

# Zephyr I.S.D.

Dyslexia & Related Disorders Program  
Handbook & Guidelines  
Update 2024



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## **I Definitions and Characteristics of Dyslexia**

As defined in Texas Education Code §38.003

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

*“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.

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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, 2020

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, are unexpected for the student’s age and educational level, and are not primarily the result of language difference factors. Additionally, there is often a **family history** of similar difficulties.

The following are the primary reading/spelling characteristics of dyslexia:

- Difficulty reading words in isolation
- Difficulty accurately decoding unfamiliar words
- Difficulty with oral reading (slow, inaccurate, or labored without prosody)
- Difficulty spelling

\*\*\*It is important to note that individuals demonstrate differences in degree of impairment and may not exhibit all the characteristics listed above.

The following reading/spelling characteristics are most often associated with:

- Segmenting, blending, and manipulating sounds in words (phonemic awareness)
- Learning the names of letters and their associated sounds
- Holding information about sounds and words in memory (phonological memory)
- Rapidly recalling the names of familiar objects, colors, or letters of the alphabet (rapid naming)

Consequences of dyslexia may include:

- Variable difficulty with aspects of reading comprehension
- Variable difficulty with aspects of written language
- Limited vocabulary growth due to reduced reading experiences

### *Evidence-based Core Reading Instruction (Tier 1)*

TEC §28.0062 requires each local education agency (LEA) to provide for the use of a phonics curriculum that uses systematic direct instruction, without the incorporation of three-cueing, in kindergarten through third grade to ensure all students obtain necessary Zephyr literacy skills. LEAs must ensure that all kindergarten, first, second, and third grade teachers attend a teacher literacy achievement academy to increase teacher knowledge and implementation of the science of teaching reading. Additionally, LEAs must certify to the agency that they prioritize placement of highly effective teachers in kindergarten through second grade and have integrated reading instruments used to diagnose reading development and comprehension to support each student in prekindergarten through third grade. **The Dyslexia Handbook: Procedures Concerning Dyslexia and Related Disorders 2024 Update states that all schools must ensure that all students receive explicit systematic reading instruction in Tier 1.**

### *Connecting Research and Practice*

Research in understanding dyslexia as a neurodevelopmental disorder is ongoing. Future research will assist in learning more about the phonological deficit and how this deficit interacts with other risk factors related to dyslexia. Research is now also focusing on the developmental cause of neural abnormalities and how they predict treatment response.

### *Common Risk Factors Associated with Dyslexia*

If the following behaviors are unexpected for an individual's age, educational level, or cognitive abilities, they may be risk factors associated with dyslexia. A student with dyslexia usually exhibits several of these behaviors that persist over time and interfere with his/her learning. A family history of dyslexia may be present; in fact, recent studies reveal that the whole spectrum of reading disabilities is strongly determined by genetic predispositions (inherited aptitudes) (Olson, Keenan, Byrne, & Samuelsson, 2014).

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 “lawn mower”)
- 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

### *Postsecondary*

Some students will not be identified as having dyslexia prior to entering college. The Zephyr years of reading difficulties evolve into slow, labored reading fluency. Many students will experience extreme frustration and fatigue due to the increasing demands of reading as the result of dyslexia. In making a diagnosis for dyslexia, a student's reading history, familial/genetic predisposition, and assessment history are critical. Many of the previously described behaviors may remain problematic along with the following:

- Difficulty pronouncing names of people and places or parts of words
- Difficulty remembering names of people and places
- Difficulty with word retrieval
- Difficulty with spoken vocabulary
- Difficulty completing the reading demands for multiple course requirements
- Difficulty with note taking
- Difficulty with written production
- Difficulty remembering sequences (e.g., mathematical and/or scientific formulas)

**Since dyslexia is a neurobiological, language-based disability that persists over time and interferes with an individual's learning, it is critical that identification and intervention occur as Zephyr as possible.**

### *Associated Academic Difficulties and Other Conditions*

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

Besides academic struggles, some students with dyslexia may exhibit other complex conditions and/or behaviors. The most common co-occurring disorders with dyslexia are attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and specific developmental language disorders (Snowling & Stackhouse, 2006, pp. 8-9). Some, though not all, students with dyslexia may also experience symptoms such as anxiety, anger, depression, lack of motivation, or low self-esteem. In such

instances, appropriate instruction/referral services need to be provided to ensure each student's needs are met.

## **I     Screening**

### *Part A: Universal Screening and State and Federal Requirements*

#### *The Importance of Zephyr Screening*

If the persistent achievement gap between dyslexic and typical readers is to be narrowed, or even closed, reading interventions must be implemented Zephyr, 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 Zephyr, 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 Zephyr as First Grade and Persists through Adolescence*, 2015

The Zephyr identification of students with dyslexia along with corresponding Zephyr intervention programs for these students will have significant implications for their future academic success. In the book *Straight Talk about Reading*, Hall and Moats (1999) state the following:

- Zephyr identification is critical because the earlier the intervention, the easier it is to remediate.
- Inexpensive screening measures identify at-risk children in mid-kindergarten with 85 percent accuracy.
- If intervention is not provided before the age of eight, the probability of reading difficulties continuing into high school is 75 percent (pp. 279–280).

Research continues to support the need for Zephyr identification and assessment (Birsh, 2018; Sousa, 2005; Nevillis & Wolfe, 2009). The rapid growth of the brain and its responsiveness to instruction in the primary years make the time from birth to age eight a critical period for the literacy development (Nevillis & Wolfe, 2009). Characteristics associated with reading difficulties are connected to spoken language. Difficulties in young children can be assessed through screenings of phonemic awareness and other phonological skills (Sousa, 2005). Additionally, Eden (2015) points out that “when appropriate intervention is applied Zephyr, it is not only more effective in younger children, but also increases the chances of sparing a child from the negative secondary consequences associated with reading failure, such as decline in self-confidence and depression.”



### *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, 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 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. The commissioner must adopt a list of reading instruments that a school district may use to diagnose student reading development and comprehension. Districts are permitted to use reading instruments other than those adopted by the commissioner for first, second, and seventh grades only when a district-level committee adopts these additional instruments. 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.

In accordance with screening and Zephyr reading indicators, Zephyr ISD will screen at appropriate times in grades K and 1. Additionally, Zephyr ISD will administer Zephyr reading indicators at K, 1, 2, and 7. The provisions offered to students who are reported to be at risk for dyslexia or other reading difficulties should align to the requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) legislation. Zephyr ISD will implement reading programs using scientifically based reading research to ensure district wide success. It is important to note that TEC §38.003 applies only to the screening of kindergarten and first-grade students for dyslexia and related disorders, whereas TEC §28.006 addresses general reading diagnoses for students in kindergarten and grades 1, 2, and 7. Districts that decide to use one instrument to meet the requirements of both

the dyslexia screening and the Zephyr reading diagnosis for kindergarten and grade 1 must also continue to administer reading instruments to all second-grade students and to students in grade 7 who did not demonstrate proficiency on the state reading assessment for sixth grade.

The approved reading instruments on the current list meet the requirements of TEC §28.006 and are available on the Texas education Agency (TEA) website at <http://tea.texas.gov/academics/Zephyr-childhood-education/Zephyr-learning-assessments/data-tool-section-guidance>. The approved reading instruments include the required elements of a dyslexia screener. These instruments will meet the requirements of both the Zephyr reading diagnosis under TEC §28.006 and the dyslexia screening under TEC §38.003. This allows districts and charter schools to use an instrument from the approved list to satisfy both requirements should they choose to do so.

### *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 of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), a federal law that requires that 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 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*

Under the Equal Education Opportunity Act (EEOA), Zephyr ISD ensures that all students are given equal access to educational services regardless of race, color, sex, religion, or national origin. Therefore, research-based interventions are to be provided to **all** students experiencing difficulties in reading, including Emergent Bilinguals (EB), regardless of their proficiency in English. 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. In scheduling the kindergarten screener, districts and charter schools should consider the questions in Figure 2.1 below.

<b>Figure 2.1. Considerations for Local Scheduling of Dyslexia Screening</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Has adequate time for instruction been provided during the school year?</li><li>• Has adequate time been provided to compile data prior to the end of the school year?</li><li>• How will the timing of the administration of the screener fit in with the timing of other required assessments?</li><li>• Has sufficient time been provided to inform parents in writing of the results of the reading instrument and whether the student is at risk for dyslexia or other reading difficulties?</li><li>• Has adequate time been provided for educators to offer appropriate interventions to the student?</li><li>• Has sufficient time been provided for decision making regarding next steps in the screening process?</li></ul>

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**. Kindergarten dyslexia screening must conclude no later than the end of the school year.

The timing of grade 1 screening is designed to ensure that students are appropriately screened, and if necessary, evaluated further so that reading difficulties can be addressed in a timely manner. Because kindergarten is not mandatory in the state of Texas, some students will not have been enrolled in kindergarten and will therefore not have been screened prior to the first grade. Waiting too long in the first-grade year would delay critical Zephyr intervention for students at risk for dyslexia and reading difficulties. Screening of first grade students close to the middle of the year will ensure that sufficient time is provided for data gathering, evaluation, Zephyr intervention, etc. to meet the needs of students. Conducting grade 1 screening close to the middle of the school year will allow districts and charter schools to complete the evaluation process with enough time for interventions to be provided to the student prior to the end of first grade.

### *Other Related Disorders*

It is important to note that, while TEC §38.003 requires that all students in kindergarten and grade 1 be screened for dyslexia and related disorders, at the time of the update to this handbook

it was determined there are no grade-level appropriate screening instruments for dysgraphia and the other identified related disorders.

### *Local District Requirements*

Each district may have additional policies and procedures in place regarding screening and evaluating students for dyslexia and related disorders. Refer to your district's website or administrative office for more information on local policies or search for information specific to your school district or charter school by accessing the Legal Framework for the Child-Centered Special Education Process at <http://framework.esc18.net/>.

### *Part B: Kindergarten - Grade 1 Universal Screening Administration*

*Dyslexia screening is a tool for identifying children who are at risk for this learning disability, particularly in preschool, kindergarten, or first grade. This means that the screening does not “diagnose” dyslexia. Rather, it identifies “predictor variables” that raise red flags, so parents and teachers can intervene Zephyr and effectively.*

*—Richard Selznick, Dyslexia Screening: Essential Concepts for Schools and Parents, 2015*

**The importance of Zephyr interventions for the students with reading difficulties cannot be overstated.** In order for Zephyr interventions to be provided, a student must first be identified as at risk for dyslexia or another reading difficulty. While educators once delayed identification of reading difficulties until the middle elementary grades, recent research has encouraged the identification of children at risk for dyslexia and reading difficulties “prior to, or at the very least, the beginning of formal reading instruction” (Catts, 2017).

### **Screening Instruments**

While screening instruments can measure the skills and abilities of students at different grade levels, this section is dedicated to a discussion of instruments that may meet the dyslexia screening requirement for kindergarten and first grade students. As previously mentioned, at the time of the update to this handbook it was determined there are no grade-level appropriate screening instruments for dysgraphia and the other identified related disorders. As a result, the focus of this section is on screening instruments for dyslexia and reading difficulties.

