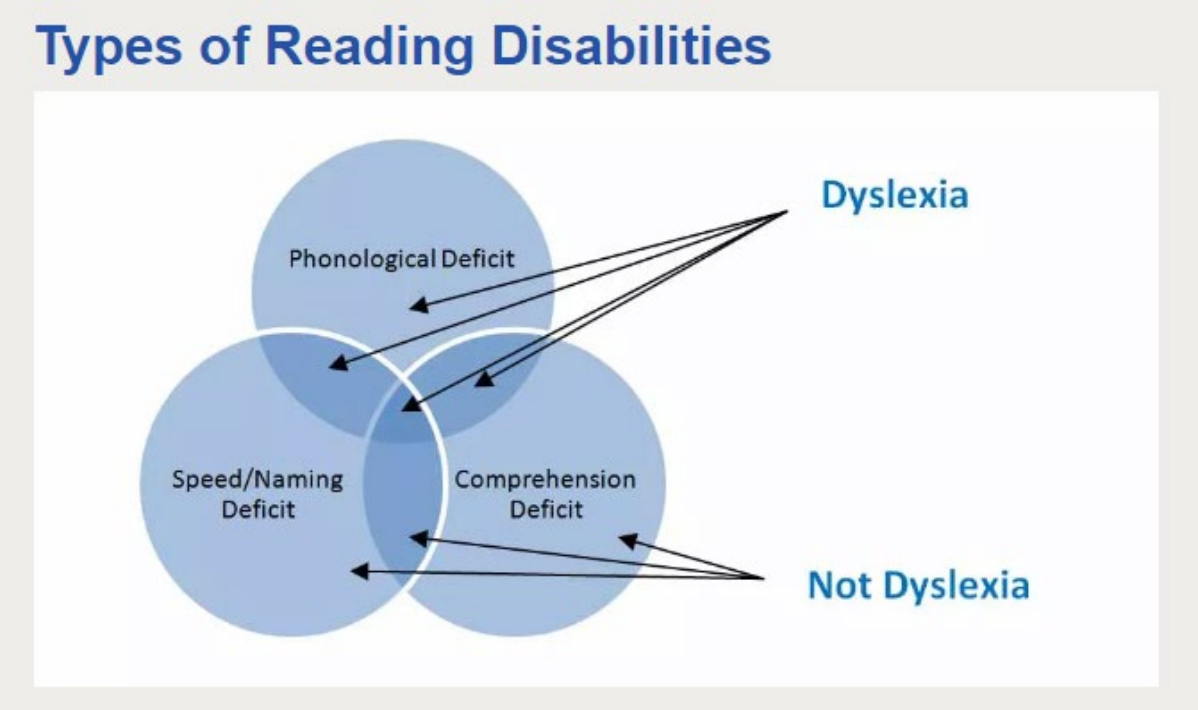
Identifying Students at Risk for Dyslexia

The steps for using assessments in secondary settings rely on available student assessment data to make informed decisions on instructional programming. The following chart explains the best practice procedures when identifying students at risk for having dyslexia and/or reading failure in the secondary educational setting. Each step in the assessment process should be carefully considered by a team of qualified practitioners. The process of administering the tests, collecting the results, and interpreting the results requires highly trained personnel to successfully implement and monitor this process.

For more information, see: Supporting Adolescent Readers: A Guide for Secondary Educators.

Experts in reading disabilities often refer to students as having deficits in three distinct areas, which may overlap in individuals (see Figure 2 below). These deficit areas are phonological processing, rapid naming, and/or comprehension.

Figure 3: Types of Reading Disabilities (Source The Reading Well, 2024)



These areas of deficit play an essential role in determining what challenges might be hindering a student's access to the general education curriculum and in need of

Tier 2 or 3 reading interventions. This, in turn, may lead to discussions about whether a student needs specially designed instruction in reading to access the core content and gain greater access to the general education curriculum, and thus eligible for special education.

Below is a more detailed explanation of each area of deficit to provide a more thorough understanding of the role these play in analyzing and determining students' risk for reading failures or dyslexia:

- **Phonological Awareness Deficit:** Some students struggle to process the sound structure of language (e.g., rhyming, identifying number of sounds in a word), which contributes to difficulties with connecting letters and sounds. Students with dyslexia who have phonological processing deficits are

estimated to make up approximately 70–80% of students with reading disabilities (Moats & Tolman, 2009).

- **Rapid Naming Deficit:** Some students are unable to automatically or rapidly process visual stimuli (e.g., letters) on a page, resulting in slow, laborious, reprocessing deficit and rapid naming deficit. These students are referred to as having a "double deficit" in word recognition. This is more difficult to remediate than students with a "single deficit" in phonological processing or rapid naming.
- **Comprehension Deficit:** Some students are characterized as having comprehension deficits even though they can read words accurately and quickly. They have difficulty comprehending the meaning of passages due to learning difficulties affecting abstract reasoning and logical thinking. Although some students with dyslexia also display comprehension deficits, this is typically a secondary consequence of phonological processing deficits.

The presence of these common characteristics should be the impetus for early identification and interventions for students at risk for reading failure or dyslexia. To provide appropriate interventions, educators should use progress monitoring data or results from diagnostic testing that outline students' specific areas of weakness or characteristics of dyslexia.

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES AND DYSLEXIA

Students with dyslexia are best served when teams of well-informed educators and parents work together to address identification, remediation, and accommodations. Therefore, it is important to be familiar with both special education and disability laws that provide support and protection and an understanding of how these laws relate to students with dyslexia. Students with dyslexia may qualify for special education and be more appropriately served on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) as outlined in this section.

DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY

Dyslexia is a disorder that falls within the Specific Learning Disability (SLD) category in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004). Students who have dyslexia may also qualify under other IDEA categories, such as speech or language impairment (SLI) or Other Health Impaired (OHI). Utah uses the Federal definition that defines SLD as:

> 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 the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia, that affects the student's educational performance. Specific learning disability does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of intellectual disability, of emotional behavioral disability, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage (34 CFR § 300.8(c)(10); USBE SpEd Rule II.J.11.a.).

Students are typically referred for evaluations to determine if an educational disability is present after interventions in the identified area of need have not been successful in closing the academic achievement gap. Parents, teachers, or anyone else who notices the student needs support can request an educational evaluation from the local education agency (LEA) to determine if the student qualifies for services under IDEA. A student does not need to complete a certain number of

intervention cycles or spend a specific amount of time in an intervention cycle before a referral can be made to determine if the student is eligible to receive special education services and supports. The LEA is required to have parental consent to conduct an evaluation (34 CFR § 300.300 and 300.301; USBE SpEd Rules II.B. and II.C.).

At the comprehensive evaluation's completion, a summary of the result is presented to a group of qualified professionals, including the parent or student. Typically, this group includes the general education teacher, the special education teacher, the parent(s), an adult student, an LEA representative, and a professional trained to interpret the results of formal and informal assessments. Data gathered during the intervention period and the evaluation process is used in the determination of eligibility (34 CFR § 300.306; USBE SpEd Rules II.I.).

Determination of eligibility requires the group to determine that the student has a disability using evaluation and eligibility criteria outlined in special education rules and evidence of the educational needs of the student (34 CFR § 300.306; USBE SpEd Rules II.I.).

It is important to note that a diagnosis of a disability is not necessary to receive services under IDEA. Equally, a diagnosis does not ensure eligibility under IDEA. Thus, not every student with a diagnosis of dyslexia or characteristics of dyslexia will qualify for services under IDEA.

If a student is found eligible under IDEA, an IEP will be developed by a team including the general education teacher, special education teacher, the parent(s) or student who is an adult, and the LEA representative.

Many parents of students with dyslexia have additional questions related to the IEP process. The Utah Parent Center is an excellent resource to help parents navigate questions related to the IEP process.

For more information regarding special education and related services, refer to the Utah Special Education Rules (2023).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS BY FAMILIES

How do I request testing/assessment/evaluation for special education services?

It is most efficient to request an evaluation for eligibility under IDEA in writing, but it is not required. A request can be given to a principal/director or teacher. A parent should receive a response from the school/LEA in a reasonable amount of time. Once the LEA has received consent for evaluation from the parent(s)/guardian(s), the evaluation should be completed within forty-five school days.

Can schools diagnose dyslexia?

School evaluations determine if a student is eligible for special educational services under one of the thirteen disability categories in the IDEA. Dyslexia is included in the category of Specific Learning Disability (SLD) and will be listed on a student's IEP as SLD. If a parent or caregiver provides an outside diagnosis from a trained neuropsychologist or psychologist in the state of Utah, that information may be considered in the evaluation process. But schools do not "diagnose" dyslexia.

What if I disagree with the evaluation results or team decisions?

IDEA has Procedural Safeguards in place to protect the rights of students and parents. If parents disagree with the results of the evaluation, they may submit a written request for an independent educational evaluation (IEE) at the LEA's expense. An LEA agreeing to an IEE will provide information about where an IEE can be obtained and provide the criteria applicable for IEEs. For more information regarding student and parental rights, refer to the USBE's Procedural Safeguards Notice.

Can assistive technology be part of an IEP for SLD?

Yes, but whether assistive technology is included depends on a determination made by the IEP team. assessment can be part of an IEP. LEAs often have an assistive technology specialist or team who can administer an assessment, the team determines it is needed. Necessary assistive technology for both classroom instruction and student assessment should be listed in the IEP. Possible assistive technology accommodations may include the use of speech-to-text, text-to-speech, and audio books. For more information on accommodations, see Appendix G: Assistive Technology.

Can the school team use the word dyslexia in my student's IEP?

Parents and educators often wonder whether the term "dyslexia" can be included in an IEP. When a student has been formally identified with dyslexia, diagnosed with dyslexia, or an evaluation has determined that the student has "characteristics common to dyslexia," the information can be included on an IEP to help ensure that the student receives services specific to their needs. The following guidance was published by the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) in October 2015:

> There is nothing in the IDEA or our implementing regulations that prohibits the inclusion of the condition that is the basis for the child's disability determination in the child's IEP. In addition, the IEP must address the child's needs resulting from the child's disability to enable the child to advance appropriately towards attaining their annual IEP goals and to enable the child to be involved in, and make progress in, the general education curriculum. (34 CFR §§300.320(a)(1), (2), and (4)). Therefore, if a child's dyslexia, dyscalculia, or dysgraphia is the condition that forms the basis for the determination that a child has a specific learning disability, OSERS [Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services] believes that there could be situations where an IEP team could determine that personnel responsible for IEP implementation would need to know about the condition underlying the child's disability (*Policy Guidance on Dyslexia*, Department of Education, 2015).

What if my student is not making progress on their IEP goals?

A student's progress should be monitored closely, and the special education teacher should be sharing progress reports with parents each report card period. Parents can request that progress be shared more frequently. If a student is not making progress, an IEP team meeting should be called to discuss changes in the intervention strategies. Recently, the Supreme Court ruled that students with an IEP need to be making "meaningful progress" on their goals to receive a fair and appropriate education (for more information, see Questions and Answers U. S. Supreme Court Case Decision Endrew F. v. Douglas).

What type of goals around reading challenges are typically included in an IEP?

When writing an IEP that addresses reading challenges, teams should determine which of the seven components of literacy (phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, oral language, and writing) should be included in the IEP goals to address students' specific needs. Explicit, structured, systematic reading interventions based on these components should always be the priority when outlining interventions for a student with reading challenges. This approach should be incorporated into the specific considerations for students' IEPs even when the student is in a secondary setting.

