

# Alvord ISD

## 2024-2025 District Dyslexia Plan



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## **I. Definition of Dyslexia**

Texas Education Code (TEC) §38.003 defines dyslexia and related disorders in the following way:

“Dyslexia” means a disorder of constitutional origin manifested by a difficulty in learning to read, write, or spell, despite conventional instruction, adequate intelligence, and sociocultural opportunity.

“Related disorders” include disorders similar to or related to dyslexia, such as developmental auditory imperception, dysphasia, specific developmental dyslexia, developmental dysgraphia, and developmental spelling disability.

TEC §38.003(d)(1)-(2) (1995)

<http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/ED/htm/ED.38.htm#38.003>

The International Dyslexia Association defines “dyslexia” in the following way:

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is 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.

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

Students identified as having dyslexia typically experience primary difficulties in phonological awareness and manipulation, single-word reading, reading fluency, and spelling. Consequences may include difficulties in phonological awareness that are unexpected for the student’s age and educational level, and are not primarily the result of language difference factors. Additionally, there is often a **family history** of similar difficulties.

## **II. Characteristics of Dyslexia**

The following characteristics identify risk factors associated with dyslexia at different stages or grade levels.

### **Preschool**

- Delay in learning to talk
- Difficulty with rhyming
- Difficulty pronouncing words (e.g., “pusgetti” for “spaghetti,” “mawn lower” for “lawnmower”)
- Poor auditory memory for nursery rhymes and chants
- Difficulty adding new vocabulary words
- Inability to recall the right word (word retrieval)
- Trouble learning and naming letters and numbers and remembering the letters in his/ her name
- Aversion to print (e.g., doesn’t enjoy following along if a book is read aloud)

### **Kindergarten and First Grade**

- Difficulty breaking words into smaller parts, or syllables (e.g., “baseball” can be pulled apart into “base” “ball” or “napkin” can be pulled apart into “nap” “kin”)
- Difficulty identifying and manipulating sounds in syllables (e.g., “man” sounded out as /m/ /ă//n/)
- Difficulty remembering the names of letters and recalling their corresponding sounds
- Difficulty decoding single words (reading single words in isolation)
- Difficulty spelling words the way they sound (phonetically) or remembering letter sequences in very common words seen often in print (e.g., “sed” for “said”)

### **Second Grade and Third Grade**

Many of the previously described behaviors remain problematic along with the following:

- Difficulty recognizing common sight words (e.g., “to,” “said,” “been”)
- Difficulty decoding single words
- Difficulty recalling the correct sounds for letters and letter patterns in reading
- Difficulty connecting speech sounds with appropriate letter or letter combinations and omitting letters in words for spelling (e.g., “after” spelled “eftr”)
- Difficulty reading fluently (e.g., reading is slow, inaccurate, and/or without expression)

- Difficulty decoding unfamiliar words in sentences using knowledge of phonics
- Reliance on picture clues, story theme, or guessing at words
- Difficulty with written expression

#### Fourth Grade through Sixth Grade

Many of the previously described behaviors remain problematic along with the following:

- Difficulty reading aloud (e.g., fear of reading aloud in front of classmates)
- Avoidance of reading (particularly for pleasure)
- Difficulty reading fluently (e.g., reading is slow, inaccurate, and/or without expression)
- Difficulty decoding unfamiliar words in sentences using knowledge of phonics
- Acquisition of less vocabulary due to reduced independent reading
- Use of less complicated words in writing that are easier to spell than more appropriate words (e.g., “big” instead of “enormous”)
- Reliance on listening rather than reading for comprehension

#### Middle School and High School

Many of the previously described behaviors remain problematic along with the following:

- Difficulty with the volume of reading and written work
- Frustration with the amount of time required and energy expended for reading
- Difficulty reading fluently (e.g., reading is slow, inaccurate, and/or without expression)
- Difficulty decoding unfamiliar words in sentences using knowledge of phonics
- Difficulty with written assignments
- Tendency to avoid reading (particularly for pleasure)
- Difficulty learning a foreign language

### **III. Screening**

#### **The Importance of Early Screening:**

*If the persistent achievement gap between dyslexic and typical readers is to be narrowed, or even closed, reading interventions must be implemented early, when children are still developing the basic foundation for reading acquisition. The persistent achievement gap poses serious consequences for dyslexic readers, including lower rates of high school graduation, higher levels of unemployment, and lower earnings because of lowered college attainment. Implementing effective reading programs early, even in preschool and kindergarten, offers the potential to reduce and perhaps even close the achievement gap between dyslexic and typical readers and bring their trajectories closer over time.*

—Ferrer, et al., Achievement Gap in Reading Is Present as Early as First Grade and Persists through Adolescence, 2015

#### **State Requirements:**

In 2017, the 85th Texas Legislature passed House Bill (HB) 1886, amending Texas Education Code (TEC) §38.003, Screening and Treatment for Dyslexia,<sup>1</sup> to require that all kindergarten and first-grade public school students be screened for dyslexia and related disorders. Additionally, the law requires that all students beyond first grade be screened or tested as appropriate.