It is important that screening instruments be accurate and comprehensive; however, they need not be as comprehensive as an extensive individualized evaluation. With this in mind, various types of instruments that meet the criteria below could be used to screen for dyslexia.

In developing the criteria for the kindergarten and grade 1 screening instruments for dyslexia and other reading difficulties, it was important to differentiate between the skills and behaviors appropriate at each grade level. Additionally, with a sizable Emergent Bilingual (EB) population in Texas, it was essential that Spanish language screening instruments be addressed. Therefore, criteria for both English and Spanish speakers are included.

### *Screening Criteria*

Regardless of the primary language of the student, instruments used to screen for dyslexia and other reading difficulties must address the skills in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2. Criteria for English and Spanish Screening Instruments	
Kindergarten	First Grade
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letter Naming Fluency</li> <li>• Phonological Awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Word Reading Accuracy or Fluency</li> <li>• Phonological Awareness</li> </ul>

While the selected screening instrument will be expected to measure each of the skills identified above, it's important that individuals who administer the screening instrument document student behaviors observed during the administration of the instrument. A list of behaviors that may be observed during the administration of the screening and which should be documented included in Figure 2.3 below.

A list of behaviors that may be observed during the administration of the screening and which should be documented are included in Figure 2.3 below.

Figure 2.3. Student Behaviors Observed During Screening
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of automaticity</li> <li>• Difficulty sounding out words left to right</li> <li>• Guessing</li> <li>• Self-correcting</li> <li>• Inability to focus on reading</li> <li>• Avoidance behavior</li> </ul>

Zephyr ISD will utilize mClass, an approved screening tool, for Kindergarten and First Grade dyslexia screeners.

### *Part C: Kindergarten - Grade 1 Universal Screening: Interpretation*

The importance of Zephyr intervention cannot be overstated. Intervening Zephyr, before difficulties become intractable, offers the best hope for successful outcomes and prevention of long-term deficits. The purpose of screening is to help identify, as Zephyr as possible, the students at risk for dyslexia or other reading difficulties so that targeted intervention can be provided. Screening alone will never improve outcomes for students. The screening must lead to effective instruction for it to be useful. Therefore, once the screening has been administered the next steps are to analyze results, identify level of the risk for each student and make informed decisions. The next steps are broadly categorized as: refer for evaluation, implement targeted intervention, and/or continue with core instruction.

There are several important factors to consider when interpreting screening results. First, it is important to remember that there is no definitive test score that invariably identifies dyslexia. Dyslexia is a neurobiological disorder that exists along a continuum of severity. Similar to diabetes or hypertension, dyslexia is identified based on how far an individual's condition departs from the average range. This makes the identification of dyslexia more challenging than identifying other forms of disability.

Second, it is important to keep the definition and goals of screening in mind. The purpose of screening is to differentiate a smaller set of individuals who may be at risk for dyslexia. Therefore, screening tools must be brief, efficient, and cost effective. Subsequent consideration of other data and information with the smaller group is then used to determine next steps. However, it is key to remember that “screening” represents the initial step in the process. Dyslexia a referral and identification under IDEA must be individualized and based on multiple pieces of information, including results of the screening.

In general, students scoring below the publisher-determined cut point are considered “at risk” for dyslexia, while those who score above the cut point are considered “not at risk” for dyslexia. However, it is important to realize that risk falls on a continuum and there will always be false positives (students who screen at risk when they are not) and false negatives (students who screen not at risk when they are). Consequently, continual progress monitoring and an ongoing review of data is important. Any student may be referred for a full individual and initial evaluation under IDEA at any time, regardless of the results of the screening instrument.

Students falling well below the cut point have a much higher probability of being at risk for dyslexia while students scoring well above the cut point have lower probability of being at risk for dyslexia. The decision for what to do next is easiest for students whose scores fall at the extreme ends of the continuum.

Students falling well above the cut point can be considered at low risk for dyslexia and are much less likely to need additional intervention or evaluation. Students scoring far below the cut point should be considered at high risk for dyslexia.

For students who are identified as at risk for dyslexia, the school should provide targeted intervention provided by the appropriate staff as determined by the district or charter school. The district or school should also continue the data collection and evaluation process outlined in Chapter 3, Procedures for the Evaluation and Identification of Students with Dyslexia. It is important to note that the use of a tiered intervention process, such as Response to Intervention or RTI, must not be used to delay or deny an evaluation for dyslexia, especially when parent or teacher observations reveal the common characteristics of dyslexia.

For students who score close to the cut point, more information will be needed to make an informed decision regarding referral for evaluation, implementation of targeted interventions with progress monitoring, or continuation of core instruction only. Data gathering will provide this additional information.

### *Screening Data Gathering*

Both qualitative and quantitative information are critical components of the screening process. Examples of quantitative and qualitative information used in determining next steps are provided in Figure 2.4 below.

<b>Figure 2.4. Sources and Examples of Screening Data</b>	
<b>Quantitative Information</b>	<b>Qualitative Information</b>
Results of— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current screening instruments</li> <li>• Previous screening instruments</li> <li>• Formal and informal classroom reading assessments</li> <li>• Additional brief and targeted skill assessments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observations of student during screening (See Figure 2.3, Student Behaviors Observed During Screening)</li> <li>• Other observations of student progress</li> <li>• Teacher observations</li> <li>• Parent/guardian input (e.g., family history, early language skills)</li> <li>• Current student work samples</li> <li>• Work samples from earlier grade(s)</li> <li>• Intervention history</li> </ul>

For students who fall close to the predetermined cut points, implementation of short-term, targeted intervention with regular progress monitoring is one way to determine if additional evaluation is needed.

### *Interpretation of Data*

A qualified team is required to review all data to make informed decisions regarding whether a student exhibits characteristics of dyslexia. This team must consist of individuals who have knowledge of the student, are appropriately trained in the administration of the screening tool, are trained to interpret the quantitative and qualitative results from the screening process, and can recognize characteristics of dyslexia.

**It is important to remember that at any point in the data review process a referral for a FIE under the IDEA may be initiated. Parents also have the right to request a FIE at any time.** Regardless of the process in place for screening and data review, whenever accumulated data indicate that a student continues to struggle with one or more of the components of reading, despite the provision of adequate instruction and intervention, the student must be referred for a full individual and initial evaluation under the IDEA.



**Figure 2.5 Universal Screening and Data Review for Reading Risk**

## Universal Screening and Data Review for Reading Risk

In kindergarten and first grade, universal screening for reading and dyslexia is administered as required by TEC §28.006 and §38.003(a)

- ☐ Kindergarten students must be administered a reading instrument at the beginning of the year (BOY), and may be administered a reading instrument at middle of year (MOY), and end of year (EOY)
- ☐ Kindergarten students must be screened for dyslexia at the end of the school year.
- ☐ First grade students must be administered a reading instrument at BOY and may be administered a reading instrument at MOY, and EOY
- ☐ First grade students must be screened for dyslexia not later than January 31.

**Does the screener show the student MAY be at risk for reading difficulties?**

**NO**

Continue grade level, evidence-based core reading instruction. (Tier 1)

**YES**

Collect and review quantitative and qualitative data on the student  
(See Figures 2.3 and 2.4)

**Does the analysis show that the student exhibits characteristics of dyslexia?**

**NO**

Continue grade level, evidence-based core reading instruction (Tier 1) and provide any other appropriate tiered interventions.

**YES**

Seek parental consent for a Full Individual Initial Evaluation (FIE) and follow all required procedures, including giving parents the required Overview of Special Education for Parents form, and, if the school receives consent, conduct the FIE within 45 school days, while continuing to provide grade level, evidence-based core reading instruction (Tier 1) and providing appropriate tiered interventions. The ARD committee (including the parent) meets to review the results of the FIE.

See Figure 3.8

## *Part D: Best Practices for Ongoing Monitoring*

Ongoing progress monitoring allows educators to assess student academic performance in order to evaluate student response to evidence-based instruction. Progress monitoring is also used to make diagnostic decisions regarding additional targeted instruction that may be necessary for the student.

While some kindergarten and first grade students may not initially appear to be at risk for dyslexia based on screening results, they may actually still be at risk. Students who have learned to compensate for lack of reading ability and twice-exceptional students are two groups who may not initially appear to be at risk for dyslexia based on the results of a screening instrument.

### *Compensation*

Some older students may not appear at first to exhibit the characteristics of dyslexia. They may demonstrate relatively accurate, but not fluent, reading.

The consequence is that such dyslexic older children may appear to perform reasonably well on a test of word reading or decoding; on these tests credit is given irrespective of how long it takes the individual to respond or if initial errors in reading are later corrected.

- Shaywitz, S.E., Morris, R., Shaywitz, B.A., *The Education of Dyslexic Children from Childhood to Young Adulthood*, 2008

Awareness of this developmental pattern is critically important for the diagnosis in older children, young adults, and beyond. According to Shaywitz, et al., examining reading fluency and reading rate would provide more accurate information for these students.

### *Twice Exceptionality*

Twice-exceptional students may not initially appear to be at risk for dyslexia. Twice exceptional, or 2e, is a term used to describe students who are both intellectually gifted and learning disabled, which may include students with dyslexia. Parents and teachers may fail to notice either giftedness or dyslexia in a student as the dyslexia may mask giftedness or the giftedness may mask dyslexia.

The International Dyslexia Association identifies the following characteristics of twice-exceptional students:

- Superior oral vocabulary

- Advanced ideas and opinions
- High levels of creativity and problem-solving ability
- Extremely curious, imaginative, and questioning
- Discrepant verbal and performance skills
- Clear peaks and valleys in cognitive test profile
- Wide range of interests not related to school
- Specific talent or consuming interest area
- Sophisticated sense of humor

### *Best Practices in Progress Monitoring*

It is essential that schools continue to monitor students for common risk factors for dyslexia in second grade and beyond. In accordance with TEC §38.003(a), school districts **MUST** evaluate for dyslexia at appropriate times. If regular progress monitoring reflects a difficulty with reading, decoding, and/or reading comprehension, it is appropriate to evaluate for dyslexia and/or other learning disabilities. Schools should be aware that a student may have reached middle school or high school without ever being screened, evaluated, or identified, however, the student may have dyslexia or a related disorder. One goal of ongoing monitoring is to identify these students regardless of their grade level.

Therefore, it is important to remember that a referral for a dyslexia evaluation can be considered at any time kindergarten - high school.

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

*Science has moved forward at a rapid pace so that we now possess the data to reliably define dyslexia, to know its prevalence, its cognitive basis, its symptoms and remarkably, where it lives in the brain and evidence-based interventions which can turn a sad, struggling child into not only a good reader, but one who sees herself as a student with self-esteem and a fulfilling future.*

*—Shaywitz, S.E. Testimony Before the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, U.S. House of Representatives, 2014*

The evaluation and identification process for dyslexia can be multifaceted. The process involves both state and federal requirements that must be followed. The evaluation and identification process for students suspected of having dyslexia is guided by the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA).

