

State Dyslexia Handbook: Chapter I ~ Definition and Characteristics of Dyslexia

The student who struggles with reading and spelling often puzzles teachers and parents. The student displays average ability to learn in the absence of print and receives the same classroom instruction that benefits most children; however, the student continues to struggle with some or all of the many facets of reading and spelling. This student may be a student with dyslexia.

As defined in TEC §38.003:

- (1) *Dyslexia* means a disorder of constitutional origin manifested by a difficulty in learning to read, write, or spell, despite conventional instruction, adequate intelligence, and sociocultural opportunity.
- (2) *Related disorders* includes disorders similar to or related to dyslexia such as developmental auditory imperception, dysphasia, specific developmental dyslexia, developmental dysgraphia, and developmental spelling disability.

The current definition from the International Dyslexia Association states:

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge (Adopted by the International Dyslexia Association Board of Directors, November 12, 2002).

The primary difficulties of a student identified as having dyslexia occur in phonemic awareness and manipulation, single-word decoding, reading fluency, and spelling. Secondary consequences of dyslexia may include difficulties in reading comprehension and/or written expression. These difficulties are unexpected for the student's age, educational level, or cognitive abilities. Additionally, there is often a **family history** of similar difficulties.

Dyslexia Handbook: Chapter II ~ Procedures for Assessing Students for Dyslexia

Procedures Required By State And Federal Law Prior To Formal Assessment

The Student Success Initiative (SSI) is a state-level effort to ensure that all Texas students receive the instruction and support needed to be academically successful in reading and mathematics. For students that demonstrate difficulties during early reading instruction (kindergarten, grades 1 and 2), the most common form of instructional help is available through the SSI as mandated by TEC §28.006. This education code requires districts and charter schools to administer early reading instruments to all students in kindergarten and grades 1 and 2 to assess their reading development and comprehension. If, on the basis of the reading instrument results, students are determined to be **at risk** for dyslexia or other reading difficulties, the district or charter school **must** notify the students' parents or guardians. According to TEC §28.006(g), the district or charter school **must** also implement an accelerated (intensive) reading program that appropriately addresses the students' reading difficulties and enables them to "catch up" with their typically performing peers.

As evident through the components of SSI and other state-level initiatives that support reading, Texas is committed to data-driven instruction. Early reading assessments are required by state law and are evidence-proven to be "best practice." With the use of early reading assessment instruments, teachers can quickly assess a child's reading abilities and provide prescriptive instruction by isolating the skills that need strengthening.

The Texas Reading First grant program, as a part of the federal program authorized by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, is another data-driven initiative that provides an opportunity for participating states to implement scientifically based reading programs that help all students achieve reading mastery by the end of the third grade. Texas Reading First requires participating campuses to utilize a 3-Tier Reading Model when providing levels of intervention for struggling readers, as well as to employ a continuous cycle of assessment, data analysis, and ongoing progress monitoring to hone teaching and intervention strategies.