What should I do if my student's teacher does not provide the accommodation listed in the IEP in the classroom?

If students are not receiving the accommodations outlined in their IEP, a parent can request a meeting with the classroom teacher and special education teacher to discuss specific IEP goals and accommodations and/or request an IEP team meeting. (If this does not resolve the concern, the parent(s) may speak to the principal and then the LEA Special Education Director and/or use the dispute resolution provisions in the Procedural Safeguards.) As students get older, it is also important for them to learn how to advocate for the accommodation they need in an appropriate manner.

Is a significant discrepancy between IQ and academic achievement required for a student to qualify for special education services under the classification of SLD?

In Utah, there are currently three methods for LEAs to use in the determination of an SLD: (a) Response to Intervention (RtI), (b) a combination of RtI and Discrepancy, or (c) an Alternate Research-Based Method (many LEAs are using Patterns of Strengths and Weaknesses [PSW] as an alternate research-based method). Eligibility for special education services is a team decision, after consideration of multiple assessment measures and academic and function performance data. The evaluation summary should include all data considered in the evaluation.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS BY EDUCATORS

Can a teacher recommend resources for parents interested in researching dyslexia?

A teacher can recommend any evidence-based resources to a parent that they think will help to improve understanding of their student's needs, such as this handbook.

Can a teacher indicate to a parent that a student has characteristics of dyslexia?

Teachers cannot diagnose whether a student has dyslexia. However, a teacher may inform a parent that a student has characteristics of dyslexia (see Appendix B). It is important to remember that a diagnosis of dyslexia is not required to receive services in Utah public schools, such as services in general education, tiered supports, and services under IDEA or a 504 Plan.

If a teacher is concerned about a student's reading scores in phonological awareness and rapid naming, what can they tell the parent?

As part of Child Find, a teacher should inform the parents of the areas in which a student is not scoring at benchmark and/or is not making progress. If these areas include phonological awareness and rapid naming, a teacher may, if they have the knowledge about diverse types of reading disorders, inform a parent that these deficits are characteristic of a student with dyslexia.

The teacher should always inform the parent(s) of the interventions available to address the identified deficits.

OVERVIEW OF SECTION 504

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, is commonly referred to as "Section 504." It is a federal civil rights law providing protection from discrimination for individuals with disabilities. Section 504 regulations require LEAs to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to qualified students with

disabilities. To ensure students receive a FAPE, 504 teams are responsible for providing services and/or supports designed to meet the needs of students with disabilities, so they can access their education.

A Section 504 Plan (504 Plan) is a document written and agreed to by the school's 504 team which provides specific accommodations, and/or related aids and services to meet the needs of students with disabilities. The accommodations listed in the 504 Plan are designed to remove the barriers that limit students' access to and participation in general education programs and activities, and typically enable students to spend the entire school day in the general education classroom. To qualify for a 504 Plan, students with dyslexia or other learning disabilities must meet certain criteria.

Under Section 504, a student is considered an individual with a disability if the student "(a) has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of such person's major life activities, (b) has a record of such an impairment, or (c) is regarded as having such an impairment" (ADA Amendments Act of 2008 and 2016 Amendment). Section 504 does not include a list of disabilities by name. Rather, the definition of "disability" is intended to be interpreted broadly. "Major life activities" include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Seeing
- Speaking
- Learning
- Breathing
- Sleeping
- Standing
- Lifting
- Reading
- Concentrating
- Thinking
- Communicating
- Helping
- Eating
- Bending
- Operation of a bodily function

It is important to understand that a medical diagnosis is NOT required for Section 504 eligibility. In the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008,

Congress directed that the definition of disability be applied broadly and that the determination of whether an individual has a disability not demand extensive analysis.

It is equally important to understand that a medical identification of dyslexia does not guarantee that a student will be provided with a 504 Plan. An LEA's 504 team will complete an evaluation to determine whether a student's disability "substantially limits one or more major life activity" that affects their ability to access a FAPE.

Section 504 Evaluation Process

The question being asked during the Section 504 evaluation process is "Does the student need a 504 Plan to access their educational needs as adequately as the needs of a non-disabled students? "(See Equal Rights for All Students - A Guide to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973).

The following questions require affirmative answers when determining whether a student with dyslexia (or characteristics of dyslexia) qualifies for a 504 Plan.

- Does the student have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more life activities?
- Does that physical or mental impairment substantially limit a student's learning and/or reading? (Other areas to consider may include writing, spelling, concentrating, thinking, and communicating, etc.).

The term "substantially limits" is not specifically defined by the Office for Civil Rights. However, it is recognized that this term should be interpreted broadly and inclusively.

Evaluating a student for Section 504 eligibility can be initiated by either the parent or the school. A school should begin an evaluation if staff members have reason to believe that, because of a disability, a student may need services, supports, and/or modification to access and make progress in general education. When a school initiates an evaluation, it must notify parents and receive parental consent before beginning the evaluation.

Parents may also request that a school evaluate a student for Section 504 eligibility. It is recommended that such a request be provided to the school/LEA in writing and include supporting background information, however neither is required. Such a

request will prompt an initial meeting. If the school agrees to evaluate the student, parents must provide consent.

The evaluation determines the student's disability and the student's ability to access their education so that appropriate related aids, services, and accommodations can be determined. This decision-making process is conducted by a group of people with knowledge about the student, the evaluation data's meaning, and placement options and is based on a variety of sources. Although it is not stated in the 504 team because they are knowledgeable about the student. When evaluating the need for a 504 Plan, the school should consider information from several sources, which may include:

- Evaluation results (if the school recently evaluated the student for an IEP or a 504 Plan)
- Documentation of the student's disability such as a doctor's diagnosis (not required but may be used in determining eligibility for a Section 504 Plan)
- Observations by the student's parent(s) and teachers
- Academic records
- Parental input
- Independent evaluations (if available)

A LEA should be assigned to manage each student's 504 Plan. Best practice is to review the 504 Plans yearly, as well as whenever any member of the 504 team believes it is necessary. Utah LEAs may adopt the review standards set in the IDEA regulations.

Under Section 504, once an evaluation has been made parents or guardians will be provided notice of any action that changes the identification, program, or placement of their child.

LEAs must have written policies and procedures regarding the Section 504 Rehabilitation Act, including grievance and due process procedures. Decisions about Section 504 eligibility should be documented. If parents or guardians disagree with the LEA's actions, they have the right to file a grievance with the LEA, request a due process hearing, or file a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights.

For a 504 process check list, refer to Appendix F.

ACCOMMODATIONS

The objective of classroom accommodations, including assistive technology, is to help level the playing field for students with dyslexia. Students with dyslexia will still have areas they struggle with, even after completing a reading intervention program that is appropriate for students with dyslexia. If a student is determined eligible for an IEP or 504 Plan, the team (including parents) will develop a plan consisting of accommodations, supports, and/or services enabling the student to access the core standards. Once finalized, written parental consent is required for the plan to be implemented.

According to the Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity, assistive technology provides a way for students with dyslexia "to save time and overcome some of the issues they may encounter because of their dyslexia, such as slow note taking or unreadable handwriting, and allows them to use their time for all the things in which they are gifted. For students with dyslexia, technology opens doors and allows them to demonstrate their knowledge in ways that were unimaginable in the past." Accommodations for students with dyslexia may include:

- Providing extra time on tests and assignments
- Asking a student to read aloud only if they volunteer
- Adapting test formats, such as allowing oral responses, providing large spaces for writing, or circling an answer instead of filling in the blank
- Allowing lectures to be recorded or providing copies of class notes
- Using text-to-speech software
- Using speech-to-text software
- Using audiobooks (Enabling students to access grade appropriate text helps increase vocabulary and may also increase reading fluency.)
- Reducing homework (with the focus placed on quality of work rather than quantity)

As technology constantly changes, there will always be new and more effective ways to implement assistive technology (for examples of accommodations, see Appendix F, or for more information on Assistive Technology and forms to request Assistive Technology, see Appendix G).

Accommodations can also be accessed during state level testing. State testing modifications and accommodations can be found on page 28 of the Utah Participation and Accommodation Policy.

IMPACT OF DYSLEXIA AND OTHER READING CHALLENGES

This section provides an overview of the social and emotional impact of dyslexia and other reading challenges on students, as well as some general guidance for educators and parents in addressing these impacts.

Additionally, it also provides an overview of those disabilities and disorders that often co-exist with dyslexia and other reading challenges.

SELF-ESTEEM, STRESS, AND ATTITUDE

Understanding how dyslexia may impact the social and emotional well-being of students with dyslexia must not be overlooked. Students with dyslexia are at higher risk for having anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem (Zuppardo, et al., 2021). Roughly 60% of individuals with dyslexia will have at least one other diagnosis (Darweesh et al., 2020). Researchers have also concluded that co-occurring conditions are fostered by specific biological, environmental, and unique protective factors people may have in their lives (Moll et al., 2020). Many of these co-occurring conditions may also be brought on or amplified by the difficulties students have faced learning to read and spell.

Educators can mitigate the impact of dyslexia on the social and emotional well-being of students by taking a holistic approach to student success. Using universal design for learning (UDL) as a part of effective instruction not only works best for students with dyslexia but for all students (Sewell et al., 2022). UDL “is a framework to guide the design of learning environments that are accessible, inclusive, equitable, and challenging for every learner. Ultimately, the goal of UDL is to support learner agency, the capacity to actively participate in making choices in service of learning goals” (CAST, 2024). In this environment, students with dyslexia are invited to approach learning by thinking about what interests them. This

naturally encourages students with dyslexia to base learning experiences on their strengths and expands their learning beyond the challenges of reading and writing.

Additionally, differentiation is expected as students express what they know in a variety of ways. This also refocuses the discussion on supporting students with dyslexia by implementing best practices for every student. All students should be encouraged to focus on their strengths as support is provided for areas of need.

Beyond academics, both parents and educators can help boost confidence and foster self-esteem, reduce stress, and help promote positive attitudes in students by working together to keep the whole child in mind. Some ways to support students may include:

- **Encourage Students to Explore Their Interests and Talents. Build** confidence in and out of the classroom by exploring and encouraging areas in which students excel. Encourage students to participate in learning, projects, and activities that give them opportunities to be successful.

- **Help Students Practice Resilience.** Students with dyslexia face unique challenges that may result from their academic or social struggles. Parents and teachers can help them face and address these and other challenges by cultivating resilience (for further information on developing resilience, see the American Psychological Association's Resilience Guide for Parents and Teachers).

- **Give Students Plenty of Opportunities to Shine.** All students shine in different areas. Find areas in which students with dyslexia excel and find ways to encourage them; let them stand out. They can teach a skill to the class, display their work on the board, receive a special award, or be a helper. Acknowledging students' talents and contributions is an excellent way to foster self-esteem.

- **Focus on Student Growth.** Instead of focusing on scores or grades, parents and teachers can focus on the progress students have made and engagement in the processes of improvement. Parents should avoid comparing students challenged with dyslexia to others in the classroom or in the family. Each student is different and progresses at a different rate. Adults can celebrate student success including the dedicated work a student with

dyslexia puts forth. Praise hard work and the student's willingness to engage in productive struggle—not perfection.