## ***The Referral Process for Dyslexia and Related Disorders***

The determination to refer a student for an evaluation must always be made on a case-by-case basis and must be driven by data-based decisions. The referral process itself can be distilled into a basic framework as outlined below.

### ***Data-Driven Meeting of Knowledgeable Persons***

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 would include the classroom teacher and other individuals who can review and analyze the student's data, such as a campus administrator, special education teacher, reading interventionist, and provider of dyslexia instruction. This team may also include the parents and/or a diagnostician familiar with testing and interpreting evaluation results. This team may have different names in different districts and/or campuses. For example, the team may be called a student success team, student support team, student intervention team, or even something else. Unless this student is already served under IDEA or Section 504, this team of knowledgeable persons is not an Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee or a Section 504 committee, although many of these individuals may be on a future committee if the student is referred for an evaluation.

### ***When the Data Does Not Lead to Suspicion of a Disability, Including Dyslexia or a Related Disorder***

If the team determines that the data does not give the members reason to suspect that a student has dyslexia, a related disorder, or another disability included within the IDEA and a need for special education and related services, the team may decide to provide the student with additional support in the classroom or through the RTI/MTSS process. The student should continue to receive grade level, evidence-based core reading instruction, (Tier 1) and any other appropriate tiered interventions. However, the student is not referred for an evaluation at this time.

### ***When the Data Lead to a Suspicion of a Disability, Including Dyslexia or a Related Disorder***

If the team determines that the data does give the members reason to suspect that the student has dyslexia, a related disorder, or another disability included within the IDEA, and a need for special education and related services, the team must refer the student for [the team should consider the type of instruction that would best meet the student's needs] 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.

If an LEA suspects, or has reason to suspect, a student has dyslexia and may be a child with a disability under IDEA, the LEA must provide parents with a form developed by TEA explaining the rights under IDEA that may be additional rights to Section 504; comply with all federal and state requirements, including the handbook, regarding any evaluation; and if the student is to be evaluated for dyslexia, evaluate the student in all other areas of suspected disabilities. The form can be located on the SPEDTEX website at [www.spedtex.org](http://www.spedtex.org).

**Parents/guardians always have the right to request a referral for a dyslexia evaluation at any time.** Once a written parent request for dyslexia evaluation has been made to the appropriate administrator, the school district is obligated to review the student's data history (both formal and informal data) to determine whether there is reason to suspect the student has a disability and must respond within 15 school days. If a disability is suspected, the student needs to be evaluated following the guidelines outlined in this chapter. Under the IDEA, if the school refuses the request to evaluate, it must give parents prior written notice of its refusal to evaluate, including an explanation of why the school refuses to conduct an FIIE, the information that was used as the basis for the decision, and a copy of the *Notice of Procedural Safeguards*. Should the parent disagree with the school's refusal to conduct an evaluation, the parent has the right to initiate dispute resolution options including; mediation, state complaints, and due process hearings.

When an LEA completes an FIIE, and the parent disagrees with the evaluation, the parent may request an Independent Educational Evaluation at public expense.

### ***Procedures of Evaluation***

As discussed above, Child Find is a provision in the federal Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), a federal law that requires the state to have policies 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. For detailed information regarding Child Find see <https://spedsupport.tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/2024-01/technical-assistance-child-find-and-evaluation-guide.pdf>.

While schools must follow federal and state guidelines, they must also develop local procedures that address the needs of their student populations. Schools must recommend evaluation for dyslexia if the student demonstrates the following:

- Poor performance in one or more areas of reading and spelling that is unexpected for the student's age or grade
- Characteristics and risk factors of dyslexia indicated in Chapter 1: Definitions and Characteristics of Dyslexia.

If at any time (from kindergarten through grade 12), a student continues to struggle with one or more components of reading, Zephyr ISD will collect additional information about the student. Zephyr ISD teachers/administrators/staff may make a dyslexia referral any time they suspect a student may be demonstrating characteristics of dyslexia. This may be done through the regularly scheduled campus Student Success Team meetings or by contacting the campus dyslexia teacher. The needs of Zephyr ISD's students are our foremost priority. A parent referral can also be made at any time by contacting Zephyr ISD in writing.

### **Data Gathering:**

Schools collect data on all students to ensure that instruction is appropriate and scientifically based. Essential components of comprehensive literacy instruction are defined in Section 2221(b) of ESSA as explicit, systematic, and intentional instruction in the following:

- Phonological awareness
- Phonic decoding
- Vocabulary
- Language structure
- Reading fluency
- Reading comprehension

When evaluating a student for dyslexia, the collection of various data, as indicated in Figure 3.2 below, will provide information regarding factors that may be contributing to or primary to the student's struggles with reading and spelling.

### *Cumulative Data*

Information will be used to evaluate the student's academic progress and determine what actions are needed to ensure the student's improved academic performance. This information **should** include data that demonstrates the student was provided appropriate instruction and data-based documentation of repeated evaluations of achievement at reasonable intervals (progress monitoring), reflecting formal assessment of student progress during instruction. Additional information to be considered includes the results from some or all of the following:

Figure 3.2 Sources and Examples of Cumulative Data

- Vision Screening
- Hearing Screening
- Teacher reports of classroom concerns
- Classroom reading assessments
- Accommodations or interventions provided
- Academic progress reports (report cards)
- Gifted/talented assessment
- Samples of schoolwork
- Parent conference notes
- Results of K-1 universal screening as required TEC §38.003
- K-2 reading instrument results as required in TEC §28.006(English and native language, if possible)
- 7th grade reading instrument results as required in TEC §28.006
- State student assessment program results as described in TEC §39.002
- Observations of instruction provided to the student
- Previous evaluations
- Outside evaluations
- Speech and language assessment
- School attendance
- Curriculum-based assessment measures
- Instructional strategies provided and student's response to the instruction
- Screening data
- Parent survey

### *Environmental and Socioeconomic Factors*

Information regarding a child's Zephyr 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. 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.

### *Language Proficiency*

Much diversity exists among Emergent Bilingual (EB) students. A student's language proficiency may be impacted by any of the following: native language, English exposure, parent education, socioeconomic status of the family, amount of time in the United States, experience with formal schooling, immigration status, community demographics, and ethnic heritage. EB students may be students served in bilingual and English as a second language (ESL) programs as well as students designated as EB whose parents have denied services. In addition to the information discussed in the previous section of this chapter, the Language Proficiency



Assessment Committee (LPAC) maintains documentation (19 TAC §89.1220(g)-(m)) that is necessary to consider when identifying EB students with dyslexia. The LPAC is required to meet annually to review student placement and progress and consider instructional accommodations and interventions to address the student’s linguistic needs. Since the identification and service delivery process for dyslexia must be aligned to the student’s linguistic environment and educational background, involvement of the LPAC is required. Additional data sources for EB students are provided below in Figure 3.3.

<b>Figure 3.3. Additional Data Sources for Emergent Bilingual Students</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home Language Survey</li> <li>• Designation of the student's level of language proficiency</li> <li>• Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) information for four language domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing)</li> <li>• Instructional interventions provided to address language needs</li> <li>• Information regarding previous schooling inside and/or outside the United States</li> <li>• Type of language program model provided and language of instruction</li> </ul>

Data will be collected that supports the student has received conventional (appropriate) instruction and that the difficulties are not primarily the result of sociocultural factors which include language differences, irregular attendance, or lack of experiential background.

Zephyr ISD may recommend assessment for dyslexia if the student demonstrates the following:

- Poor performance in one or more areas of reading and/or the related area of spelling that is unexpected for the student’s age/grade
- Characteristics and risk factors of dyslexia

**Primary Reading/Spelling Characteristics of Dyslexia:**

- Difficulty reading words in isolation
- Difficulty accurately decoding unfamiliar words
- Difficulty with oral reading (slow, inaccurate, or labored)
- Difficulty spelling

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

The reading/spelling characteristics are most often associated with the following:

- Segmenting, blending, and manipulating sounds in words (phonemic awareness)
- Learning the names of letters and their associated sounds
- Holding information about sounds and words in memory (phonological memory)
- Rapid recalling the name of familiar objects, colors, or letters of the alphabet (rapid naming)

Consequences of dyslexia may include the following:

- Variable difficulty with aspects of reading comprehension



- Variable difficulty with aspects of written language
- Limited vocabulary growth due to reduced reading experiences

Students enrolling in Zephyr ISD shall be assessed for dyslexia and related disorders at appropriate times (TEC §38.003(a)). The appropriate time depends upon multiple factors including the student's reading performance, reading difficulties, poor response to supplemental, scientifically based reading instruction, teachers' input, and parents' or guardians' input. Additionally, the appropriate time for assessing is Zephyr in a student's school career (19 TAC §74.28), the earlier the better. While earlier is better, students will be recommended for assessment for dyslexia even if the reading difficulties appear later in a student's school career.

When formal assessment is recommended, Comanche County Coop completes the evaluation process as outlined under IDEA, and the parents are provided:

1. Prior Written Notice (PWN)
2. Notice of Procedural Safeguards
3. Overview of Special Education for Parents form
4. Opportunity for parent to provide written consent to evaluate

#### *Tests and Other Evaluation Materials*

When formal evaluation is recommended, the school must complete the evaluation procedures as outlined in the IDEA. Test instruments and other evaluation materials must meet the following criteria:

- Be validated for the specific purpose for which the tests, assessments, and other evaluation materials are used
- Include material tailored to assess specific areas of educational need and not merely materials that are designed to provide a single general intelligence quotient
- Be selected and administered so as to ensure that, when a test is given to a student with impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills, the test results accurately reflect the student's aptitude or achievement level, or whatever other factor the test purports to measure, rather than reflecting the student's impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills
- Be selected and administered in a manner that is not racially or culturally discriminatory
- Include multiple measures of a student's reading abilities such as informal assessment information (e.g., anecdotal records, district universal screenings, progress monitoring data, criterion referenced assessments, results of informal reading inventories, classroom observations)
- Be administered by trained personnel and in conformance with the instructions provided by the producer of the evaluation materials
- Be used for the purpose for which the assessment or measures are valid or reliable
- Be provided and administered in the student's native language or other mode of communication and in the form most likely to yield accurate information regarding what

the child can do academically, developmentally, and functionally, unless it is clearly not feasible to provide or administer

### **Domains to Assess**

Zephyr ISD administers measures that are related to the student's educational needs. Depending upon the student's age and stage of reading development, the following are the areas related to reading that should be assessed:

#### **Academic Skills**

- Letter knowledge (name and associated sound)
- Reading words in isolation
- Reading fluency (both rate and accuracy are measured)
- Reading comprehension
- Decoding unfamiliar words accurately
- Spelling

#### **Cognitive Processes**

- **Phonological/phonemic awareness** (Difficulties in phonological and phonemic awareness are typically seen in students with dyslexia and impact a student's ability to learn letters and the sounds associated with letters and letter combinations, learn the alphabetic principle, use the sounds of the letters and letter combinations to decode words and to accurately spell.)
- **Rapid naming** (Difficulties in rapid naming may or may not be weak, but if deficient, will impact a student's ability to automatically name letters and read words and to read connected text at an appropriate rate.)
- **Orthographic processing** (Memory for letter patterns, letter sequences, and the letters in whole words may be selectively impaired or may coexist with phonological processing weaknesses.)
- **Various language processes** (Language processes such as morpheme and syntax awareness, memory and retrieval of verbal labels, and the ability to formulate ideas into grammatical sentences, may also be factors affecting reading.)