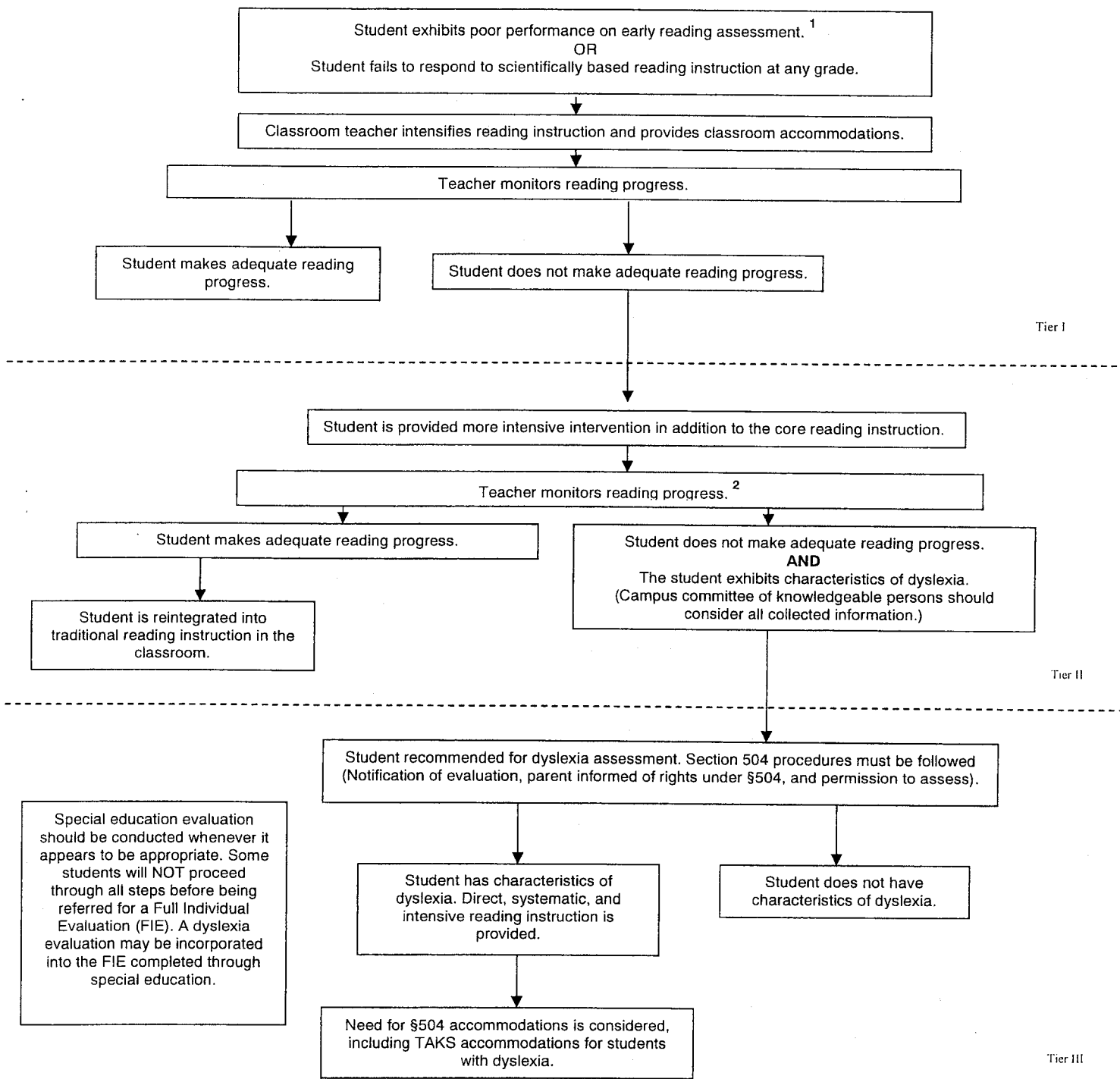
The interventions provided to students who are reported to be at risk for dyslexia or other reading difficulties should align with the requirements of NCLB legislation that **requires** that districts and charter schools implement reading programs using scientifically based reading research (SBRR). Ongoing assessment and progress monitoring of reading achievement gains is **required** for students at risk. Additional information pertaining to initiatives that support the reading achievement of Texas students is available on the Texas Education Agency Web page: www.tea.state.tx.us.

The most recent reauthorization of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), passed in 2004, is consistent with NCLB in emphasizing quality of instruction and documentation of student progress. A process based on the student's response to scientific, research-based intervention is one of the criteria included in IDEA that states may use in determining whether a student has a specific learning disability including dyslexia (see Appendix B for a review of information related to response to intervention). Regardless of the process in place, the parents or guardians always have the right to request a referral for assessment at any time.

The definition of dyslexia adopted by the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) indicates that the unexpected difficulties that students with dyslexia demonstrate in the area of reading are seen **despite the provision of effective (scientifically based) classroom instruction.**

Appendix A: Pathway to the Identification and Provision of Instruction for Students with Dyslexia

This flow chart illustrates a process for determining the instructional support needed by students with dyslexia.