- **Involve Students in Setting Goals.** Encourage students to be involved in making goals for themselves. Students will likely need help in making realistic goals and creating a plan to achieve them. One of the best ways to build confidence in students is to help them see that when they set a goal, formulate a plan, and put forth the effort, they can achieve difficult things. When students achieve their goals, ensure that their successes are celebrated.

- **Encourage Students Self-Advocacy Skills.** Give students opportunities to weigh in on what works best for them including the accommodations and strategies best serve their academic and social needs. By making students a central part of their educational team, students are able to develop skills for self-determination including self-advocacy. When students are able to self-advocate, they are aware of their strengths and weakness and can communicate effectively with peers and teachers. These communication skills enable them to get the support they need to be successful. For more information about peer advocacy, see Decoding Dyslexia's Youth Advocates.

Talking to Students

Talking to students about their dyslexia can be a challenge, but it can also be empowering for students and the adults who work with and care about them. Students are more successful when they have the basic knowledge about dyslexia and what they need to succeed. While students should not be overloaded with complex information, they should be given the basics of what dyslexia is, what it means for them, and what can be done to help. It is important for students to know that dyslexia is nothing to be ashamed of.

Key Talking Points to Facilitate Conversations with Students about Dyslexia

- Dyslexia can explain why some people find it hard to read, write, and spell. Everyone is different, and everyone's brain works differently.

- Dyslexia is something that some children are born with, the same way that some children are born with blue eyes. Dyslexia may run in families in the same way that curly hair may run in families.
- Dyslexia does not mean students are not smart. Their brains just work differently. Learning to read and spell may be difficult for students with dyslexia, but with persistence, help from parents and teachers, and lots of practice, students will get better and better.
- Dyslexia will never go away, but students with dyslexia can learn to read and write very well. Some things may be difficult for students with dyslexia, but they can learn how to work with those challenges.
- According to the International Dyslexia Association (2017), 85% of students who qualify for special education services have a primary learning disability in reading and language processing. Some students are identified early but, sadly, others with dyslexia never discover the reason reading and writing are hard for them. Students who are aware of their dyslexia can learn methods that will effectively help them with their challenges. Identifying dyslexia can prevent students from giving themselves unhealthy labels such as lazy or stupid.
- Students with dyslexia often grow up and accomplish exceptional things. There are many famous people with dyslexia. Perseverance is the key to success.
- Everyone has strengths and weaknesses. When something is hard, focused work makes it possible to get better at it. Students with dyslexia will have to work harder at learning to read and write but it can be done.

Parents should be prepared to discuss dyslexia often with their children as they may need a reminder of what dyslexia is and why reading is difficult for them. As students age, they can be offered additional information about dyslexia, become part of their own educational team, and learn to advocate for themselves. Parents need to remember to approach these discussions with their children from a strength's perspective. Having dyslexia can make life difficult at times, but every student has many strengths and talents and can be successful in reading and writing with the right help and support.

WORKING WITH EDUCATORS

Having an open, honest, positive relationship with a teacher is essential for the student's success. Because everyone has different experiences and expectations, it is important to create an educational team that is on the same page.

Some important things for parents to keep in mind as they are collaborating with a teacher and the IEP team regarding their students with dyslexia are:

- **Parents may find a way to connect with teacher(s)** to discuss the student's learning challenges at the beginning of the school year and throughout the year as needed and how they can support their student at home. These conversations may be more productive in a meeting or a phone call, rather than via an email or a quick chat.
- **Parents may find it helpful to be a part of the communication system that schools and teachers create** to share information that may include what things are helping a student to be successful, and what struggles a student is having. Students are more successful in the classroom and at home when their educational team is communicating and working together.
- **Parents may discuss their student's specific accommodations on the IEP or 504 Plan with their teacher(s)** including the key points about how those specific accommodations have worked or not worked in the past. Parents may also want to check in regularly with teachers to see if these accommodations are helping their student to be successful. It may also be helpful to discuss how specific assistive technology may support their student.
- **Parents may be able to support educators in their approaches to implementing effective interventions for their students** by accessing research or information about dyslexia and reading challenges. Parents can help their student succeed by sharing their own reservoir of knowledge with teachers and school administrators. This knowledge may include helpful books, websites, and professional development opportunities.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parents can have a significant impact when they are involved in supporting their student with dyslexia. Beyond the foundational roles of providing safety, security, and overall well-being, parents are integral to their student's educational success, particularly in navigating the challenges associated with dyslexia. Research highlights the importance of parents having access to tools and resources to support their student.

Parents can be involved in supporting their students in the following ways:

- **Learn about dyslexia.** When Parents find out all they can about dyslexia, it can be a great help to their students. Books, websites, and discussions with other parents of students with dyslexia can add to their knowledge and understanding. Conferences or training can also help parents learn to advocate for their students.
- **Be an advocate.** Parents can work with the school to help their student receive the best instruction and resources needed to succeed. Parents should be positive liaisons between their student and the school to help everyone stay on the same page and know what interventions are and aren't working. If a student needs support at school, parents can meet with their student's teacher and other school specialists to problem solve and develop a plan. Parents know their student best and should not hesitate to speak up confidently. If parents are frustrated, or feel that adequate progress is not being made, they can reach out to educators to plan ways to improve outcomes for their student. This may include holding several meetings with school and/or LEA personnel until parents are confident that an appropriate plan is developed. Remarkable things happen for students when a team approach is used (Morin, 2018).
- **Seek help when needed.** If a student shows signs of emotional stress or extreme changes in behavior, parents may want to reach out to their student's teacher or administrators. If parents determine that their student may benefit from additional help, they may wish to seek out professional support for their student and/or family.
- **Encourage students to engage with reading outside of the classroom.** Parents can help their student to engage with reading by finding books and

stories that are interesting and enjoyable. Some strategies for encouraging reading at home include taking turns reading, asking questions about the reading, or discussing vocabulary. Another effective option is offering students the opportunity to listen to audiobooks.

- **Encourage persistence.** Parents can cultivate persistence in their students' approach to their dyslexia by adopting strategies that may be helpful throughout their life. These strategies might include continuing with Structured Literacy even to adulthood, making plans for their postsecondary success, and enabling students to develop self-advocacy and communicate what accommodations they need to be successful in their educational and work settings.

CO-EXISTING DISABILITIES AND DISORDERS

While students with dyslexia share some common characteristics, dyslexia manifests differently in individuals due to age and other factors affecting foundational reading skill development. In addition, students may have coexisting disabilities, such as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), specific learning disabilities (SLD) like dysgraphia and dyscalculia, developmental language disorder (DLD), or a speech language impairment (SLI). Roughly 60% of those with dyslexia have at least one other diagnosis (Darweesh et al., 2020). Researchers have found that conditions co-occur because of the specific way that biological, environmental, and protective factors interact in people's bodies and their lives (Moll et al., 2020). Familiarity with these coexisting disabilities is important because many characteristics overlap, which can lead to a misdiagnosis and/or a lack of diagnosis. The following list of co-existing disabilities is in order of statistical prevalence.

For more information regarding co-existing disorders and reading challenges, see Hendren, R. L., et al. (2018)., and Moll, K., et al. (2020).

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Students with ADHD—Predominantly Inattentive display difficulty paying attention and are easily distracted but do not have issues with impulsivity or hyperactivity. This may also be referred to as attention-deficit disorder or "ADD."

Students with ADHD—Combined meet the criteria for both inattention and hyperactivity. Although ADHD is not a learning disability, students with the disorder may appear to have difficulty with reading due to their inability to stay focused. However, students with ADHD are typically able to read well when they concentrate. Inattentiveness and difficulty with reading are two characteristics shared among students with dyslexia or ADHD. Students with dyslexia may become inattentive during reading activities in school because reading is difficult for them. Therefore, it is important for educators and parents to understand the underlying cause of inattentiveness and reading difficulties so that effective interventions can be implemented.

DYSGRAPHIA

Between 30% and 47% of those with writing problems or dysgraphia also have reading problems (Chung et al., 2020). Dysgraphia is a neurologically based specific learning disability affecting written expression. The writing process, which requires both fine motor and language processing skills, is slow and difficult for students with dysgraphia. These students typically have poor handwriting and spelling and difficulty putting their thoughts on paper. Evaluation to determine if a student has dysgraphia typically includes looking for difficulties in several skill areas: visual-spatial, fine motor, language processing, spelling, handwriting, grammar, and organization of written language (IDA, 2020). Specific symptoms that may be evident could include:

- Difficulty spacing letters and words on a page
- Inability to write on a line or inside margins
- Very slow at copying text
- Poor fine motor skills (e.g., holding a pencil, using scissors, tracing)
- Incorrect use of punctuation and capitalization
- Difficulty putting thoughts into written words

In general, students with dysgraphia benefit from ongoing, explicit instruction in handwriting, spelling, and writing composition. To improve illegible handwriting, younger students may benefit from activities such as tracing and copying letters. In addition, students with dysgraphia also benefit from accommodations such as typing and speech-to-text software. Students with dysgraphia may have other disabilities, including dyslexia or ADHD. However, a student with dysgraphia and no other disabilities should be able to learn to read without difficulty.

Dyscalculia

Researcher James Gillum (2012) describes dyscalculia as a neurologically based specific learning disorder that affects a student's performance in mathematics and notes that "there is a higher than expected co-morbidity of diagnosis of dyscalculia with dyslexia and ADHD" (p. 290). Dysgraphia and dyscalculia can also occur together—around 36% of the time (Ashraf & Najam, 2020).

Students with dyscalculia typically have poor numerosity or "number sense" (Gillum, 2012; Witzel & Mize, 2018). Students with dyscalculia may have difficulty with:

- Counting
- Learning mathematical facts (e.g., addition, multiplication)
- Auditory memory of numbers (e.g., phone numbers)
- Understanding place value, decimals, and fractions
- Memorizing rules and procedures needed for solving multi-step mathematic problems (Soares et al., 2018; Witzel & Mize, 2018)

As may be expected, students with dyscalculia often demonstrate anxiety towards mathematical tasks. Although dyscalculia has not been studied as thoroughly as dyslexia, explicit and systematic instruction focusing on building automaticity with mathematical calculations and procedures has been shown to be beneficial for students with dyscalculia (Soares et al., 2018).

Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) or Speech Language Impairment (SLI)

A 2019 study published in Child Development found that 43% of 8-year-old children with DLD also had dyslexia, and 58% of children with dyslexia had DLD. With DLD/SLI, phonological difficulties may improve over time, but comprehension problems might continue.

Anxiety

Approximately 21% of students with SLDs also have an anxiety disorder (Visser et al., 2020). Researchers think there is a two-way relationship between anxiety and dyslexia. When students are anxious, brain functions such as processing speed,

visual attention, and task-switching abilities do not work as well. That is why a person with an anxiety disorder may develop reading difficulties. It is also true that students with reading difficulties become anxious when required to read, especially when required to read aloud.

Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) or Conduct Disorder (CD)

For some people, behavior disorders make it harder to learn to read. For others, reading difficulties can eventually lead to behavior problems. An accurate picture can be hard to piece together, especially if symptoms of ADHD are also present (Hendren et al., 2018).

Autism

Researchers estimate that autism and reading disorders overlap 6%–30% of the time. It is important to note that when autistic students have difficulty with reading comprehension, it is not usually related to decoding problems (Hendren et al., 2018).

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

504 Plan: A plan designed to accommodate an individual who has been determined, because of an evaluation, to have a physical or mental impairment.

Accommodations: An alteration of environment, curriculum, format, or equipment that allows an individual with a disability to gain access to content and/or complete assigned tasks in the Least Restrictive Environment.