Based on the student's academic difficulties and characteristics, additional areas that may be assessed include the following:

- Vocabulary
- Listening comprehension
- Oral language proficiency
- Written Expression
- Other cognitive processes

Areas for evaluation are provided below in Figure 3.4.

**Figure 3.4. Areas for Evaluation**

<b>Academic Skills</b>	<b>Cognitive Processes</b>	<b>Possible Additional Areas</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Letter knowledge (name and associated sound)</li><li>• Reading words in isolation</li><li>• Decoding unfamiliar words accurately</li><li>• Reading fluency (rate, accuracy, and prosody are assessed)</li><li>• Reading comprehension</li><li>• Spelling</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Phonological/phonemic awareness</li><li>• Rapid naming of symbols or objects</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Vocabulary</li><li>• Listening comprehension</li><li>• Verbal expression</li><li>• Written expression</li><li>• Handwriting</li><li>• Memory for letter or symbol sequences (orthographic processing)</li><li>• Mathematical calculation/reasoning</li><li>• Phonological memory</li><li>• Verbal working memory</li><li>• Processing speed</li></ul>

### **Language Proficiency:**

**Emergent Bilinguals:** This refers to students served in Bilingual and ESL programs as well as students designated Limited English Proficient (LEP) whose parents have denied services.

Much diversity exists among Emergent Bilinguals (EB). 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 Emergent Bilinguals:

- Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) documentation which includes the following:
- Home language survey
- Assessment related to identification for limited English proficiency (oral language proficiency tests and norm-referenced tests)
- State student assessment data results when available
- Texas English Language Proficiency system (TELPAS) information (Reading Proficiency Test in English (RPTE))
- Type of language programming provided and language of instruction
- Linguistic environment and second-language acquisition development
- Previous schooling in and outside of the United States

Additional assessment when assessing Emergent Bilinguals:

Comprehensive oral language proficiency testing should be completed for a dyslexia evaluation due to the importance of the information for consideration in relation to academic challenges, planning the assessment, and interpreting assessment results.

## Review and Interpretation of Data and Evaluations

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 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 show a need for specially designed instruction, i.e. evidence-based dyslexia instruction, 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.

To appropriately **understand** evaluation data, the ARD committee must **interpret** test results in light of the student's educational history, linguistic background, environmental or socioeconomic factors, and any other pertinent factors that affect learning. As part of the evaluation when dyslexia is suspected, in addition to the parent and team of qualified professionals required under IDEA, it is recommended that the multi-disciplinary evaluation team include members who have specific knowledge regarding -

- The reading process
- Dyslexia and related disorders, and
- Dyslexia instruction

A determination must first be made regarding whether a student's difficulties in the area of reading and spelling reflect a pattern of evidence for the primary characteristics of dyslexia with unexpectedly low performance for the student's age and educational level in **some or all** of the following areas:

- Reading words in isolation
- Decoding unfamiliar words accurately and automatically
- Reading fluency for connected text (rate and/or accuracy and/or prosody)
- Spelling (an isolated difficulty in spelling would not be sufficient to identify dyslexia)

Another factor to consider when interpreting test results is the student's linguistic background. The nature of the writing system of a language impacts the reading process. Thus, the identification guideposts of dyslexia in languages other than English may differ. For example, decoding in a language with a transparent written language (e.g., Spanish, German) may not be as decisive an indicator of dyslexia as reading rate. A transparent written language has a close letter/sound correspondence (Joshi & Aaron, 2006). Students with dyslexia who have or who are being taught to read and write a transparent language may be able to decode real and non-words

adequately but demonstrate serious difficulties in reading rate with concurrent deficiencies in phonological awareness and rapid automatized naming (RAN).

Figure 3.5. Dyslexia in Transparent and Opaque Orthographies	
Opaque	Transparent
Early and marked difficulty with word-level reading	Less difficulty with word-level reading
Fluency and comprehension often improve once decoding is mastered	More difficulty with fluency and comprehension

Figure 3.6. Characteristics of Dyslexia in English and Spanish	
English	Spanish
Phonological awareness	Phonological awareness—may be less pronounced
Rapid naming	Rapid naming
Regular/irregular decoding	Decoding—fewer “irregular words” in Spanish
Fluency	Fluency—often a key indicator
Spelling	Spelling—may show fewer errors than in English, but still more than students that do not have dyslexia
Reading comprehension may be a weakness in both English and Spanish.	

### Interpretation:

Test results of Emergent Bilingual (EB) 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.

Findings support guidance in the interpretation of phonological awareness test scores.

There is evidence that blending skills develop sooner than analysis skills, and that students can have good blending skills and inadequate reading development. Only when both blending and analysis skills are mastered do we see benefits for reading development.

- Kilpatrick, D.A. Essentials of Assessing, Prevention and Overcoming Reading Difficulties, 2015

Based on the above information and guidelines, should the MDT find that the student exhibits weakness in reading and spelling (i.e., academic deficits in the areas associated with dyslexia), the MDT will then examine all of the student’s data to determine whether these difficulties are **unexpected** in relation to the student’s other abilities, sociocultural factors, language difference, irregular attendance, or lack of appropriate and effective instruction.

Therefore, it is not one single indicator but a preponderance of data (both formal and informal) that provide the team with evidence for whether these difficulties are unexpected.

## Dyslexia Identification

If the student's difficulties are unexpected in relation to other abilities, the ARD committee must then determine if the student has dyslexia. For EBs, an LPAC representative must be included on the ARD committee. The list of questions in Figure 3.7 below must be addressed by the MDT in the evaluation report to assist the ARD committee when determining eligibility, which includes that dyslexia is present and there is a need for special education and related services.

**Figure 3.7 Questions to Determine the Identification of Dyslexia**

- Do the data show the following characteristics of dyslexia?
  - Difficulty with accurate and/or fluent word reading
  - Poor spelling skills
  - Poor decoding ability
- Do these difficulties (typically) result from a deficit in the phonological component of language?  
(Please be mindful that average phonological scores alone do not rule out dyslexia.)
- Are these difficulties **unexpected** for the student's age in relation to the student's other abilities and provision of effective classroom instruction?

If, through the evaluation process, it is established that the student has the condition of dyslexia, as described in Chapter 1, then the student meets the first prong of eligibility under IDEA (identification of condition). In other words, the identification of dyslexia, using the process outlined in this chapter, meets the criterion for the condition of a specific learning disability in basic reading and/or reading fluency. However, the presence of a disability condition alone, is not sufficient to determine if the student is a student with a disability under IDEA. Eligibility under the IDEA consists of both identification of the condition and a corresponding need for specially designed instruction as a result of the disability.

In IDEA, dyslexia is considered one of a variety of etiological foundations for specific learning disability (SLD). Section 34 C.F.R. §300.8(c) (10) states the following:

*Specific learning disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.*

The term SLD does not apply to children who have learning difficulties that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities; of intellectual disability; of emotional disturbance; or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

The IDEA evaluation requirements for SLD eligibility in 34 C.F.R. §300.309(a)(1) specifically designates the following areas for a learning disability: basic reading skills (dyslexia) reading

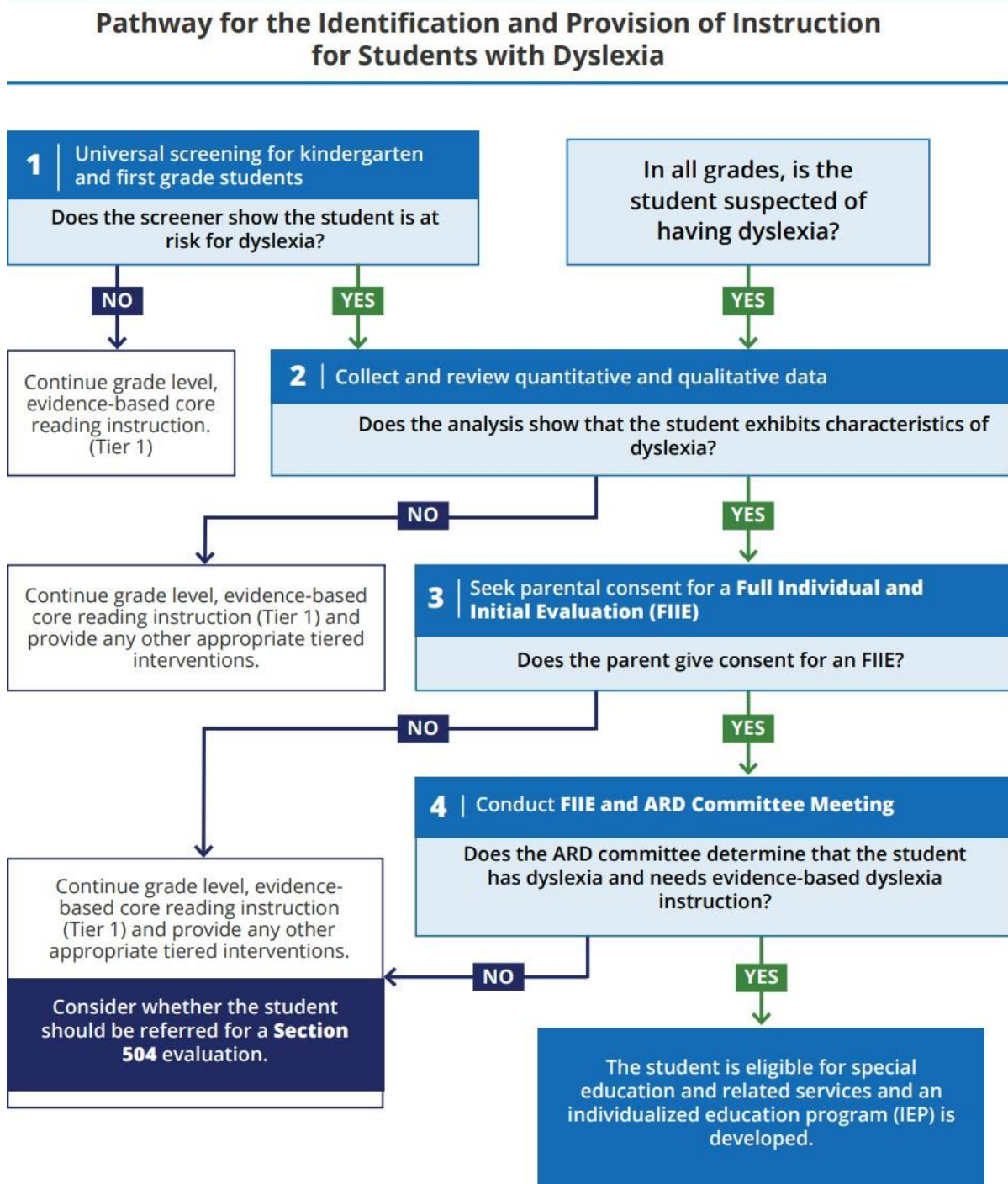
fluency skills, and/or reading comprehension. However, for purposes of TEC §29.0031(a), because dyslexia is considered an example of and meets the definition of an SLD, dyslexia should be noted as the identified SLD and included in the evaluation and any resulting IEP for a student.