In response to the screening requirements of HB 1886, the SBOE amended its rule in 19 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §74.28, Students with Dyslexia and Related Disorders. While this rule speaks primarily to evaluation and identification of a student with dyslexia or related disorders, it also requires that evaluations only be conducted by appropriately trained and qualified individuals. Guidelines regarding the required screening for kindergarten and first-grade students are discussed in Part B of this chapter.

A related state law adds an additional layer to screening requirements for public school students. Texas Education Code §28.006, Reading Diagnosis, requires each school district to administer to students in kindergarten, first grade, and second grade a reading instrument to diagnose student reading development and comprehension. This law also requires school districts to administer a reading instrument at the beginning of seventh grade to students who did not demonstrate reading proficiency on the sixth-grade state reading assessment. The law requires each school district to administer to kindergarten students a reading instrument adopted by the commissioner or an alternative reading instrument approved by the commissioner. Texas Education Code §28.006(d) requires each district to report

the results of these reading instruments to the district’s board of trustees, TEA, and the parent or guardian of each student. Further, a school district is required to notify the parent or guardian of each student in kindergarten, first grade, or second grade who is determined to be at risk for dyslexia or other reading difficulties based on the results of the reading instruments. In accordance with TEC §28.006(g), an accelerated reading instruction program must be provided to these students.

### **Federal Requirements- Child Find**

In addition to state and local requirements to screen and identify students who may be at risk for dyslexia, there are also overarching federal laws and regulations to identify students with disabilities, commonly referred to as Child Find. Child Find is a provision in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), a federal law that requires the state to have policies and procedures in place to ensure that every student in the state who needs special education and related services is located, identified, and evaluated. The purpose of the IDEA is to ensure that students with disabilities are offered a free and appropriate public education (20 U.S.C. §1400(d); 34 C.F.R. §300.1). Because a student suspected of having dyslexia may be a student with a disability under the IDEA, the Child Find mandate includes these students. Therefore, when referring and evaluating students suspected of having dyslexia, LEAs must follow procedures for conducting a full individual and initial evaluation (FIIE) under the IDEA.

Another federal law that applies to students with disabilities in public school is Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, commonly referred to as Section 504. Under Section 504, public schools must annually attempt to identify and locate every qualified student with a disability residing in its jurisdiction and notify them and/or their parents of the requirements of Section 504.

### **Dyslexia Screening–Universal Screening**

Screening is defined as a universal measure administered to all students by qualified personnel to determine which students are at risk for dyslexia or reading difficulties and/or a related disorder. Screening is not a formal evaluation.

### **Timing of Screening**

Texas Education Code §38.003 mandates that kindergarten students be screened at the end of the school year. Texas Education Code §38.003 does not explicitly state when first grade students must be screened. The SBOE, through approval of the rule which requires adherence to this handbook (TAC §74.28), has determined that students in first grade must be screened no later than the middle of the school year. Screening of first-grade students can begin anytime in the fall as the teacher deems appropriate. Grade 1 screening must conclude no later than January 31 of

each year.

### **Administration of Screening Instruments**

A district or charter school must ensure that appropriately trained and qualified individuals administer and interpret the results of the selected screening instrument. Please note that an educational aide is not eligible to administer or interpret the dyslexia screening instrument. Individuals who administer and interpret the screening instrument must, at minimum, meet the following qualifications:

- An individual who is certified/licensed in dyslexia; or
- A classroom teacher who holds a valid certification for kindergarten and grade 1.

**BEST PRACTICE:** Whenever possible, the student's current classroom teacher should administer the screening instrument for dyslexia and reading difficulties.

Alvord ISD will use the following screeners:

- Kindergarten- TX-KEA
- First Grade- iStation
- Seventh Grade- 7th Grade Fluency Test

## **IV. Procedures for the Evaluation and Identification of Students with Dyslexia**

A team of persons with knowledge of the student, instructional practices, and instructional options meets to discuss data collected, including data obtained during kindergarten and/or first grade screening, and the implications of that data. These individuals include, but are not limited to, the classroom teacher, administrator, dyslexia specialist, and/or interventionist. This team may also include the parents and/or a diagnostician familiar with testing and interpreting evaluation results.