Affixes: A letter or group of letters added to the beginning or end of a word (prefixes/suffixes).

Alphabetic Principle: Spoken language is made up of speech sounds (phonemes) that can be represented by a letter or letter string (graphemes).

Assessment: The measurement tools and processes used for analyzing, evaluating, and making instructional decisions to determine which students need help, which kind of intervention they need, and whether that intervention is effective.

Auditory: Pertains to hearing.

Auditory Discrimination: The ability to hear likenesses and differences in phonemes or words.

Automaticity: Fast, automatic responses to the sounds of letters in blending sounds into words for spelling or reading, without a conscious effort.

Benchmarks: Major milestones that specify the skill or performance level a student needs to accomplish a goal.

Blending: Moving from one sound to another to make a word: /p/ /i/ /g/ = pig. The student must be able to hold onto the sounds to read the word.

Closed Syllable: A syllable ending in one or more consonants (with one vowel) which is usually “short.”

Cognitive: Mental processing or thinking.

Consonants: All the letters of the alphabet except for vowels. A basic speech sound in which the breath is at least partly obstructed, and which can be combined with a vowel to form a syllable.

Decode: Being able to read by breaking apart the component sounds of a word; blending of sounds to make a word.

Diagnosis: A statement or conclusion provided by a medical provider that describes the reason for a disease, illness, or problem.

Digraphs: Two consonants making one sound – /sh/.

Diphthong: Two vowels making two separate sounds but said as one sound, as in /ou/ in mouse, and /oi/ in boil.

Eligibility: Meeting the stipulated requirements for one or more of the thirteen categories under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). These include autism, deafblindness, developmental delay, emotional disturbance, hearing impairment/deafness, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech language impairment, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment (including blindness).

Evaluation: Used to determine whether a student has a disability and, if so, whether special education services are necessary. Individual multidisciplinary evaluations have major educational as well as legal significance.

Fluency: The effortless reading of text with adequate rate, accuracy, and expression to support comprehension.

Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE): An educational program that is individualized to a specific student who is eligible for special education. It is designed to meet that student's unique needs, provides access to the general curriculum, meets the grade-level standards established by the state, and from which the student receives educational benefit.

Grapheme: The written representation of a phoneme or letter sound. The letter p represents the sound, /p/.

Individualized Educational Program (IEP): A program developed to ensure that a student who has a disability identified under the law and is attending an elementary or secondary educational institution receives specialized instruction and related services.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): Ensures students with a disability are provided with a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) that is tailored to their individual needs.

Intervention: A specific, evidence-based program or set of steps to help a student improve in an area of need.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): A setting where a student who has a disability should have the opportunity to be educated with non-disabled peers to the greatest extent appropriate. Students must have access to the age-appropriate general education curriculum and only removed from the general education class when services cannot be provided in that classroom.

Morpheme: The smallest unit of meaning. In the word cats, /cat/ is one morpheme, the /s/ is another unit of meaning.

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS): A framework for implementing systematic, evidence-based practices to maximize student achievement in academics in preparation for and leading to college and career readiness.

Open Syllable: A syllable which ends with a single vowel and typically makes the long vowel sound.

Orthography: The writing system of the spoken language; the spelling.

Other Health Impairment (OHI): Having limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, which results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment.

Phoneme: The smallest unit of sound such as /b/ or /t/ or /tch/ = /ch/.

Phonemic Awareness: Being able to manipulate phonemes within words by isolating sounds and blending them.

Phoneme Segmentation: The skill of being able to divide words into phonemes. Pig = /p/ /i/ /g/.

Phonics: A reading method that teaches the student how to apply phoneme - grapheme correspondences to pronounce words

Phonological Awareness: An umbrella term that encompasses identifying and manipulating word parts.

Prefix: A word part that usually carries meaning and attaches to the front of a word.

Prosody: Reading with prosody means reading with intonation and expression.

Reading Comprehension: The ability to make meaning from text requiring specific skills, strategies, vocabulary, background knowledge, and reasoning skills.

Remediation: Instruction that meets the identified student need that addresses a gap in background knowledge or basic skills.

Response to Intervention (RtI): A multi-tiered approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs through high-quality core instruction and universal screening.

Root: The basic element of a word to which a prefix or suffix may be added.

Specific Learning Disability (SLD): 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 do mathematical calculations.

Special Education Services: Specially designed instruction and related services and supports required by an IEP for students with disabilities who are determined eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Structured Literacy: An explicit, systematic, cumulative, and diagnostic approach to teaching reading that includes principles of phonology, sound-symbol association, syllable instruction, morphology, syntax, and semantics.

Suffix: A letter or letters added to the end of a word to change its meaning or usage.

Syllable: A word or part of a word containing a vowel sound; /fan/ /tas/ /tic/ has three syllables, /ath/ /lete/ has two syllables, /spin/ has one syllable.

Tactile: Pertains to touch.

Unvoiced Sounds: Sounds that are made when the vocal cords do not vibrate – such as /f/ /p/ /t/ /k/, etc.

Voiced Sounds: Sounds made by vibrating the vocal cords – such as /g/ and /z/. All vowels are voiced. You can put your hand on your throat and feel the vibrations.

Vowel Digraph: Two vowels representing a single sound: ai = /ā/ or oe = /ō/.

Vowels: a, e, i, o, u, and y.

Vocabulary: The knowledge of words and word meanings, including definitions, morphemic analysis, and contextual analysis.

Word Study: Instructional approach that addresses word recognition, vocabulary, and phonics, as well as spelling.

Written Expression: Ability to generate ideas, construct meaningful sentences, sequence, organize ideas into paragraphs, and use grammar appropriately in fluent and efficient written forms.

APPENDIX B: CHARACTERISTICS OF DYSLEXIA BY AGE GROUP

According to Moats and Dakin (2008), every classroom teacher will likely have one or two students with dyslexia. Therefore, knowing what to look for can be beneficial in responding to their literacy needs. The following is a list of some of the symptoms that students with dyslexia or word-level reading challenges may have.

In preschool, a student with dyslexia may demonstrate:

- Problems with pronouncing words correctly
- Delayed language and vocabulary development
- Difficulty reciting the alphabet and days of the week sequentially
- Difficulty with quickly naming things (colors, shapes, familiar objects when shown pictures of objects)
- Frustration with coloring, pasting, and cutting with scissors
- Difficulty rhyming, speech articulation issues, remembering simple song lyrics, tying shoes

In kindergarten and first grade, a student with dyslexia may demonstrate:

- Difficulty remembering names of letters and recalling them quickly
- Problem in recalling the sounds letters represent
- Difficulty breaking simple words into separate speech sounds
- Trouble learning to recognize common words (names, common labels, or words used in writing) by sight or automatically
- Inability to spell the sounds of words in a way so the reader can easily recognize the word

In grades 2–3, a student with dyslexia may demonstrate:

- Inability to recognize important and common words by sight or instantly, without having to sound them out
- Difficulty during the sounding out process or letter-sound association (decoding) process, and recalls the wrong sounds for the letter and letter patterns
- Slow reading that lacks appropriate expression, marked by many decoding and word-recognition errors

- Good comprehension of material that is read to the student and poor reading comprehension marked by losing the gist or meaning due to slow and inaccurate reading
- Poor spelling with speech sounds omitted, wrong use of letters for sounds, and poor recall for the most common small words (such as words like when, went, they, been, to, does, said, or what)
- Guessing at unknown words based on pictures, story theme, or one or two letters
- Difficulty writing or completing written work
- Problems in understanding directions
- Anxiety related to schoolwork and poor self-image
- Difficulty transitioning from learning to read to reading to learn:
    - A sense of being overwhelmed by reading and writing demands
    - Misreading of direction or word problems
    - Difficulty keeping up, taking unfinished classwork home in addition to regular homework
    - Poor spelling and a struggle to produce written work

In grades 4–6, a student with dyslexia may demonstrate:

- Weak decoding skills; slowness in figuring out multisyllabic words
- A need for extra time on tests involving reading
- Poor sight word vocabulary
- Poor spelling
- Difficulty in learning spelling strategies such as root words, affixes, spelling patterns
- Poor oral reading with a lack of fluency
- Difficulty with comprehension on a reading test, but when comprehension is measured through tests that do not require reading, it is often much better than the reading test would suggest
- Difficulty with word problems in mathematics
- Good oral self-expression, but it may not be manifested in writing
- Avoidance of reading and writing at all costs
- Anxiety related to schoolwork and poor self-image

In high school, a student with dyslexia may demonstrate:

- Poor spelling
- Poor written composition

- Avoidance of reading or writing assignments
- Incorrect reading of information
- Trouble with summarizing
- Poor memory skills
- Slow work speed
- Problems with organizing work and managing assignments
- Difficulty with performing in classes that have reading and writing demands
- Difficulty in learning a foreign language
- May show anxiety related to schoolwork and poor self-image

(List adapted from *LETRS: The Challenge of Learning to Read*, Louisa Moates & Tolman, 2019 and The Alabama State Department of Education, 2022)

APPENDIX C: DYSLEXIA SCREENING AND THE USE OF ACADIENCE READING

ACADIENCE READING

A hallmark of dyslexia is poor reading performance in the face of effective reading instruction (VanDerHeyden & Burns, 2017). Thus, one of the most definitive indications of dyslexia and risk for having dyslexia is a combination of (1) severe low skills on measures of phonological processing including phonemic awareness and phonics and (2) a sustained lack of adequate progress in learning the basic early literacy skills when provided with effective instruction.

Using a single test to make important high-stakes decisions like the diagnosis of dyslexia is inconsistent with professional standards (AERA, APA, & NCME, 2014). However, Acadience Reading[2] provides an effective method of identifying students who are at risk for having early reading difficulties, including dyslexia, monitoring those students to determine whether they remain at risk, and identifying students who are not making adequate progress and should be referred for further assessment. Acadience Reading is designed to be used within a comprehensive, school-wide model of literacy support designed to prevent reading failure. As early as kindergarten, Acadience Reading results predict the likelihood of students experiencing reading difficulty in the future, provide teachers with evidence-based instructional targets for instruction and intervention, and provide a means to evaluate progress toward those targets in time to modify instruction and intervention.