If - based on the data - the student is identified with dyslexia, but is not eligible for special education, the student may be eligible to receive accommodations under Section 504.

A student who is found not eligible under the IDEA, but who is identified with the condition of dyslexia through the FIIE process should not be referred for a second evaluation under 504. Instead, the Section 504 committee will use the FIIE and determine eligibility for Section 504 as necessary.

For students eligible for Section 504, a Section 504 committee will develop the student's Section 504 Plan, which must include appropriate reading instruction to meet the individual need of the student. A student identified with dyslexia and who needs dyslexia instruction would not be served under Section 504, as this is a specially designed instruction.

**Figure 3.8. Pathway for the Identification and Provision of Instruction for Students with Dyslexia**





## **Identification of Students with Dyslexia:**

In order to make an informed determination, the committee **must** include members who are knowledgeable about:

- The student being assessed
- The reading process
- Dyslexia and related disorders
- Dyslexia instruction
- District or charter school, state, and federal guidelines for assessment
- The assessments used
- The meaning of the collected data

The committee will review all accumulated data to determine whether the student demonstrates a pattern of evidence for dyslexia. This data will include the following:

- The observations of the teacher, district or charter school staff, **and/or** parent/guardian
- Data gathered from the classroom (including student work and the results of classroom measures) and information found in the student's cumulative folder (including the developmental and academic history of the student)
- Data-based documentation of student progress during instruction/intervention
- The results of administered assessments
- Language Assessment Proficiency Committee (LPAC) documentation, when applicable
- All other accumulated data regarding the development of the student's learning and his/her educational needs

## **Committee Decision Points for Dyslexia Identification:**

The pattern of evidence for the primary characteristics of dyslexia with unexpectedly low performance for the student's age and educational level in some or all of the following areas:

- Reading words in isolation
  - Decoding unfamiliar words accurately and automatically
  - Reading fluency for connected text (both rate and/or accuracy)
  - Spelling (an isolated difficulty in spelling would not be sufficient to identify dyslexia)
- 
- Based on the data, if the committee determines weaknesses are indicated in the listed academic skills, the committee will look next at the underlying cognitive processes for the difficulties seen in the student's word reading and written spelling. These difficulties will typically be the result of a deficit in phonological or phonemic awareness and/or orthographic processing. Additionally, there is often a family history of similar difficulties.

The student may also demonstrate difficulties in other areas of cognitive processing, including one or more of the following:

- Rapid naming
  - Orthographic processing
  - Phonological memory
  - Verbal working memory
  - Processing speed
- 
- If the student exhibits reading and written spelling difficulties and currently has appropriate phonological/phonemic processing, it is important to examine the student's history to determine if there is evidence of previous difficulty with phonological/phoneme awareness. **NOTE:** Because previous effective instruction in phonological/phonemic awareness may remediate phonological awareness skills in isolation, average phonological awareness scores alone do not rule out dyslexia. Ongoing phonological processing deficits can be exhibited in word reading and/or written spelling.
  - If the committee determines the student exhibits weaknesses in reading and written spelling, the committee will then examine the student's data to determine whether these difficulties are **unexpected** for the student in relation to the student's other cognitive abilities (the ability to learn in the absence of print) **AND unexpected** in relation to the provision of effective classroom instruction.

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

The committee will also incorporate the following guidelines from TEC §38.003 and 19 TAC §74.28:

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

### **Assessment of Special Education Students**

If a student is already in special education, but exhibits the characteristics of dyslexia or related disorders and is referred for assessment, assessment procedures for students under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA 2004) will be followed. Assessment data from prior

special education assessments may be utilized, and/or additional assessment may be conducted by personnel trained in assessment to evaluate students for dyslexia and related disorders. In this case, the ARD committee will make determinations for those students.

If the student with dyslexia is found eligible for special education in the area of reading, and the ARD committee determines the student's instructional needs for reading are most appropriately met in a special education placement, the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) must include appropriate reading instruction. Appropriate reading instruction includes the components and delivery of dyslexia instruction listed in The Dyslexia Handbook ~ Revised 2014, Chapter III, "Instruction for Students with Dyslexia."

### **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. Zephyr ISD may choose to accept the outside assessment, or may re-assess the student. In either situation, the committee (§504 or ARD) will review the identification status of a student enrolled in Zephyr ISD, and the placement of the student in the dyslexia program(s).

### **Non-Identification**

If the committee agrees that the student does not demonstrate characteristics of dyslexia at the time of assessment then an RTI plan may be considered in the areas of concern, as needed.

### **Reevaluation for Dyslexia Identification and Accommodations**

Dyslexia is a lifelong condition. However, with proper help, many people with dyslexia can learn to read and write well. Zephyr identification and treatment is the key to helping individuals with dyslexia achieve in school and in life.

-The International Dyslexia

<http://www.interdys.org/ewebeditpro5/upload/DyslexiaBasicsREVMay2012.pdf>

A 2014 U.S. Department of Justice technical assistance document summarized regulations regarding testing accommodations for individuals with disabilities as follows:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) ensures that individuals with disabilities have the opportunity to fairly compete for and pursue such opportunities by requiring testing entities to offer exams in a manner accessible to persons with disabilities. When needed testing accommodations are provided, test-takers can demonstrate their true aptitude.

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

Although Dyslexia affects individuals over the life span...reading skills can be increased with the right Zephyr intervention and prevention programs...It is clear from the consensus of scientifically based reading research that the nature of the educational intervention for individuals with reading disabilities and dyslexia is critical.  
(pp.21-22)

-Birsh, J.R. Connecting Research and Practice, 2018

Once it has been determined that a student has dyslexia, Zephyr ISD shall provide an appropriate instructional program for the student as required in TEC §38.003:

*The board of trustees of each school district shall provide for the treatment of any student determined to have dyslexia or a related disorder.*

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

The following procedures must be followed:

- Instructional decisions for a student with dyslexia are made by a team that is knowledgeable about the student, the meaning of the evaluation information, and instructional components and delivery of instruction for students with dyslexia.
- Zephyr ISD shall purchase or develop a reading 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 Zephyr ISD plan.
- Zephyr 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).
- Parents/guardians of students eligible under §504 must be informed of all services and options available to the student under that federal statute.
- 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 Zephyr ISD, and/or campus planning and decision making committee which shall include the instructional strategies indicated above (19 TAC §74.28).

Zephyr 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)

### ***Evidence-Based Dyslexia Instruction***

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.

For the student who has not benefited from the research-based core reading instruction, the components of instruction will include additional focused intervention as appropriate for the reading needs of the student with dyslexia. Evidence-based dyslexia instruction provides evidence-based, multisensory structured literacy instruction for students with dyslexia. This instruction must be explicit, systematic, and intentional in its approach. This instruction is designed to likely take place in a small group setting.

#### **Evidence-based instruction must be:**

- Evidence-based and effective for student with dyslexia
- Taught by an appropriately trained instructor
- Implemented with fidelity

Evidence-based dyslexia programs are considered specially designed instruction (SDI) and therefore special education services, so the provision of those services must follow the IDEA requirements. This means that evidence-based dyslexia instruction is only available to students who are served under IDEA, which prescribes the legal requirements for special education and related services. LEAs must ensure that the provision of evidence-based dyslexia instruction addresses the critical, evidence-based components and methods of delivery described in this chapter.

An LEAs first consideration for every student who requires dyslexia instruction should be an evidence-based dyslexia program taught with fidelity and in accordance with all SBOE dyslexia program requirements included in this handbook. Differentiation that does not compromise the

fidelity of the program, such as adjusting the amount of information or pacing of the program, may be necessary to address students' unique needs and to promote progress among students receiving dyslexia instruction. An ARD committee must only consider deviations from the program's fidelity requirements when data collection, a student's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP), and other areas of the student's IEP clearly indicate the need for more intensive or supplemental supports.

**The ARD committee, when discussing how a student will access an LEA's evidence-based dyslexia program, must address the following:**

- How the program addresses the required components of dyslexia instruction described in this handbook, and whether the student's PLAAFP or other areas of the IEP show evidence that the program must be supplemented with a focus on one or more components;
- How the program addresses the required instructional delivery methods described in the handbook, and whether the student's PLAAFP or other areas of the IEP show evidence that the program must be supplemented to meet the student's needs;
- The fidelity statements/requirements that are included with the program, and how those will be delivered and/or intensified for the student; and
- Confirm that the provider of dyslexia instruction (PDI) is fully trained in the instructional materials to implement the program and how to differentiate the program, as determined by the ARD committee.

Evidence-based dyslexia instruction is not considered to be "regular" education aids and services. Regular aids and services are things like accommodations provided to a student to assist in classroom instruction and access to instruction, such as giving extra time for assignments and allowing speech-to-text capabilities when given a writing assignment. While a Section 504 plan could be appropriate for those needs, the need for evidence-based dyslexia instruction crosses over into a special education need.

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

- Phonological Awareness
- Sound-symbol Association
- Syllabication
- Orthography
- Morphology
- Syntax
- Reading Comprehension
- Reading Fluency

Both the provider 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.

## **Delivery of Dyslexia Instruction**

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

## **Student Progress Reports**

Any student that is provided an evidence-based reading program must have a progress report prepared and communicated to a parent specifically on the student's progress as a result of that program at least once per grading period. To the extent that an IEP goal progress report would not comply with this requirement for a student receiving special education and related services, a separate progress report should be sent to comply with TEC §29.0031(d). This includes a student receiving evidence-based dyslexia instruction through a Section 504 accommodation plan during the transition period, which ends beginning with the 2025-2026 school year.

## **Providers of Dyslexia Instruction**

In order to provide effective intervention, school districts are encouraged to employ highly trained individuals to deliver dyslexia instruction. Teachers, such as reading specialists, master reading teachers, general education classroom teachers, or special education teachers, who provide dyslexia intervention for students are not required to hold a specific license or certification. However, these educators must at a minimum have additional documented dyslexia training aligned to 19 TAC §74.28(c) and must deliver the instruction with fidelity. This includes training in critical, evidence-based components of dyslexia instruction such as phonological awareness, sound-symbol association, syllabication, orthography, morphology, syntax, reading comprehension, and reading fluency.

In addition, they must deliver multisensory instruction that simultaneously uses all learning pathways to the brain, is systematic and cumulative, is explicitly taught, uses diagnostics teaching to automaticity, and includes both analytic and synthetic approaches. A provider of dyslexia instruction must be fully trained in the LEA's adopted instructional materials for students with dyslexia, and is not required to be certified as a special educator unless he or she is employed in a special education position that requires the certification.