If the team suspects that the student has dyslexia, a related disorder, or another disability included within the IDEA, the team must refer the student for a full individual and initial evaluation (FIIE). In most cases, an FIIE under the IDEA must be completed within 45-school days from the time a district or charter school receives parental consent. The student should continue to receive grade level, evidence-based core reading instruction (Tier 1) and any other appropriate tiered interventions while the school conducts the FIIE.

**It is important to remember, at any time ( First through grade 12) a student struggling with one or more components of reading, Alvord ISD will collect**



**additional information about the student and may refer for an FIIE. Parents also have the right to request a FIIE at any time, through a written request to the appropriate administrator.** Once a parent request has been made, Alvord ISD is obligated to review student's data to determine a reason to suspect a disability and respond within 15 school days.

Once a student has been referred for an FIIE, Alvord ISD will:

- Gain Parental Consent
- **Gather Cumulative Data**
- Conduct a Formal Evaluation
- Review and Interpretation of Data and Evaluations
- Dyslexia Identification

The academic history of each student will provide the school with the cumulative data needed to ensure that underachievement in a student suspected of having dyslexia is not due to lack of appropriate instruction in reading. This information should include data that demonstrate that the student was provided appropriate instruction and include data-based documentation of repeated evaluations of achievement at reasonable intervals (progress monitoring), reflecting formal evaluation of student progress during instruction. These cumulative data also include information from parents/guardians. Sources and examples of cumulative data are provided in Figure 3.2 in the Texas Dyslexia Handbook.

Information regarding a child's early literacy experiences, environmental factors, and socioeconomic status must be part of the data collected throughout the data gathering process. These data support the determination that difficulties in learning are not due to cultural factors or environmental or economic disadvantage. Studies that have examined language development and the effects of home experiences on young children indicate that home experiences and socioeconomic status have dramatic effects on cumulative vocabulary development (Hart & Risley, 1995). Having data related to these factors may help in determining whether the student's struggles with reading are due to a lack of opportunity or a reading disability, including dyslexia.

The MDT, using input from the parent/guardian, completes the FIIE, which determines if the student meets the criteria for dyslexia, and, if so, explains the impact of dyslexia on the student's access and progress in the enrolled grade-level general curriculum. The next step is for the ARD committee, which includes the parent/ guardian as a committee member, to determine prong 1 and prong 2, which means the student has both the identification of a qualifying disability and the

need for special education and related services. Eligibility is determined by the ARD committee in accordance with federal and state law and regulations.

The ARD committee will review the FIIE and all available data to determine eligibility for special education and related services. When a student is determined to have dyslexia and the data shows a need for specially designed instruction, i.e., evidence-based dyslexia instruction, then the student meets the two prongs of special education eligibility. That is, the student has a qualifying disability – as dyslexia is an SLD under the IDEA and state law – and demonstrates a need for specially designed instruction.

If—based on the data—the student is identified with dyslexia, but is determined by the ARD committee as not eligible for special education and related services because the student is determined to not need dyslexia instruction, (i.e., specially designed instruction) the student may be eligible to receive accommodations under Section 504.

**Please refer to Figure 3.8 of the Texas Dyslexia Handbook for a more detailed description of the Pathways for the Identification and Provision of Instruction for Students with Dyslexia**

Students may be evaluated for dyslexia only once in their school career. It is a brain based disability, therefore it is not a condition that will develop as the student matures.

#### **English Language Learners:**

Much diversity exists among English Language Learners (ELLs). The identification and service delivery process for dyslexia must be in step with the student's linguistic environment and educational background. Involvement of the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) in the decision making process is required.

Additional data to be gathered when assessing English Language Learners:

- Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) documentation
- Comprehensive oral language proficiency testing should be completed for a dyslexia evaluation

#### **Interpretation:**

Test results of English Language Learners (ELL) will be interpreted in light of the student's language development (in both English and the student's native

language), educational history, linguistic background, socio-economic issues, nature of the writing system and any other pertinent factors that affect learning.

### **Assessment of Students Identified Outside the District**

Students identified as having dyslexia or related disorders from an outside source will be evaluated for eligibility in the district's program. Alvord ISD may choose to accept the outside assessment, or may re-assess the student. In either situation, the ARD committee will determine the identification status of a student enrolled in Somewhere ISD, and the placement of the student in the dyslexia program(s).

## **V. Instruction for Students with Dyslexia**

Effective literacy instruction is essential for all students and is especially critical for students identified with dyslexia. High-quality core classroom reading instruction can give students identified with dyslexia a foundation upon which intervention instruction can have a more significant impact.