Acadience Reading supports students with dyslexia or who are at risk for having dyslexia in the following four distinct ways:

1. **Acadience Reading provides early screening for students with dyslexia or who are at risk for having dyslexia:** Acadience Reading provides an early warning system to teachers from the beginning of kindergarten and tracks progress through first grade and beyond. A student

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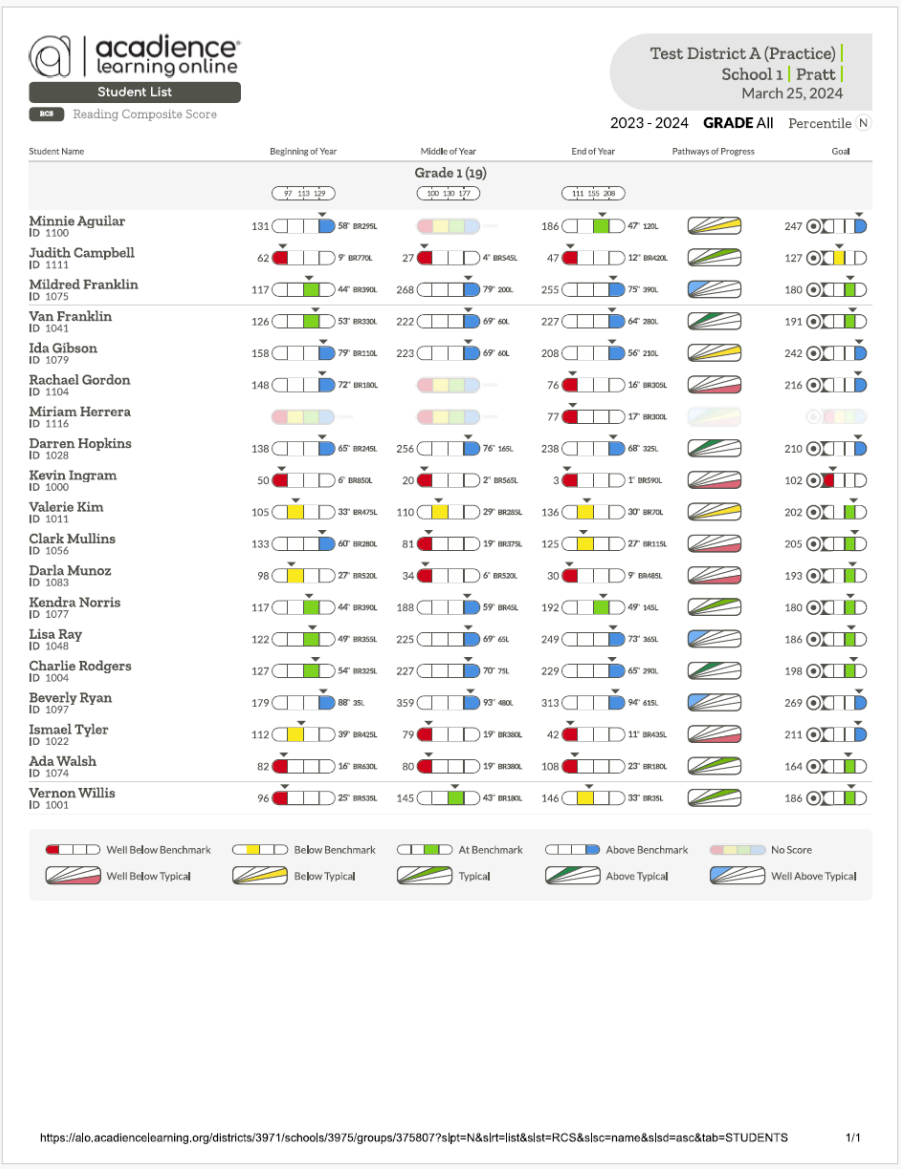
scoring Below or Well Below Benchmark on phonological and phonemic awareness, alphabet knowledge, or basic phonics skills provides the first piece of evidence that they may be at risk for having dyslexia.

Acadience Reading reporting tools, such as the Classroom Report (see Figure 3 for an example), provide a powerful and efficient way to identify students at risk for having dyslexia and to target instruction to reduce risk and prevent reading failure.

Figure 4: Classroom Report

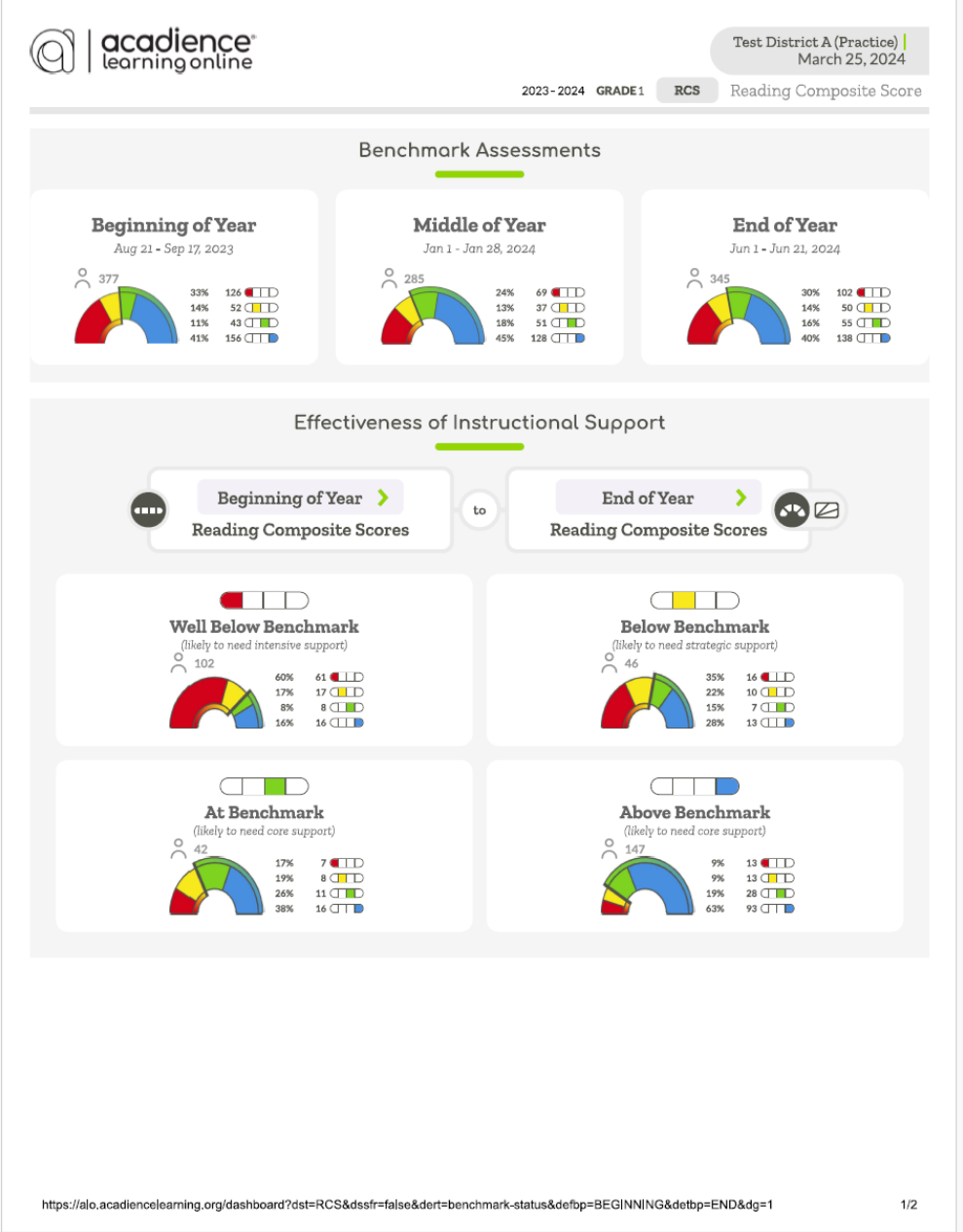


2. **Acadience Reading provides direct measures of student progress with instruction:** If a student's low skills are followed by persistent lack of adequate progress, in spite of instruction that has been generally effective with other students who have similarly low initial scores, the student is experiencing significant difficulty learning to read as associated with dyslexia or other reading disabilities. Acadience Reading incorporates a system of benchmark goals through kindergarten, first grade, and beyond that provide feedback to teachers on student progress in time to modify instruction to ensure success. Monitoring and evaluating a student's progress toward reaching their individual learning goals and using that information to guide instruction are among the most powerful influences on student achievement (Hattie, 2009).
3. **Acadience Reading Progress Monitoring enables individualized support to ensure adequate progress for students with dyslexia or who are at risk for having dyslexia:** It is critical for students with dyslexia or who are at risk for having dyslexia to master the same early literacy skills as students without reading difficulty, especially the phonological processes that provide the keys to the code. However, students with dyslexia or who are at risk for having dyslexia are likely to need individual adaptations and supports to master those skills. Before instruction begins, educators do not know what each individual student will need. A powerful approach is to select effective methods and adapt them to meet the student's individual needs. Additional information for differentiating instruction may be obtained, when necessary, through further assessment. For every student that is below benchmark, a diagnostic assessment is required. (see Early Literacy Diagnostic Assessments and Progress Monitoring).
4. **Acadience Reading provides direct evaluation of the effectiveness of the school-wide system of instruction and support:** One of the most important supports that educators can provide to students with dyslexia or who are at risk for dyslexia is an effective school-wide system of supports. The school-wide system includes both the core instruction provided to all students, as well as the various levels of intervention provided to students who are at risk for or are experiencing reading difficulties based on their specific needs. Evaluating the system of instruction begins with examining the effectiveness of core instruction. Intervention programs are most effective in the context of effective core instruction. Furthermore, if most

students within a grade level score below or well below benchmark, they are at risk but may be having difficulty due to a lack of effective instruction rather than dyslexia. Lack of adequate progress indicates risk for dyslexia when the student is given effective instruction. We must evaluate and support the effectiveness of the school-wide system to fully meet the needs of students with dyslexia or who are at risk for dyslexia.

Additionally, Acadience Reading provides information about the effectiveness of the school-wide system, including core instruction, supplemental support, and intensive intervention. These tools and resources help to ensure an effective multi-tiered system of supports for students with dyslexia or those at risk for having dyslexia (see Figure 4 for an example of a classroom report).

Figure 5: Effectiveness of Instructional Support



All students should be provided with good, systematic, explicit core instruction. Any student identified as at risk for having dyslexia or other reading difficulties should also be placed immediately into an appropriate evidence-based intervention that is matched to the student's specific areas of need. From there, it is imperative to monitor progress, modify instruction at a formative level as needed, and provide ongoing feedback to teachers and parents. When students continue to struggle

with literacy skills despite receiving additional high-quality, systematic, explicit instruction, further assessment may be warranted.

It is important to note that tests do not diagnose dyslexia but are tools used in a process that informs a diagnosis. Most often, the process involves individual assessment provided by a multi-disciplinary team of qualified professionals (see The International Dyslexia Association, 2017). This multi-disciplinary team may elect to obtain additional assessment information for selected students who continue to struggle with literacy skills to help determine whether they have dyslexia.

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APPENDIX D: COMMON FALLACIES AND FACTS ABOUT DYSLEXIA

The word “dyslexia” has been used and misused for many years. To have a productive discussion about dyslexia and how to address it, it is important to identify some common fallacies associated with dyslexia.

Table 1: Common Myths About Dyslexia (adapted with permission from Tennessee Department of Education, 2023).

Component	Fallacy	Fact
Reversals	Dyslexia is a visual problem. Students with dyslexia see and write letters and words backward.	Many students reverse their letters when learning to read and write. Reversing letters is not a sure sign of dyslexia, and not all students with dyslexia reverse letters. However, reversals after first grade are a red flag for dyslexia.
School Success	If you perform well in school, you must not have dyslexia.	Some students with dyslexia perform well in school. These students typically work as hard as their peers and may have the necessary accommodations to show their knowledge.
Intelligence	Smart students cannot have dyslexia; students with dyslexia cannot be very smart.	Dyslexia is defined by an unexpected difficulty in learning to read. Dyslexia is not related to intelligence, and students with all levels of IQ are impacted by dyslexia.
Reading Ability	Students with dyslexia cannot learn to read.	Most students with dyslexia do learn to read, but reading may take more time, be error prone. As a result, comprehension may be compromised.