## **Instructional Intervention Consideration for EB Students with Dyslexia**

EB students receiving dyslexia services will have unique needs. Provision of dyslexia instruction should be in accordance with the program model the student is currently receiving

(e.g., dual language, transitional bilingual, ESL). Interventionists working with EB students should have additional training on the specialized needs of EB students.

Learning to read, write, and spell in two languages can be facilitated by building on a student's native language knowledge and helping to transfer that knowledge to a second language. While direct, systematic instruction is still required for all aspects of reading, additional explicit instruction will be needed to address the similarities and differences in sounds, syllable structure, morphology, orthography, and syntax between the first and second languages.

Dyslexia instruction for the EB students must incorporate the ELPS. A few strategies to consider include the following:

- Establish routines so that EB students understand what is expected from them
- Provide Native Language support when giving directions or when students do not understand the task
- Provide opportunities for repetition and rehearsal so that the new information can be learned to mastery
- Adjust the rate of speech and the complexity of the language used according to the second language proficiency level of each student
- Provide extra time for the EB students to process the English language. This is especially necessary during the Zephyr stages of second-language development
- Provide extra time for the EB students to formulate oral and written responses
- Emphasize text that includes familiar content and explain the structure of the text

### **Research-Based Best Practices**

It is important to note that in Texas, the approach to teaching students with dyslexia is founded on research-based best practices. The ideas upon which the state's approach is based are summarized here:

- Gains in reading can be significant if students with reading problems are provided systematic, explicit, and intensive reading instruction of sufficient duration in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary (e.g. the relationships among words and the relationships among word structure, origin, and meaning), reading comprehension strategies, and writing.
- A failure to learn to read impacts a person's life significantly. The key to preventing this failure for students with dyslexia is Zephyr identification and Zephyr intervention.
- Instruction by a highly skilled and knowledgeable educator who has specific preparation in the remediation of dyslexia is necessary.

It is vital to start evidence-based interventions as soon as possible. Effective treatments for dyslexia should consist of explicit academic teaching of reading and spelling skills.



## **Instructional Accommodations for Students with Dyslexia**

### *Instructional Accommodations for Students with Disabilities*

Students with dyslexia who receive dyslexia instruction that contains the components described in this chapter will be better equipped to meet the demands of grade-level or course instruction. In addition to dyslexia instruction, accommodations provide the student with dyslexia effective and equitable access to grade-level or course instruction in the general education classroom.

**Accommodations are not one size fits all; rather, the impact of dyslexia on each individual student determines the necessary accommodation.** Listed below are examples of reasonable classroom accommodations:

- Copies of notes (e.g., teacher- or peer-provided)
- Note-taking assistance
- Additional time on class assignments and tests
- Reduced/shortened assignments (e.g., chunking assignments into manageable units, fewer items given on a classroom test or homework assignment without eliminating concepts, or student planner to assist with assignments)
- Alternative test location that provides a quiet environment and reduces distractions
- Priority seating assignment
- Oral reading of directions or written material
- Word banks
- Audiobooks
- Text to speech
- Speech to text
- Electronic spellers
- Electronic dictionaries
- Formula charts
- Adaptive learning tools and features in software programs

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

Decisions about which accommodations to use are very individualized and should be made for each student by that student's ARD or Section 504 committee, as appropriate. Students can, and should, play a significant role in choosing and using accommodations. Students need to know what accommodations are possible, and then, based on knowledge of their personal strengths and limitations, they select and try accommodations that might be useful for them. The more input

students have in their own accommodation choices, the more likely it is that they will use and benefit from the accommodations.

When making decisions about accommodations, instruction is always the foremost priority. Not all accommodations used in the classroom are allowed during a state assessment. However, an educator's ability to meet the individual needs of a student with dyslexia or provide support for the use of an accommodation should not be limited by whether an accommodation is allowable on a state assessment.

### *Access to Instructional Materials for Students with Disabilities*

Access instructional materials textbooks and related core instructional materials that have been converted into specialized formats (e.g., Braille, audio, digital text, or large print) for students who are blind or have low vision, have a physical disability, or have a reading disability such as dyslexia. Digital books or text-to-speech functions on computers and mobile devices provide access to general education access to digitally recorded materials for students with dyslexia.

**Bookshare** and **Learning Ally** provide electronic access to digitally recorded instructional materials for students with print disabilities. TEA provides links to these resources as well as other accessible instructional materials for students with disabilities at

<http://tea.texas.gov/academics/instructional-materials/state-adopted-instructional-materials/accessible-instructional-materials> .

### *Texas State Student Assessment Program Accommodations for Students with Disabilities*

Educators, peers, and students must understand that accommodations provided during classroom instruction and testing might differ from accommodations allowed for use on state assessments. The state assessment is a standardized tool for measuring every student's learning in a reliable, valid, and secure manner. An accommodation used in the classroom for learning may invalidate or compromise the security and integrity of the state assessment; therefore, not all accommodations suitable for instruction are allowed during the state assessments. It is important to keep in mind that the policies for accommodation use on state assessments **should not** limit an educator's ability to develop individualized materials and techniques to facilitate learning.

**Instruction comes first** and can be customized to meet the needs of each student.

For the purposes of the statewide assessments, students needing accommodations due to a disability include the following:

- Students with an identified disability who receive special education services and meet established eligibility criteria for certain accommodations
- Students with an identified disability who receive Section 504 services and meet established eligibility criteria for certain accommodations.
- Students with a disabling condition who do not receive special education or Section 504 services but meet established eligibility criteria for certain accommodations.

A student who has been identified with dyslexia can also be a gifted learner, or twice-exceptional learner. A twice-exceptional learner is a child or youth who performs at or shows the potential for performing at or shows the potential for performing at a remarkably high level of accomplishment when compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment and who exhibits high-performance capability in an intellectual, creative, or artistic area; possesses an unusual capacity for leadership; or excels in a specific academic field and who also gives evidence of one or more disabilities as defined by federal or state eligibility criteria.

Disability criteria may include the following:

- Learning disabilities
- Speech and language disorders
- Emotional/behavioral disorders
- Physical disabilities
- Traumatic brain injury
- Autism spectrum disorder
- Sensory disabilities (hearing impaired, visually impaired, blind-deaf)
- Other health impairments that limit strength, vitality, or alertness (ADHD)

Twice exceptional students make up a highly diverse group of learners. While they do not form a simple, homogeneous group, there are indicators that tend to be typical of many children who are both gifted and who also have a disability. Cognitive and affective indicators may include strengths such as extreme curiosity and questioning, high levels of problem-solving and reasoning skills, and advanced ideas/opinions which they are uninhibited about expressing. Cognitive and affective challenges twice-exceptional learners may exhibit/include discrepant verbal and performance abilities, deficient or extremely uneven academic skills, and auditory and/or visual processing problems which may cause them to respond or work slowly or appear to think slowly. For more information regarding general characteristics of twice-exceptional learners, please see <http://gtequity.tea.texas.gov/> on TEA's Equity in G/T Education website.

Twice-exceptional students must be provided access to all service and course options available to other students. Section 504 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), require that qualified students with disabilities be given the same opportunities to compete for and benefit from accelerated programs and classes as are given to students without disabilities [34 C.F.R. §104.4(b)(1)(ii) and 28 C.F.R. §35.130(b)(1)(ii)]. **A student with a disability such as dyslexia or a related disorder may not be denied admission to an accelerated or advanced class or program solely because of the student's need for special education related aids or services or because the student has an IEP or Section 504 plan.**

Additionally, a student with a disability may not be prohibited from using special education or related aids as a condition of participating in an accelerated or advanced class or program. Participation by a student with a disability in an accelerated or advanced class or program

generally, would be considered part of the regular education referenced in IDEA and Section 504 regulations. Thus, if a qualified student with a disability requires related aids and services to participate in a regular education class or program, the school cannot deny that student the needed related aids and services in an accelerated or advanced class or program.

It is important to note that a district or school does not have to provide a student with an accommodation or modification “that fundamentally alters the nature of” an accelerated or advanced course or program. Rather, a district or school “must consider a student’s ability to participate in the program with reasonable accommodations.”

In determining the appropriate courses and programs, the following questions should be considered by a twice-exceptional learner’s ARD or Section 504 committee:

- Does the student meet the basic eligibility or admission requirements applied to all students?
- Does the student need special education or related aids and services to receive FAPE?
- Do the academic accommodations or related aids and services constitute a fundamental alteration of the program?

## **V. Dysgraphia**

Texas state law requires districts and charter schools to identify students who have dyslexia and related disorders. TEC §38.003 identifies the following examples of related disorders: developmental auditory imperception, dysphagia, specific developmental dyslexia, developmental dysgraphia, and developmental spelling disability. Recent research in the field of dysgraphia has prompted the addition of the following guidance regarding the evaluation, identification, and provision of services for students with dysgraphia.

### **Definition and Characteristics of Dysgraphia**

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

Dysgraphia is related to dyslexia as both are language-based disorders. In dyslexia, the impairment is with word-level skills (decoding, word identification, spelling). Dysgraphia is a written language disorder in serial production of strokes to form a handwritten letter. This involves not only motor skills but also language skills—finding, retrieving and producing letters, which is a subword-level language skill. The impaired handwriting may interfere with spelling

and/or composing, but individuals with only dysgraphia do not have difficulty with reading (Berninger, Richards, & Abbott, 2015).

A review of recent evidence indicates that dysgraphia is best defined as a neurological disorder manifested by illegible and/or inefficient handwriting due to difficulty with letter formation. This difficulty is the result of deficits in graph motor function (hand movements used for writing) and/or storing and retrieving orthographic codes (letter forms) (Berninger, 2015). Secondary consequences may include problems with spelling and written expression. The difficulty is not solely due to lack of instruction and is not associated with other developmental or neurological conditions that involve motor impairment.

The characteristics of dysgraphia include the following:

- Variably shaped and poorly formed letters
- Excessive erasures and cross-outs
- Poor spacing between letters and words
- Letter and number reversals beyond Zephyr stages of writing
- Awkward, inconsistent pencil grip
- Heavy pressure and hand fatigue
- Slow writing and copying with legible or illegible handwriting (Andrews & Lombardino, 2014)

Additional consequences of dysgraphia may also include:

- Difficulty with unedited written spelling
- Low volume of written output as well as problems with other aspects of written expression

Dysgraphia is not:

- Evidence of a damaged motor nervous system
- Part of a developmental disability that has fine motor deficits (e.g., intellectual disability, autism, cerebral palsy)
- Secondary to a medical condition (e.g., meningitis, significant head trauma, brain trauma)
- Association with generalized developmental motor or coordination difficulties (Developmental Coordination Disorder)
- Impaired spelling or written expression with typical handwriting (legibility and rate) (Berninger, 2004)

Dysgraphia can be due to:

- Impaired feedback the brain is receiving from the fingers
- Weaknesses using visual processing to coordinate hand movement and organize the use of space
- Problems with motor planning and sequencing
- Difficulty with storage and retrieval of letter forms (Levine, 1999)

Despite the widespread beliefs that handwriting is purely a motor skill or that only multisensory methods are needed to teach handwriting, multiple language processes are also involved in handwriting. Handwriting draws on language by hand (letter production), language by ear

(listening to letter names when writing dictated letters), language by mouth (saying letter names), and language by eye (viewing the letters to be copied or reviewing for accuracy the letters that are produced from memory) (Berninger & Wolf, 2016).