¹ Parents (or guardians) of students in K–2 will be notified if the student is determined to be at risk for dyslexia or other reading difficulties (TEC §28.006).
² Parents (or guardians) may request dyslexia assessment or special education evaluation at any time.

Texas Education Code

Sec. 28.006. READING DIAGNOSIS.

(a) The commissioner shall develop recommendations for school districts for:

- (1) administering reading instruments to diagnose student reading development and comprehension;
- (2) training educators in administering the reading instruments; and
- (3) applying the results of the reading instruments to the instructional program.

(b) The commissioner shall adopt a list of reading instruments that a school district may use to diagnose student reading development and comprehension. A district-level committee established under Subchapter F, Chapter 11, may adopt a list of reading instruments for use in the district in addition to the reading instruments on the commissioner's list. Each reading instrument adopted by the commissioner or a district-level committee must be based on scientific research concerning reading skills development and reading comprehension. A list of reading instruments adopted under this subsection must provide for diagnosing the reading development and comprehension of students participating in a program under Subchapter B, Chapter 29.

(c) Each school district shall administer, at the kindergarten and first and second grade levels, a reading instrument on the list adopted by the commissioner or by the district-level committee. The district shall administer the reading instrument in accordance with the commissioner's recommendations under Subsection (a)(1).

(c-1) Each school district shall administer at the beginning of the seventh grade a reading instrument adopted by the commissioner to each student whose performance on the assessment instrument in reading administered under Section 39.023(a) to the student in grade six did not demonstrate reading proficiency, as determined by the commissioner. The district shall administer the reading instrument in accordance with the commissioner's recommendations under Subsection (a)(1).

(d) The superintendent of each school district shall:

- (1) report to the commissioner and the board of trustees of the district the results of the reading instruments;
- (2) report, in writing, to a student's parent or guardian the student's results on the reading instrument; and
- (3) using the school readiness certification system provided to the school district in accordance with Section 29.161(e), report electronically each student's raw score on the reading instrument to the agency for use in the school readiness certification system.

(k) The provisions of this section relating to parental notification of a student's results on the reading instrument and to implementation of an accelerated reading instruction program may be implemented only if the commissioner certifies that funds have been appropriated during a school year for administering the accelerated reading instruction program specified under this section.

(l), (m) Expired.

Added by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 397, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 1997. Amended by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 396, Sec. 2.11, eff. Sept. 1, 1999.

Amended by:

Acts 2006, 79th Leg., 3rd C.S., Ch. 5, Sec. 3.05, eff. May 31, 2006.

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1058, Sec. 6, eff. June 15, 2007.

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1340, Sec. 1, eff. June 15, 2007.

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 895, Sec. 26, eff. June 19, 2009.

Early Intervention/Prevention

“New in this component of the definition is the concept that the child needs to have been provided with effective classroom instruction. Documenting an individual's instructional history is critical to understanding the nature of the observed reading difficulty. For example, many children who are at risk for reading failure come from disadvantaged backgrounds where quality early childhood education and preschool experiences are less available. Thus, they frequently enter formal schooling lacking many of the essential linguistic and other early pre-reading abilities (i.e., phonological sensitivity, vocabulary, print awareness) critical for proficient reading development. If the reading instruction provided the child in the classroom is not informed by an understanding of the gaps in foundational skills and adjusted to teach the missing skills, reading failure typically occurs (see Lyon, et al., 2001 for a review of this issue). On the other hand, a number of recent studies (see Torgesen, 2000, for a review) have shown that many children identified as at risk for reading failure in kindergarten and first grade, and provided with effective instruction, developed proficient early reading skills. Indeed, Torgesen (2000) reported that effective early interventions have the capability of reducing the expected incidence of reading failure from 18 percent of the school age population to 1.4 to 5.4 percent.”

Lyon, G. R., Shaywitz, S. E., & Shaywitz, B. A. (2003). Defining dyslexia, comorbidity, teachers' knowledge of language and reading: A definition of dyslexia. *Annals of Dyslexia*, 53, 1-14, p. 8.