Component	Fallacy	Fact
Reading Difficulties	All reading difficulties can be attributed to dyslexia.	The hallmark of dyslexia is difficulty with reading even though all the necessary components (intelligence, verbal skills, and appropriate instruction) are present.
Eligibility	If a student has dyslexia, they will have an Individualized Education Program (IEP). An IEP is the only way to get the appropriate instruction and accommodations.	Dyslexia presents in varying degrees, from mild to severe. Some students with characteristics of dyslexia do not meet the requirements for Specific Learning Disability (SLD) eligibility. All students should receive appropriate, differentiated instruction and universal accommodations in Tier 1, and when needed, the students may receive Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention. Students who do not respond to these interventions may be eligible to receive special education services.
Gender	More boys are affected by dyslexia.	Dyslexia affects an approximately equal number of boys and girls. However, for every girl referred to special education under SLD, there are two boys referred. The higher number of male referrals may be due to differences in classroom behavior. Dyslexia does not discriminate based on gender, race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.
Short-Term Problem	Most students will eventually outgrow dyslexia.	Dyslexia is a result of a processing difference in the brain and will last a lifetime.

Component	Fallacy	Fact
Comprehension	Students who have dyslexia have poor reading comprehension skills.	Students with dyslexia can have strong language comprehension skills. However, reading comprehension can be masked by (1) the amount of mental effort required to decode and (2) a limited amount of reading, leading to a gap in the student's vocabulary compared to students who read larger amounts of text.

APPENDIX E: POSTSECONDARY TRANSITION PLANNING

Planning for postsecondary life should begin as soon as a student enters school. As with any journey in life, knowing where you are headed will help you choose the appropriate road to get there! Since there is usually more than one way to get to a destination, knowing a student's strengths, talents, and needs will help everyone to support the student in setting postsecondary goals and make decisions regarding classes and programs that will best help them meet those goals. According to law, postsecondary transition planning for a student with an IEP begins when the student is fourteen. The IEP team should design this plan based upon a student's strengths, preferences, interests, and needs as identified through age-appropriate postsecondary transition assessments. The plan should include instruction, related services, community experiences, development of employment skills, other post school adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, adult living skills. According to the Utah State Board of Education Special Rules (2023), the purpose of postsecondary transition planning services is to "ensure that all students will have available to them a free appropriate public education (FAPE) that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living" (p. 180).

While the formal postsecondary transition plan begins at 14, postsecondary transition planning should begin earlier. To prepare for postsecondary college, even before high school, a student should register for challenging classes in English, mathematics, history, science, and foreign language. For many students with dyslexia, a foreign language can be difficult to learn and read. If a student has a difficult time with this, most colleges accept American Sign Language as a foreign language requirement for admission and this may be a more successful alternative for a student with dyslexia. Students should also learn about their dyslexia and discover and practice using the assistive technology (AT) they will need in high school and post-secondary school. There are many great checklists that outline steps and tasks to be completed from grades 9–12 in the postsecondary transition process.

If the student is at least fourteen and has an IEP or receives services under Section 504, the student can also receive postsecondary transition services through the

Utah State Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). These services are customized to the needs of the student but could include Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), job exploration counseling, work-based experiences, instruction in self-advocacy, and counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive postsecondary transition educational programs at institutions of higher education. When postsecondary transition planning, the school counselors should always be involved in helping identify classes needed to reach graduation; set career goals; and help in gathering information about colleges, scholarships, and vocational programs.

An important part of preparing for college and career is the development of self-advocacy skills. This would include helping the student understand their dyslexia, strengths, and weaknesses, how he/she best learns and communicates, and what types of assistive technology he/she will need. Developing self-advocacy skills can begin in elementary school with the support of educators and parents. One way of doing this is by helping them discover their strengths and talents, the tasks they struggle with, and what types of activities/assistive technology (AT) help them in the classroom. Talking about this is the first step in helping them learn to explain these things to their teachers and friends. By the time a student is in high school, he/she should take a more active role in communicating with teachers about their needs including accommodations. It is a good idea to practice this skill with family, friends, and in school where there is support, because in a future college or work setting, students will have to explain their needs to instructors, managers, etc. on their own. An understanding of strengths and how they best learn will aid them in selecting classes that will compliment these strengths while still challenging them.

Many universities and colleges require documentation of a disability to provide support services. This documentation must usually be done within two years of enrolling in college. Check with your institution of higher education to see what documentation is needed to receive accommodations. In the article, Transition of Students with Disabilities to Postsecondary Education: A Guide for High School Educators (2011), it states, “It is not uncommon for documentation standards to vary from institution to institution; thus, students with disabilities should research documentation standards at those institutions that interest them. A student must provide documentation upon request that he or she has a disability that is an impairment that substantially limits a major life activity and that supports the need for an academic adjustment. The documentation should identify how a student’s

ability to function is limited as a result of their disability." The testing and diagnosis must be done by a licensed psychologist. The report should also include the recommended accommodations the student will need in the college setting. It is important to start this process before high school graduation, so the student will be able to utilize the services he/she needs from the start.

Parents and students should also understand that some of the accommodations received in a K–12 setting are not allowed in a postsecondary setting. The student should contact the Office of Disability and Support Services at the colleges and universities he/she is considering and find out the specific documentation that is required and the services that are being offered.

Postsecondary Transition Resources

- What is Self-Advocacy? from Understood.org
- Parent and Teacher Resources, Utah State Office of Rehabilitation
- Postsecondary Transition in Utah: Self-Determination and Self-Advocacy Padlet
- Pre-Employment Transition Services
- Student Transition Service
- Transition Elevated Planning App
- Transition Timeline, Utah State Board of Education
- USBE Postsecondary Transition and Graduation webpage

APPENDIX F: ACCOMMODATIONS AND PROCESS CHECKLIST

State testing modifications and accommodations can be found on page 24 of the Utah Participation and Accommodation Policy.

Classroom accommodations help level the playing field for students with dyslexia. Below are some common accommodations that can be implemented to make learning more accessible. It is important to note that accommodations should be designed to meet the individual student need.

Accommodations for Students with Dyslexia

- Use audiobooks
- Provide pictures of directions and schedules for younger students
- Use large print fonts for worksheets
- Simplify directions with keywords for most important ideas
- Provide bookmarks to follow along when reading

For teaching techniques:

- Give step-by-step instructions (oral and written)
- Repeat directions then check for student understand
- Stick to consistent daily routines
- Use small groups teaching
- Provide notes from the lessons, organizers to fill in and follow along during the lesson
- Review skills daily
- Pre-teach new and important concepts

For classwork and test taking, teachers can:

- Provide extra time for reading and writing
- Only ask the student to read aloud if they volunteer
- Practice spelling patterns
- Allow access to spellcheck or speech-to-text
- Provide diverse ways to respond, such as saying the answer, providing large spaces for writing, or circling an answer instead of filling in the blank

- Hand out letter and number strips for students to look at so they can see how to write correctly
- Provide sentence starters that show how to begin a written response
- Show examples of work that is correct to serve as a model
- Arrange worksheet problems from easiest to hardest
- Allow understanding to be demonstrated in a variety of ways (e.g., oral reports, video presentations, posters, etc.)
- Record instructions/lectures
- Grade in-class work based on what the student knows, not on handwriting or spelling
- Allow a scribe so students can dictate on tests and writing assignments
- Let the students have a peer look for errors
- Reduce homework

Students can:

- Use text readers
- Partner up to study so that one person writes while the others speak, or they share the writing
- Use laptops or other devices with spellcheck and speech-to-text capabilities
- Use spell and grammar check programs

Accommodations for Students with Dyscalculia

For materials:

- Have the students use graph paper or lined paper sideways to line up mathematics problems
- Provide papers with raised or different colored lines to help with forming letters in the right spaces
- Use charts of mathematics facts or multiplication tables
- Allow the use of calculators when students are not being assessed on computation
- Use manipulatives to teach mathematics concepts

For in-class learning:

- Review what the students have already learned before teaching new skills
- Let the students talk about how to solve problems
- Let the students write out charts or draw sketches to solve problems

- Give the students lists of the mathematics formulas taught in the class
- Check often to see if students understand the work

Students can:

- Create separate worksheets for word problems and number problems
- Highlight or circle key words and numbers on word problems

Accommodations for Students with Dysgraphia

For in-class learning:

- Provide notes prior to discussions so students can focus on instruction
- Limit the need for writing during instruction
- Teach keyboarding skills
- Grade based on what students knows rather than spelling or handwriting
- Provide graphic organizers
- Help students break writing assignment into smaller steps
- Allow students to use print or cursive to show their work
- Let students to use scribes and proofreaders
- Give examples of finished writing assignments and discuss how each part is graded
- Allow alternate methods of demonstrating knowledge other than writing, like giving verbal responses, or demonstrations

Students can:

- Use a variety of pencils and pens or adaptive pencil grips
- Use graph paper or paper with raised lines
- Dictate ideas and outlines to a scribe prior to writing
- Use spell checkers and programs to help edit work
- Use voice recognition software
- Record classroom lectures and take photos of notes and diagrams on the whiteboard

10 Point Checklist to Satisfy Essential Steps of the Section 504 Process

This checklist was adapted from the LRP Special Ed Connection® checklist of the same name.

Use this quick guide to introduce new staff members and parents to the essential steps of the Section 504 process, from initial identification to periodic reevaluation. Keep in mind that your local policies may require something different.

1. **Identify Student**
    a. Section 504 requires LEAs to annually "undertake to identify and locate every qualified [individual with a disability] residing in [the LEA's] jurisdiction who is not receiving a public education" (34 CFR 104.32(a)). Child find activities could include publishing information in student handbooks, local newspapers, or in brochures at private schools.
2. **Refer Student for Evaluation**
    a. An LEA must conduct an evaluation of students "who, because of [disability], need or are believed to need special education or related services"(34 CFR 104.35 (a)). A referral could come from a parent, nurse, teacher, or other personnel.
3. **Gain Consent**
    a. Although not stated in the statute, the Office for Civil Rights (OCR), the federal agency that enforces Section 504 and the ADA, requires LEAs to obtain parental consent before initially evaluating a student.
4. **Provide Procedural Safeguards**
    a. Give parents a copy of your LEA's procedural safeguards, which must include notice, an opportunity for parents to examine relevant records, a right to a due process hearing, and the right to a review of an adverse hearing decision (34 CFR 104.36.).
5. **Form 504 Committee**
    a. This team consists of people knowledgeable about the student, the meaning of the evaluation data, and the placement options (34 CFR 104.35(c)(3)). Although the parent is not a required team member, it's often best practice to include the parent in the student's 504 team. For a student with a medical condition such as diabetes, a good practice is to include a school health provider.
6. **Conduct Evaluation**
    a. An evaluation determines whether a student is eligible, and if eligible, to what extent the student requires accommodations or services and what those should look like.
    b. 504 teams can gather information from a variety of sources, including aptitude and achievement tests, teacher recommendations, the

student's physical condition, social and cultural background, and adaptive behavior.