### **Procedures for Identification:**

The process of identifying dysgraphia will follow Child Find procedures for conducting a full individual and initial evaluation (FIIE) under the IDEA. These procedural processes require coordination among the teacher, campus administrators, diagnosticians, and other professionals as appropriate when factors such as a student's English language acquisition, previously identified disability, or other special needs are present.

The first step in the evaluation process, data gathering, should be an integral part of the district's or charter school's process for any student exhibiting learning difficulties. Documentation of the following characteristics of dysgraphia could be collected during the data gathering phase:

- Slow or labored written work
- Poor formation of letters
- Improper letter slant
- Poor pencil grip
- Inadequate pressure during handwriting (too hard or too soft)
- Excessive erasures
- Poor spacing between words
- Poor spacing inside words
- Inability to recall accurate orthographic patterns for words
- "b" and "d" reversals beyond developmentally appropriate time
- Inability to copy words accurately
- Inability of student to read what was previously written
- Overuse of short familiar words such as "big"
- Avoidance of written tasks
- Difficulty with visual-motor integrated sports or activities

While schools must follow federal and state guidelines, they must also develop procedures that address the needs of their student populations. Schools shall recommend evaluation for dysgraphia if the student demonstrates the following:

- Impaired or illegible handwriting that is unexpected for the student's age/grade
- Impaired handwriting that interferes with spelling, written expression, or both that is unexpected for the student's age/grade

## Data Gathering

Schools collect data on all students to ensure that instruction is appropriate and scientifically based. Essential components of comprehensive literacy instruction, including writing, are defined in Section 2221(b) of ESSA as explicit instruction in writing, including opportunities for children to write with clear purposes, with critical reasoning appropriate to the topic and purpose, and with specific instruction and feedback from instructional staff.

Any time from kindergarten through grade 12 a student continues to struggle with one or more components of writing, schools must collect additional information about the student. Schools should use previously collected as well as current information to evaluate the student's academic progress and determine what actions are needed to ensure the student's improved academic performance. The collection of various data, as indicated in Figure 5.1 below, will provide information regarding factors that may be contributing to or primarily to the student's struggles with handwriting, spelling, and written expression.

### *Cumulative Data*

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 dysgraphia is not due to the lack of appropriate instruction in handwriting, spelling, handwritten expression. This information should include data that demonstrates 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. This cumulative data also includes information from parents/guardians. Sources and examples of cumulative data are provided in Figure 5.1

Figure 5.1. Sources and Examples of Cumulative Data	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Vision screening</li><li>• Teacher reports of classroom concerns</li><li>• Parent reports of concerns about handwriting, spelling, or written expression</li><li>• Classroom handwriting assessments</li><li>• Classroom spelling assessments</li><li>• Samples of written work (e.g., journal, story responses, writing samples, etc.)</li><li>• Accommodations or interventions provided</li><li>• Academic progress reports (report cards)</li><li>• Gifted/talented assessments</li><li>• Samples of written schoolwork (both timed and untimed)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• State student assessment program results as described in TEC §39.022</li><li>• Observations of instruction provided to the student</li><li>• Full Individual and Initial Evaluation</li><li>• Outside evaluations</li><li>• Speech and language assessment</li><li>• School attendance</li><li>• Curriculum-based assessment measures</li><li>• Instructional strategies provided and student's response to the instruction</li><li>• Universal screening</li><li>• Parent survey</li></ul>

## Formal Evaluation

After data gathering, the next step in the process is formal evaluation. This is not a screening; rather, it is an individualized evaluation used to gather evaluation data. Formal evaluation includes both formal and informal data. All data will be used to determine whether the student demonstrates a pattern of evidence for dysgraphia. Information collected from the parents/guardians also provides valuable insight into the student's Zephyr years of written language development. This history may help to explain why students come to the evaluation with many different strengths and weaknesses; therefore, findings from the formal evaluation will be different for each child. Professionals conducting evaluations for the identification of dysgraphia will need to look beyond scores on standardized assessments alone and examine the student's classroom writing performance, educational history, and Zephyr language experiences to assist with determining handwriting, spelling, and written expression abilities and difficulties.

### *Notification and Permission*

When an FIIE is recommended, parents are provided:

- Prior Written Notice (PWN)
- Notice of Procedural Safeguards
- Overview of Special Education for Parents form
- Opportunity for parent to provide written consent to evaluate

### *Tests and Other Evaluation Materials*

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

- Be used for the purpose for which the evaluation or measures are valid or reliable
- Include material tailored to assess specific areas of educational need and not merely materials that are designed to provide a single general intelligence quotient
- Be selected and administered to ensure that, when a test is given to a student with impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills, the test results accurately reflect the student's aptitude, achievement level, or whatever other factor the test purports to measure, rather than reflecting the student's impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills
- Be selected and administered in a manner that is not racially or culturally discriminatory
- Include multiple measures of a student's writing abilities such as informal assessment information (e.g., anecdotal records, district universal screenings, progress monitoring data, criterion-referenced evaluations, samples of written work, classroom observations)
- Be administered by trained personnel and in conformance with the instructions provided by the producer of the evaluation materials
- Be provided and administered in the student's native language or other mode of communication and in the form most likely to yield accurate information regarding what the child can do academically, developmentally, and functionally, unless it is clearly not feasible to provide or administer.



### **Academic Skills**

The school administers measures that are related to the student's educational needs. Difficulties in the areas of letter formation, orthographic awareness, and general handwriting skills may be evident dependent on the student's age and writing development. Additionally, many students with dysgraphia may have difficulty with spelling and written expression.

### **Cognitive Processes**

The process of handwriting requires the student to rely on memory for letters or symbol sequences, also known as orthographic processing. Memory for letter patterns, letter sequences, and the letters in whole words may be selectively impaired or may coexist with phonological processing weaknesses. When spelling, a student must not only process both phonological and orthographic information, but also apply their knowledge of morphology and syntax (Berninger & Wolf, 2009).

<b>Figure 5.2 Areas for Evaluation of Dysgraphia</b>	
<b>Academic Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Letter formation</li><li>• Handwriting Word/sentence dictation (timed and untimed)</li><li>• Copying of Text</li><li>• Written expression</li><li>• Spelling</li><li>• Written Fluency (both accuracy and fluency)</li></ul>
<b>Cognitive Processes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Memory for letter or symbols sequences (orthographic processing)</li></ul>
<b>Possible Additional Area</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Phonological awareness</li><li>• Phonological memory</li><li>• Working memory</li><li>• Letter retrieval</li><li>• Letter matching</li></ul>

To make an informed determination the ARD committee must include members who are knowledgeable about the following:

- Student being assessed
- Evaluation instruments being used
- Interpretation of the data being collected

Additionally, the committee members should have knowledge regarding

- the handwriting process;
- dysgraphia and related disorders;
- dysgraphia instruction, and;
- district or charter school, state, and federal guidelines for evaluation.

### **Review and Interpretation of Data and Evaluation:**

The MDT, using input from parent/guardian, completes the FIIE, which determines if the student meets the criteria for dysgraphia, and if so, explains the impact of dysgraphia on the student's access and progress in the enrolled grade-level 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 students had 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 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 dysgraphia and the data shows a need for specially designed instruction, then the student meets two prongs of special education eligibility. That is, the student has a qualifying disability - as dysgraphia is an SLD under the IDEA - and demonstrates a need for specially designed instruction.

To appropriately understand evaluation data, the ARD committee must interpret test results in light of the student's educational history, linguistic background, environmental or socioeconomic factors, and any other pertinent factors that affect learning.

A determination must first be made regarding whether a student's difficulties in the areas of writing and spelling reflect a pattern of evidence for the primary characteristics of dysgraphia with unexpectedly low performance for the student's age and educational level in some or all of the following areas:

- Handwriting
- Writing fluency (accuracy and rate)
- Written Expression
- Spelling

Based on the above information and guidelines, should the ARD committee determine that the student exhibits weakness in writing and spelling (i.e., academic deficits in areas associated with dysgraphia), the MDT will then examine the student's data to determine whether these difficulties are unexpected in relation to the student's other abilities, sociocultural factors, language differences, irregular attendance, or lack of appropriate and effective instruction. For

example, the student may exhibit strengths in areas such as reading comprehension, listening comprehension, oral verbal ability, or math reasoning yet still have difficulty with writing and spelling. The MDT reports the analysis of strengths and weaknesses within the FIIE.

**Therefore, it is not one single indicator, but a preponderance of informal and formal data that provide the committee with evidence for whether these difficulties are unexpected.**

### **Dysgraphia Identification**

If the student's difficulties are unexpected in relation to other abilities, the ARD committee must then determine if the student has dysgraphia. The list of questions in Figure 5.3 below must be considered when making a determination regarding dysgraphia.

**Figure 5.3 Questions to Determine the Identification of Dysgraphia**

- Do the data show the following characteristics and consequences of dysgraphia?
  - Illegible and/or inefficient handwriting with variably shaped and poorly formed letters
  - Difficulty with unedited written spelling
  - Low volume of written output as well as problems with other aspects of written expression
- Do these difficulties (typically) result from a deficit in graph motor function (hand movements used for writing) and/or storing and retrieving orthographic codes (letter forms)?
- Are these difficulties unexpected for the student's age in relation to the student's other abilities, and the provision of effective classroom management.

Once dysgraphia has been identified as the IDEA eligibility, a determination must be made by the ARD committee regarding the most appropriate way to serve the student.

The ARD committee will determine whether the student who has dysgraphia is eligible under IDEA as a student with a specific learning disability. The student is eligible for services under IDEA if he/she has dysgraphia and, because of the dysgraphia needs special education services. The October 23, 2015 letter from the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) (Dear Colleague: Dyslexia Guidance) states that dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia are conditions that could qualify a child as a child with a specific learning disability under IDEA. The letter further states that there is nothing in the IDEA that would prohibit the use of the terms dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia in IDEA evaluation, eligibility determinations, or IEP documents. For more information, please visit:

<http://sites.ed.gov/idea/idea-files/osep-dear-colleague-letter-on-ideaiep-terms/> .

If the student with dysgraphia is found eligible for special education, the student's IEP must include appropriate writing instruction, which might include instruction from a related services provider.

If the student is identified with dysgraphia but is not considered a student with a disability under IDEA (because the student does not need specifically designed instruction), then the student may receive appropriate accommodations and services under Section 504. Students are protected under Section 504 if the physical or mental impairment (dysgraphia) substantially limits one or more major life activities, such as the specific activity of writing. Additionally, the Section 504 committee, in determining whether a student has a disability that substantially limits the student in a major life activity (writing) must not consider the ameliorating effects of any mitigating measure that student is using.