Texas Education Code §38.003(b) states, “in accordance with the program approved by the State Board of Education, the board of trustees of each school district shall provide for the treatment of any student determined to have dyslexia or a related disorder.” SBOE rules in 19 TAC §74.28 require that each school must provide an identified student access at his/her campus to an instructional program that meets the requirements in SBOE rule and to the services of a teacher trained in dyslexia and related disorders. While the components of instruction for students with dyslexia include good teaching principles for all teachers, the explicitness and intensity of the instruction, fidelity to program descriptors, grouping formats, and training and skill of the teachers are wholly different from core classroom instruction and must be considered when making individual placement decisions.

- Alvord ISD shall purchase a reading program (Take Flight Program) for students with dyslexia and related disorders that is aligned with the descriptors found in this handbook. The descriptors include the components of phonemic awareness, sound-symbol association, syllabication, orthography, morphology, syntax, reading comprehension, and reading fluency. Instructional approaches include simultaneous, multisensory, systematic and cumulative, explicit, diagnostic teaching to automaticity, synthetic and analytic instruction (19 TAC §74.28). The components of instruction and instructional approaches are described in the next section of the Alvord ISD plan.

- Alvord ISD must provide each identified student access at his/her

campus to an instructional program that meets the requirements in 19 TAC §74.28(c) and to the services of a teacher trained in dyslexia and related disorders. The school district may, with the approval of each student's parents or guardians, offer additional services at a centralized location. Such centralized services shall not preclude each student from receiving services at his or her campus (19 TAC §74.28).

- Teachers who provide the appropriate instruction for students with dyslexia must be trained in instructional strategies that utilize individualized, intensive, multisensory, phonetic methods and a variety of writing and spelling components specified in the next section of this plan. (19 TAC §74.28).

- Teachers who provide the appropriate instruction for students with dyslexia must be trained in the professional development activities specified by Alvord ISD, and/or campus planning and decision making committee which shall include the instructional strategies indicated above (19 TAC §74.28).

Alvord ISD shall provide a parent education program for the parents/guardians of students with dyslexia and related disorders. The program should include the following:

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

Instructional decisions for a student with dyslexia must be made by a committee (§504 or ARD) that is knowledgeable about the instructional components and approaches for students with dyslexia. In accordance with 19 TAC §74.28(c), districts shall purchase or develop a reading program for students with dyslexia and related disorders that incorporates **all** of the following components of instruction and instructional approaches.

### **Critical, Evidence-Based Components of Dyslexia Instruction**

- Phonological Awareness
- Sound-symbol Association
- Syllabication
- Orthography
- Morphology

- Syntax
- Reading Comprehension

### **Delivery of Dyslexia Instruction**

- Simultaneous, multisensory (VAKT Instruction)
  - Systematic and Cumulative Instruction
  - Explicit instruction
  - Diagnostic teaching to automaticity
  - Synthetic instruction
  - Analytic instruction

Both the teacher of dyslexia and the regular classroom teacher should provide multiple opportunities to support intervention and to strengthen these skills; therefore, responsibility for teaching reading and writing must be shared by classroom teachers, reading specialists, interventionists, and teachers of dyslexia programs.

At this time, Alvord ISD is using the Take Flight Program developed by the Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for the dyslexia reading therapy program.

### **VI. Program Completion**

Students are dismissed from the dyslexia therapy pull-out program upon completion of the Take Flight Dyslexia Reading Program. Mastery checks will be completed once per 6 weeks to ensure progress is being made. Students qualifying for dyslexia services that are identified as special education will follow monitoring/re-evaluation requirements outlined in federal law.

No one factor is sufficient to warrant exiting a student from direct dyslexia services. Dismissal is determined by the ARD committee. The committee considers the following factors when recommending exiting or reduction of dyslexic services:

- Completion of the district dyslexia program
- The reevaluation and/or post-testing of student shows student growth to be closer to grade level proficiency standards  
(NOTE: Reevaluation does not mean reassessing to establish the identification of dyslexia, but rather viewing data that supports student progress, and achievement.)
- The student demonstrates self-monitoring/self-correction behaviors as

- evidenced through informal observation by teacher and/or dyslexia teacher
- The student passed the reading portion of the state assessment (NOTE: passing the reading portion of the state assessment is never the sole source for exiting dyslexia services);
  - Committee recommendation
  - Parent request in writing that the student exit the program

If a student has shown substantial progress and the §504 committee or ARD committee determines the student is ready to be dismissed completely from the program, the committee may recommend monitoring services instead of direct services. Upon successful completion of the program, will receive regular monitoring during the first two years after completion.

Monitoring may include, but is not limited to the collection/evaluation of

- Report cards
- State assessment data
- Teacher reports/checklists
- Additional assessment data

When a child is exited from the dyslexia program, a dismissal form will be completed and placed in the child's cumulative folder.