7. **Determine Eligibility**
    a. The 504 team determines if the student is eligible under Section 504.
    b. To be eligible, a student must have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities (prong one); a record of such an impairment (prong two); or be regarded as having such an impairment (prong three) (34 CFR 104.3(j)). Students who are eligible under only prongs two and three do not receive accommodations in a Section 504 Plan, but still receive Section 504's antidiscrimination protections.
    c. Note that the 504 team cannot consider mitigating measures, such as the positive effects of medication, when determining if an impairment substantially limits a major life activity. For episodic impairments, such as allergies, consider the impact when the impairment is active. Major life activities can include a variety of activities, such as breathing, speaking, learning, concentrating, or walking. They are not limited to this list and they include more than just the major life activity of learning.
8. **Provide FAPE**
    a. Under Section 504, schools are required to provide FAPE to all qualified students with disabilities in their jurisdictions, regardless of the nature or severity of those disabilities (34 CFR 104.33 (a)).
    b. Section 504's regulations define FAPE as "regular or special education and related aids and services" that are designed to meet the needs of students with disabilities as adequately as the needs of their nondisabled peers.
9. **Determine and Implement 504 Accommodation Plan**
    a. Some students may be eligible under Section 504, but not need any services or accommodations. For instance, a student with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) who successfully controls their impairment with medication may be technically eligible under 504, but not in need of any accommodations at school.
    b. If the same student, however, needs to sit next to the teacher and away from distractions, the 504 team should document those accommodations in a 504 plan.

10. Periodically Reevaluate

a. Teams are required to periodically reevaluate 504-eligible students, although the regulations don't specify how often to conduct a reevaluation. Best practice is to hold an annual 504 meeting and conduct a reevaluation at least triennially. Similarly, the team should evaluate if there's a change in the student's academic performance, physical or mental health, or need for services. Schools must also conduct an evaluation, including a manifestation determination review, before changing the placement of a 504-eligible student for disciplinary reasons.

APPENDIX G: ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Assistive Technology (AT) does not have to be high tech to be effective. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that the IEP team consider AT needs in the development of an IEP (IDEA, Section 1414(d)(3)(B)(v)). AT should also be considered for students with a 504 Plan. The use of appropriate AT devices and services can allow students with disabilities to participate in, benefit from, and maximize accessibility to the general education curriculum and a free appropriate public education (FAPE) (IDEA, Section 1411(e)(2)(C)(v)).

The Utah Center for Assistive Technology (UCAT) oversees 30 Utah Assistive Technology Teams (UATT) throughout the state. These teams support all the public schools in the state by providing high-quality assistive technology assessments for students ages 3–21, who have an IEP or 504 Plan. Parents and teachers can request an AT evaluation from UATT in each LEA. During an IEP or 504 meeting, the team should use the Assistive Technology Consideration Support Document created by the USBE. This form will help guide the team in its AT evaluation.

If an AT evaluation is requested, a referral form is completed by the school staff or parent containing the following information:

- Permission to evaluate for assistive technology, signed by the parent or guardian
- Complete UATT referral form
- Current IEP/504 plan
- Other information (medical information, etc.)
- The UCAT will also assist parents and individuals to find AT that will be appropriate and useful for them, as well as loan devices for a 30-day trial

There are many different AT options for helping in each area of need, so it is important to choose what works best for the student. Remember, the greatest technology in the world is useless if the student does not like it and will not use it. It is also important that parents and teachers become familiar with the AT the student is using. AT is not exclusive to secondary students; it can be useful to students in elementary school as well. Demonstrations of AT and apps can be found on the developer's websites.

While Assistive Technology is always changing, the following are some helpful resources:

- Utah Center for Assistive Technology (UCAT)
- Utah Assistive Technology Teams
- Utah State Board of Education Assistive Technology Guidance and Considerations
- Utah State Board of Education Assistive Technology Flow Chart
- Utah State Board of Education Special Education Rules
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Section 300.105 Assistive Technology

APPENDIX H: ESSENTIAL READING SKILLS

The following section was adapted with permission from pages 49-53 of the *California Dyslexia Guidelines,* California Department of Education, 2017.

Essential Skills to Measure for a Standard Assessment

Phonological Awareness including Phonemic Awareness

Definition and Examples

Phonological Awareness refers to an individual's awareness of and access to the sound structure of oral language. It is the understanding that spoken language can be divided into smaller units (i.e., words, syllables, onset-rime, and phonemes) and that those units can be identified and manipulated. Students are initially more proficient with perceiving these larger units (e.g., words) than individual sounds (e.g., phonemes). Rhyming is also a task of phonological awareness.

Examples:

> ***Rhyming.*** Tell me a word that rhymes with /top/: (/hop/, /mop/)
>
> ***Syllable Blending***. Blend these syllables to pronounce a whole word: /ta/ /ble/ (/table/)

Phonemic awareness is a subset of phonological awareness that refers specifically to the understanding of and ability to manipulate the discrete, individual sounds of language called phonemes. The critical phonemic awareness skills that serve as a foundation for beginning reading are segmentation, blending, and manipulation.

Examples:

> ***Phoneme Segmentation.*** Pronounce all the phonemes (speech sounds) in /cat/: (/k/ /a/ /t/)
>
> ***Phoneme Blending.*** Blend these phonemes (speech sounds) to pronounce a whole word: /b/ /l/ /a/ /s/ /t/: (/blast/)

Phoneme Isolation. Identify the initial, final, and medial sounds in words. What is the last phoneme (sound) in /dog/? (/g/)

Phoneme Deletion. Say /skip/ without /k/: (/sip/)

Dyslexia and Phonological Awareness

Difficulty in phonological awareness, especially phonemic awareness, is one of the best predictors of dyslexia and a key predictor of early literacy acquisition. Rudimentary ability to blend, segment, and manipulate phonemes within words and syllables is a prerequisite for understanding phonics (grapheme–phoneme association for word identification and phoneme–grapheme association for spelling). These basic skills of blending, segmenting, and manipulating phonemes facilitate students' understanding of the "place value" of the sequence of graphemes and phonemes within words. However, there are some students with dyslexia who do not necessarily have poor phonological awareness. There is a stronger neurobiological (genetic) basis than environmental basis to phonological processing.

Rapid Naming: Letters, Numbers, Colors, and Objects

Definition and Examples

The ability to quickly name (label) common objects, colors, digits, and letters presented visually. Rapid naming of digits and letters is more closely associated with learning to read; however, for younger students who do not yet know letter or number names, assess naming for objects, colors, shapes, etc. Phonological processing is required for rapid naming but additionally requires executive functioning, attention, and fluency, among other abilities.

Dyslexia and Rapid Naming

Difficulties in rapid naming is a strong predictor of dyslexia and early literacy acquisition—but less so than phonemic awareness or alphabet knowledge. It is likely that those with difficulties in both phonemic awareness and rapid naming have more severe forms of dyslexia.

Alphabet Knowledge

Definition and Examples

Ability to name individual letters.

Dyslexia and Alphabet Knowledge

One of the best predictors of dyslexia and a key predictor of early literacy acquisition.

Grapheme–Phoneme and Phoneme–Grapheme Association

Definition and Examples

Grapheme–Phoneme Association is the ability to associate graphemes with the phonemes they spell.

Examples:

<h> spells /h/ as in /house/

<e> spells /ē/ as in /feet/

Phoneme–Grapheme Association is the ability to associate phonemes with the graphemes that spell them.

Examples:

/ch/ is spelled with <ch> as in /chair/

/oi/ is spelled with <oi> as in /boil/

Dyslexia and Grapheme-phoneme and Phoneme-grapheme Association

Difficulties in grapheme–phoneme and phoneme–grapheme association are hallmark signs of dyslexia. There is a direct relationship between difficulties in

phonological processing and development of grapheme–phoneme and phoneme–grapheme associations.

Single Word Decoding of Real Words and Predictable Nonwords

Definition and Examples

Decoding of real words is the ability to use systematic decoding strategies to accurately identify and pronounce real words through grapheme–phoneme association.

Decoding of nonwords (pseudo-words) is the ability to automatically identify (pronounce) predictable pseudowords correctly when presented with a list.

Examples:

<op> <mest> <plig> <greb>

Dyslexia and Single Word Decoding of Real Words and Predicable Nonwords

Dyslexia involves a specific difficulty in word and nonword (pseudoword) decoding that is based on a weakness in the phonological aspect of language. There is a direct relationship between difficulties in grapheme–phoneme and phoneme–grapheme associations and these decoding abilities.

Reading Comprehension

Definition and Examples

Reading comprehension is t is understanding what is read aloud or silently. Should consider both narrative and expository texts and assess both literal (explicit) and inferential (implicit) understanding. A variety of types of assessments (e.g., multiple-choice, open-ended, closure) should be considered since each type measures different skills within reading comprehension.

Dyslexia and reading comprehension

Students with dyslexia may have difficulty in reading comprehension with strengths in listening comprehension. The challenges with reading comprehension may be the result of deficits related specifically to reading (e.g., inaccurate word identification-decoding, limited syntactic awareness, limited morphological awareness, etc.).

Oral Reading Fluency

Definition and Examples

The accuracy, speed, and prosody (intonation and meaningful phrasing) of a student's reading of text at an instructional level.

Dyslexia and Oral Fluency

Many students with dyslexia have difficulty with reading fluency due to a number of factors (e.g., poor decoding; limited awareness of syntax, including grammar; an underlying processing speed deficit). In adults with dyslexia, students who have been successfully remediated, and in students using efficient compensatory strategies, the rate aspect of reading fluency may remain as a difficulty (unexpectedly slower rate with intact accuracy and comprehension).

Encoding (Spelling)

Definition and Examples

Both the ability to spell individual words in isolation and in the context of written expression must be assessed. Individual words are dictated and the student writes words on paper. Students may also be asked to spell predictable pseudo-words, which removes visual memory from the task. Spelling accuracy must also be assessed within context of students' independent written expression.

Dyslexia and Encoding (Spelling)

Spelling is most often impaired in students with dyslexia because spelling (encoding) and reading (decoding) have a reciprocal relationship. For adults with dyslexia, students who have been successfully remediated, and in students using efficient compensatory strategies, spelling deficits are easier to identify than reading deficits.

Additional Essential Components

Additional essential components of reading, writing and spoken Language for screening and comprehensive assessment.

Phonological Memory

Definition and Examples

Also known as verbal short-term memory, phonological memory is the capacity to store small amounts of phonological information for brief periods of time. It is distinguished from verbal working memory, verbal long-term memory, or spatial short-term memory.

Examples:

Memory for Digits: Repeating a sequence of digits such as “seven, five, three, nine” presented orally

Nonword Repetition: Repeating a nonword (simulates pronunciation of an unfamiliar word or a word from a foreign language)

Dyslexia and Phonological Memory

Many students with dyslexia have difficulty with phonological memory. However, poor phonological memory not only predicts long-term phonological memory and decoding, but it also predicts vocabulary acquisition and oral language comprehension.

Oral Language (Receptive, Expressive)

Definition and Examples

Oral language is the system through which we use spoken words to express ourselves (expressive language—speaking) and understand others (receptive language—listening). Oral language is the foundation of written language.

Dyslexia and Oral language

Some students with oral language (speaking and listening) deficits may also have dyslexia; however, there are many students with dyslexia with average to superior oral language skills. Strong abilities in oral language may lessen the effects of dyslexia so that symptoms are less severe. Expressive language issues sometimes seen in students with dyslexia can include difficulty with specific word retrieval and oral fluency. Receptive language issues seen in some students with dyslexia can include difficulty with being able to accurately recall and retell a story or a list of words presented verbally.

Syntactic Processing

Definition and Examples

The ability to combine and manipulate the order of words or the smallest meaningful chunks within a word (morphemes) in order to construct sentences.

Example:

> Reading a sentence aloud, such as “The boy being pushed by the girl is sad.” Students then choose the appropriate picture to match the sentence. An incorrect choice may be a picture of a sad-looking boy on a swing being pushed by a girl. An incorrect picture might show a sad-looking girl on a swing being pushed by a boy.