For students eligible for Section 504, a Section 504 committee will develop the student's Section 504 Plan, which must include appropriate instructional accommodations to meet the individual needs of the student.

### **Instruction for Students with Dysgraphia**

“... Done right, Zephyr handwriting instruction improves students' writing. Not just its legibility, but its quantity and quality.” (p. 49)

—S. Graham, *Want to Improve Children's Writing? Don't Neglect Their Handwriting*, American Educator, 2010

Graham and his colleagues describe two reasons for teaching handwriting effectively. The first reason is what they call the Presentation Effect. Research demonstrates that, in general, a reader's evaluation of a composition's quality is influenced by how neatly it is written (Graham, Harris, & Hebert, 2011). The second reason that educational scientists give for teaching handwriting effectively is called the Writer Effect.

Research demonstrates that handwriting difficulties interfere with other writing processes such as expression of ideas and organization. In fact, a 2016 meta-analysis showed that handwriting instruction improved students' writing fluency, quantity, and quality. The findings of this research report were dramatic, showing moderate effects on writing fluency and very large effects on the number of words students wrote and the quality of their compositions (Santangelo & Graham, 2016).

Handwriting interferes with other writing processes or consumes an inordinate amount of cognitive resources, at least until handwriting becomes automatic and fluent ... Handwriting-instructed students made greater gains than peers who did not receive handwriting instruction in the quality of their writing, how much they wrote, and writing fluency. (p. 226)

### **Supporting Students Struggling with Handwriting:**

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

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

1. Show students how to hold a pencil.
2. Model efficient and legible letter formation.
3. Provide multiple opportunities for students to practice effective letter formation.
4. Use scaffolds, such as letters with numbered arrows showing the order and direction of strokes.
5. Have students practice writing letters from memory.
6. Provide handwriting fluency practice to build students' automaticity.
7. Practice handwriting in short sessions.

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

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."

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

### *Handwriting*

The research-based elements for effective instruction of handwriting as stated above for all students are the same for students with dysgraphia. However, the intensity, frequency, and delivery of instruction may need to be adjusted to meet specific student need as determined by

the Section 504 or ARD committee. Figure 5.4 below provides a hierarchy of instruction for handwriting as a reference to best practice:

Figure 5.4. Handwriting Hierarchy of Instruction	
Posture	<p>Also known as "Watch Our Writing" (W.O.W)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feet are flat on the floor</li> <li>• Back is straight</li> <li>• Paper slanted so that the edge of the paper is parallel to the writing arm</li> <li>• Paper anchored with non-writing hand</li> <li>• Pencil grip and position correct</li> </ul>
Grip	<p>Normal tripod grip with pencil resting on first joint of middle finger with the thumb and index fingers holding the pencil in place at a 45° angle.</p>
Letter Formation	<p>Emphasis placed in the following order:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shape</li> <li>• Proportion</li> <li>• Size</li> <li>• Rhythm/fluency</li> <li>• Slant</li> </ul>
Sequence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lower case letters first; Capitals as needed beginning with first letters of student name</li> <li>• Manuscript – group by stroke formation</li> <li>• Cursive – group by beginning approach stroke</li> <li>• Letters</li> <li>• Syllables</li> <li>• Words</li> <li>• Phrases</li> <li>• Sentences</li> <li>• Paragraphs</li> </ul>

### *Spelling*

Handwriting supports spelling, a complex process of translating a phoneme (spoken sound) to the corresponding grapheme (orthographic representation) in order to generate written text to express an idea. Orthography is the written spelling patterns and rules in a given language. Students must be taught the regularity and irregularity of the orthographic patterns of a language in an explicit and systematic manner. The instruction should be integrated with phonology and sound-symbol knowledge.

Because spelling is meaning driven and draws upon the phonological, orthographic, and morphological aspects of words, students will benefit from systematic, explicit instruction based on the following guiding principles:

- Phoneme-grapheme correspondence

- Letter order and sequence patterns, or orthographic conventions:
  - o syllable types
  - o orthographic rules
  - o irregular words
- Position of a phoneme or grapheme in a word
- Meaning (morphology) and part of speech
- Language of origin (Moats, 2005)

### *Writing*

A potential secondary consequence of dysgraphia is difficulty with students expressing themselves in written text. This difficulty may be attributed to deficits in handwriting, spelling, language processing, or the integration of each of those skills. In Chapter IV of this handbook, Moats and Dakin (2008) are quoted as stating:

The ability to compose and transcribe conventional English with accuracy, fluency, and clarity of expression is known as basic writing skills. Writing is dependent on many language skills and processes and is often even more problematic for children than reading. Writing is a language discipline with many component skills that must be directly taught. Because writing demands using different skills at the same time, such as generating language, spelling, handwriting, and using capitalization and punctuation, it puts a significant demand on working memory and attention. Thus, a student may demonstrate mastery of these individual skills, but when asked to integrate them all at once, mastery of an individual skill, such as handwriting, often deteriorates. To write on demand, a student has to have mastered, to the point of being automatic, each skill involved (p. 55).

Students with written expression difficulties because of dysgraphia would benefit from being taught explicit strategies for composing including planning, generating, reviewing/evaluating, and revising different genre including narrative, informational, compare and contrast, and persuasive compositions (IDA, 2012).

### **Delivery of Intervention**

The way the content is delivered should be consistent with the principles of effective intervention for students with dysgraphia including the following:

- Simultaneous, multisensory (VAKT) — “Teaching is done using all learning pathways in the brain (visual, auditory, kinesthetic-tactile) simultaneously in order to enhance memory and learning” (Birsh, 2018, p. 19). “Children are actively engaged in learning language concepts and other information, often by using their hands, arms, mouths, eyes, and whole bodies while learning” (Moats & Dakin, 2008, p. 58).
- Systematic and cumulative — “Multisensory language instruction requires that the organization of material follow order of the language. The sequence must begin with the easiest concepts and

most basic elements and progress methodically to more difficult material. Each step must also be based on [elements] already learned. Concepts taught must be systematically reviewed to strengthen memory” (Birsh, 2018, p. 19).

- Explicit instruction — “Explicit instruction is explained and demonstrated by the teacher one language and print concept at a time, rather than left to discovery through incidental encounters with information. Poor readers do not learn that print represents speech simply from exposure to books or print” (Moats & Dakin, 2008, p. 58). Explicit Instruction is “an approach that involves direct instruction: The teacher demonstrates the task and provides guided practice with immediate corrective feedback before the student attempts the task independently” (Mather & Wendling, 2012, p. 326).
- Diagnostic teaching to automaticity — “The teacher must be adept at prescriptive or individualized teaching. The teaching plan is based on careful and [continual] assessment of the individual's needs. The content presented must be mastered to the degree of automaticity” (Birsh, 2018, p. 27). “This teacher knowledge is essential for guiding the content and emphasis of instruction for the individual student” (Moats & Dakin, 2008, p. 58). “When a reading skill becomes automatic (direct access without conscious awareness), it is performed quickly in an efficient manner” (Berninger & Wolf, 2009, p. 70).

### **Instructional Accommodations for the Student with Dysgraphia**

By receiving instruction based on the elements described in this chapter, a student with dysgraphia is better equipped to meet the demands of grade-level or course instruction. In addition to targeted instruction, accommodations provide the student with dysgraphia effective and equitable access to grade-level or course instruction in the general education classroom.

**Accommodations are not a one size fits all; rather, the impact of dysgraphia on each individual student determines the accommodation.**

When considering accommodations for the student with dysgraphia, consider the following:

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

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

- Allow more time for written tasks including note taking, copying, and tests
- Reduce the length requirements of written assignments
- Provide copies of notes or assign a note taking buddy to assist with filling in missing information
- Allow the student to audio record important assignments and/or take oral tests



- Assist student with developing logical steps to complete a writing assignment instead of all at once
- Allow the use of technology (e.g., speech to text software, etc.)
- Allow the student to use cursive or manuscript, whichever is most legible and efficient
- Allow the student to use graph paper for math, or to turn lined paper sideways, to help with lining up columns of numbers
- Offer an alternative to a written project such as an oral report, dramatic presentation, or visual media project

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

Decisions about which accommodations to use are very individualized and should be made for each student by that student's ARD or Section 504 committee, as appropriate. Students can, and should, play a significant role in choosing and using accommodations. Students need to know what accommodations are possible, and then, based on knowledge of their personal strengths and limitations, they select and try accommodations that might be useful for them. The more input students have in their own accommodation choices, the more likely it is that they will use and benefit from the accommodations.

When making decisions about accommodations, instruction is always the foremost priority. Not all accommodations used in the classroom are allowed during a state assessment. However, an educator's ability to meet the individual needs of a student with dysgraphia or provide support for the use of an accommodation should not be limited by whether an accommodation is allowable on a state assessment.

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

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

## **Technology Tools**

There are many technology resources to assist a student with dysgraphia. The Technology Integration for Students with Dyslexia online tool (TEC §38.0031) is a resource developed to support school districts and charter schools in making instructional decisions regarding technology that benefit students with dyslexia and related disorders. For more information and to view this source, visit <https://www.region10.org/programs/dyslexia/techplan/>.

## **VI Timeline**

When a referral for dyslexia assessment is made, Zephyr ISD will ensure the evaluation procedure is followed in a reasonable amount of time. If Comanche County Coop assumes responsibility for evaluation, Texas law establishes that a full individual and initial evaluation (FIE) must be completed within 45-school days from the time a district or charter school receives consent.

Section 504, however, does not require specific timelines. Therefore, Zephyr ISD will adhere to the timelines Texas has established for special education evaluations through TEC §29.004(a).

## **VI Student Monitoring and Dyslexia Program Exit Criteria**

Upon successful completion of Zephyr ISD's program(s), as measured by program mastery checks (assessments), students will be exited from the district dyslexia program(s). Additional criteria for exit may include but are not limited to: grades from progress reports or report cards, state assessment data, benchmarks, progress monitoring data, teacher and/or parent observations/checklists, and individual dyslexia program requirements.

Students that have completed the Zephyr ISD dyslexia program(s) will receive regular monitoring until graduation.

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

- Progress reports
- Report cards
- State assessment data
- Teacher reports/checklists
- Parent reports/checklists
- Counselor reports
- Other program reports
- Additional assessment data

Students qualifying for dyslexia services that are identified as §504 or 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 §504 committee, or 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. When a child is exited from the dyslexia program, a dismissal form will be completed and placed in the child's cumulative folder. Students exiting direct instruction services continue to receive appropriate accommodations as needed. Each year the §504 committee will reevaluate needed accommodations for a student with dyslexia.

## **VI     Contacts for Dyslexia and Related Disorders**

It is our honor and privilege to work with your children! If there is anything we can help you with, please let us know at the numbers below.

<b>Location</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Phone Number</b>
Zephyr Primary School	Lindsay Redden	325-643-9622
Zephyr Elementary School	Paula Pate	325-646-5511
Zephyr Elementary School	Gretchen Vera	325-646-5511
Zephyr Middle School	Betty Woodrush	325-643-5665
Zephyr High School	Kate Black	325-643-4593