Dyslexia and Syntactic Processing

Students with dyslexia do not typically have difficulty with syntactic processing. Problems with awareness and understanding of syntax often affect language comprehension (e.g., listening, reading).

Morphological Processing

Definition and Examples

Morphological processing is the ability to take the smallest meaningful units (chunks) within a word and manipulate them to form other words. Manipulation of morphemes can create words that differ in several ways:

- Different part of speech (derivational)
  happy → happiness
  finish → finite → infinite → finality
- Grammatical change (inflection)
  small → smaller → smallest
  march → marches → marched
  boy → boys

Dyslexia and Morphological Processing

Students with dyslexia do not typically have difficulty with morphological processing. However, some students with dyslexia do lack morphological awareness or familiarity with word parts due to their limited exposure to complex text.

Orthographic Processing

Definition and Examples

Orthography is the writing system of a language (i.e., spelling) and includes conventions, punctuation, and capitalization. Knowledge of orthography is stored in

memory in the form of rules and representations of words or parts of words—and used to read and spell words.

Dyslexia and Orthographic Process

Orthographic processing is one of several cognitive factors, along with phonological processing, that contribute to the ability to read words.

Handwriting

Definition and Examples

The process of writing consists of text generation and transcription skills; transcription skills can further be broken down into handwriting and spelling. Handwriting for written expression requires the integration of orthographic knowledge (see above) with the physical act of letter formation. It is often assessed by the quality of the written letters (e.g., consistency and accuracy of letter formation, size, spacing, alignment—ability to anchor letters on lined paper) and also by fluency (e.g., writing letters of the alphabet or copying text under timed conditions).

Example:

> Methods of assessing handwriting ranging from measuring fluency (e.g., having students copy a sentence containing all of the letters of the alphabet as many times as possible in one minute) to careful examination of handwriting quality.

Dyslexia and Handwriting

Handwriting (automatic letter formation) has been shown to be causally related to quality of written expression (e.g., text length and text quality), especially for younger children.

Written Composition, Writing Mechanics, and Writing Fluency

Definition and Examples

Broadly defined, written expression includes a complex set of abilities (e.g., idea generation; organization of ideas; ability to generate topic sentences, supporting sentences, and concluding sentences; and editing and revision; mechanics—capitalization, punctuation, handwriting and keyboarding). Additional factors to assess include vocabulary, spelling, grammar, and syntax (e.g., sentence structure).

Writing fluency is the ability to smoothly and effortlessly compose written texts.

Dyslexia and Written Composition, Writing Mechanics, and Writing Fluency

Although students with dyslexia often have poor written expression, writing mechanics, and writing fluency, currently there is no established evidence that these are important signs of dyslexia. These are seen in students with dysgraphia (writing disorder) and are a highly comorbid condition (coexisting) in students with dyslexia.

APPENDIX I: ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF EVIDENCE-BASED STRUCTURED LITERACY INTERVENTIONS

This list is designed to help evaluate intervention. It identifies the necessary components of evidence-based structured literacy interventions and will help to identify areas that may need to be supplemented with additional evidence-based instructional practices.

This table was adapted with permission from page 28 of *The New Jersey Dyslexia Handbook: A Guide to Early Literacy Development & Reading Struggles,* the State of New Jersey Department of Education, 2017.

Table 2: Essential Components of Evidence-Based Structured Literacy Interventions

Component	Description
Phonological Awareness	• Segmenting sentences into words • Syllable segmentation and blending • Phonemic awareness—segmentation, blending, and manipulation
Sound-Symbol Association	• Sound and letters connected for both reading (visual) and spelling (auditory) to mastery • Blending of sounds and letters into words to mastery • Segmenting whole words into individual sounds to mastery
Orthography	• Focus on spelling patterns and rules as well as word meanings, parts of speech, and word origins • Explicit instruction in letter formation
Fluency	• Attention to accuracy, rate, and prosody • Use of normative data to ensure adequate progress
Morphology	• Study of base words, roots, prefixes, and suffixes

Component	Description
Grammar/Syntax	• Focus on grammar and sentence variations • Study of mechanics of language and function of word order to convey meaning
Vocabulary	• Words taught explicitly in multiple settings • Synonyms, antonyms, and multiple meanings integrated into discussions • Essential features with visual representation for concepts identified during discussion • Idioms integrated when appropriate to situations
Reading Comprehension	• Process of deriving meaning and establishing a coherent mental model of the text's content • Attention to integration of ideas within text and between texts • Purposeful teaching of strategies related to the text structure with opportunities to apply in new situations • Access background knowledge and identify language in text that may be problematic (indirect meanings, figurative language, complex sentences, pronoun referents, new vocabulary) • Use of graphic organizers • Use of text structure to accomplish a goal (i.e., explaining main idea or recalling details)
Syllable Instruction	• Six basic syllable types: identify the sound of the vowel within the syllable • Syllable division rules enhance accuracy for reading unknown words to mastery

Component	Description
Delivery of Instruction	• Training standards and fidelity of implementation measures defined • Explicit instruction is provided one language concept at a time • Sequence of instruction is systematic and cumulative • Provides multisensory instruction • Includes assessments for diagnostic teaching (pre/posttest, mastery checks) • Establishes guidelines for student grouping (size, homogenous needs)

APPENDIX J: EDUCATOR AND FAMILY RESOURCES

Phonemic Awareness

Articles from PBS.org on the key elements of phonemic awareness and how to teach the related skills:

- Launching Young Readers Article 1
- Launching Young Readers Article 2

Phonological Awareness

- Florida Center for Reading Research Phonological Awareness Program
    - The Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR) has a reasonably complete phonological awareness program available for free download. The various faculty and researchers behind the FCRR have made extensive contributions to the understanding of phonological awareness and reading development for more than 20 years. For K–1, it would seem this program could be considered an excellent "go to" program given that it is free and based on decades of research. The FCRR materials are typeset in such a manner that an LEA could easily print them either in full color or black and white.

Phonics

- Enhancing Alphabetic Instruction (PreK–1)
- General Instruction Ideas
- Multisyllabic Word Reading Instruction
- Phonics Teaching Guide

Fluency

- Fluency Instructional Strategies

Vocabulary

- Vocabulary Instruction in Action Video
- Vocabulary Instruction Strategies

Comprehension

- Components of Effective Comprehension Instruction in Secondary
- Comprehension Practice Guide for K–3
- Improving Adolescent Literacy Grades 4 and Up

Books

- *Blueprint for a Literate Nation: How You Can Help* by Cinthia Coletti
    - Coletti approaches reading instruction and dyslexia from the perspective of a parent and Chief Operating Officer. Drawing heavily from researchers in the field, Ms. Coletti outlines how schools, LEAs, communities, and the government can change America's reading profile. As a call to arms, this book is effective. The last ⅓ of the book has endless resources and the "blueprint" for a literate nation.
- *Dyslexia Advocate! How to Advocate for a Child with Dyslexia within the Public Education System* by Kelli Sandman-Hurley
- This book contains a sensible and well-researched approaches for helping students with dyslexia within the public education system. Every special education provider and administrator will benefit from reviewing the information in this book before assessing and developing an Individualized Education Program for students with reading difficulties.
- *The Dyslexia Empowerment Plan: A Blueprint for Renewing Your Child's Confidence and Love of Learning* by Ben Foss
    - Foss is an articulate and relatable advocate for children and families dealing with dyslexia and the school system. Through personal stories, Foss manages to commiserate while providing actionable ways to improve outcomes in school, work, and life. This is an excellent book for parents or students who are feeling overwhelmed by the implications of dyslexia and need encouragement.
- *Dyslexia Screening: Essential Concepts for Schools and Parents* by Richard Selznick If a school wants to begin implementing practical interventions for students with dyslexia, then this book is a must. It is a thin volume that outlines exactly how any school can begin screening and intervening for dyslexia.
- *Effective Decoding and Spelling Instruction* by Marcia K. Henry
    - After tutoring countless students with dyslexia, there is one thing that becomes apparent: poor spelling can linger long after decoding improves. Many English words do not respond to conventional sound

to symbol spelling methods or syllable types. Students with dyslexia will need a solid foundation of morphology, etymology, and orthography that are the keys to truly unlocking encoding. Henry's book provides a logical and effective way of approaching English spelling that offers every student the opportunity to spell (and understand) more words with confidence.

- *Essentials of Assessing, Preventing and Overcoming Reading Difficulties* by David Kilpatrick
    - One of the best books available to walk educators and parents through the often-complicated landscape of screening, assessing, and treating dyslexia. Kilpatrick provides foundational understanding of why students may struggle with reading and how to interpret various screeners to improve instructional outcomes. Kilpatrick also provides well-researched evaluations of many of the latest and most popular reading programs.
- *Language at the Speed of Sight: How We Read, Why So Many Cannot, and What Can Be Done About It* by Mark Seidenberg
    - This is one of the more narrative books on reading issues. Language often reads more like a good novel, but it is equally well-researched and informative. Seidenberg explores the educational world to discuss why so many teachers are not taught the basic educational understanding to teach reading well in the United States.
- *Overcoming Dyslexia: A New and Complete Science-Based Program for Reading Problems at Any Level* by Sally Shaywitz
    - Considered one of the first and best introductions to the latest functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) research regarding dyslexia and the brain, Shaywitz's Overcoming Dyslexia has become synonymous with understanding how reading occurs in the brain. Shaywitz distills much of the "new" science into actionable items for parents, teachers, and administrators. For her latest research and writing, go to the Yale Center for Dyslexia & Creativity website.
- *Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain* by Maryanne Wolf
    - Although fairly dated, Wolf's book is very helpful for anyone interested in the science behind reading and dyslexia. Many reviewers consider this the book you "actually want to read about brain science."

- *Reading in the Brain: The New Science of How We Read* by Stanislas Dehaene
    - This is a fascinating book from the perspective of a neuroscientist regarding the brain and reading. Although often heavy in technical terminology, Dehaene incorporates enough human experiences to bring the science to life. He also explores the oft overlooked implications of vision on the reading experience.
- *The Reading Mind: A Cognitive Approach to Understanding How the Mind Reads* by Daniel Willingham
    - More recently published, *The Reading Mind* benefits from its predecessors and seems to sum up the latest research with perspective of hindsight being 20/20. Willingham fills in the gaps from other books and clarifies some of the misunderstandings all with well-researched examples that make fine points about the need for solid reading instruction across the grades.
- *The Shut-Down Learner: Helping Your Academically Discouraged Child* by Richard Selznick
    - Selznick hits the mark with Shut-down Learner by carefully and competently outlining where a student should be developmentally with reading. This helpful guide is easy to read and understand which makes it useful to educators and parents.

Useful Websites and Online Support

- Early Literacy Resources
- Assistive Technology Solutions for Dyslexia
- Bright Solutions (curriculum, videos, info, and more)
- Decoding Dyslexia Utah
- Dyslexia Training Institute (training, info, and more)
- International Dyslexia Association
- Lindamood-Bell Learning Centers
- National Center for Learning Disabilities
- Neuhaus Education Center
- Center On Multi-Tiered System of Supports (for RtI and more)
- Scottish Rite for Children: Dyslexia
- Slingerland Institute for Literacy
- Understood
- University of Michigan

- Utah Parent Center
- Washington State Dyslexia Resource Guide
- Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity