



To the Administrator Addressed

Commissioner Mike Morath

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DATE:	September 23, 2021
SUBJECT:	Updates to Dyslexia Handbook: Procedures Concerning Dyslexia and Related Disorders (Dyslexia Handbook)
CATEGORY:	Special Populations
NEXT STEPS:	Share with appropriate staff and update local processes and procedures as necessary

The purpose of this correspondence is to provide local educational agencies (LEAs) with a high-level overview of some important updates regarding recent revisions to the Dyslexia Handbook. On September 4th, 2021, [the State Board of Education \(SBOE\) gave final approval](#) for updates to the Dyslexia Handbook. Some of the updates to the Dyslexia Handbook may require LEAs to make policy, procedure, and practice changes. The updated Dyslexia Handbook will go into effect in the coming weeks (20 days after filing as adopted with the [Texas Register](#)). LEAs are encouraged to inform staff and begin the process of preparing for implementation, so they are well positioned to be in compliance once the changes go into effect. Additional guidance and information will be released as the in-effect date approaches.

Evaluation Updates

The sections on evaluation for dyslexia and dysgraphia have moved to a single pathway for identification under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This change means that anytime the LEA suspects that the student has dyslexia or a related disorder and may need dyslexia intervention services, the LEA must seek parental consent for a Full Individual Initial Evaluation (FIIE) under the IDEA. LEAs are reminded that the process of seeking informed parental consent under the IDEA must include proper prior written notice and be accompanied by the notice of procedural safeguards. It is critical that parents and guardians are informed of the procedural protections and rights afforded to them and their child under the IDEA.

Using a single pathway for identification of dyslexia and related disorders ensures that LEAs fulfill their child find obligations under the IDEA. LEAs who are not already conducting an FIIE under the IDEA when dyslexia or dysgraphia is suspected, need to prepare their local system for this change. Evaluation staff members may need support such as a plan for absorbing additional evaluations, training (as needed) on identification of dyslexia and dysgraphia within an FIIE, and communication systems to ensure strong collaboration with individuals with expertise in dyslexia and related disorders.

Dyslexia Screening Updates

LEAs are required, per Texas Education Code (TEC), [§38.003](#), to conduct universal dyslexia screening of students in kindergarten and first grade. Kindergarten students must be screened for dyslexia at the end of the school year, and first grade students must be screened no later than January 31st. The Dyslexia Handbook describes the screening criteria for this requirement. The updates to the Dyslexia Handbook include a reduction in the number of skills that must be included on the instrument used by LEAs to screen for dyslexia. The updated criteria for English and Spanish screening instruments are as follows:

Kindergarten	First Grade
Letter Sound Knowledge or Letter Naming Fluency	Word Reading Accuracy or Fluency
Phonological Awareness	Phonological Awareness

The current list of [approved reading instruments](#) that meet the requirements of TEC, [§28.006](#), (Early Reading Diagnosis) include elements that meet the requirements for the dyslexia screening under TEC, [§38.003](#). These tools are available at no cost to LEAs. LEAs may wish to begin planning now to ensure that the dyslexia screening instruments they plan to administer will meet the above criteria. Again, choosing one of the free tools available to all LEAs will meet the requirements.

Providers of instruction Updates

The 2018 version of the Dyslexia Handbook contained language regarding requirements for educators tasked with delivering 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 diagnostic teaching to automaticity, and includes both analytic and synthetic approaches.

The updates to the Dyslexia Handbook maintain this language and add the following:

A provider of dyslexia instruction does not have to be certified as a special educator when serving a student who also receives special education and related services if that provider is the most appropriate person to offer dyslexia instruction.

For Additional Information Regarding Dyslexia Handbook Updates:

Until the rule is filed as adopted with the Texas Register, the proposed amendments to the existing rule will be available on the [Proposed State Board of Education Rules webpage](#). Additional information regarding the actions of the SBOE can be found in the [meeting agendas](#) and [archived webcasts](#).

[TEA Dyslexia and Related Disorders Webpage](#) will host additional guidance and information as it becomes available.

Additional Dyslexia Supports

Beyond the recently approved changes to the Texas Dyslexia Handbook, additional resources designed to support students with dyslexia in Texas public schools are being made available.

TEA is offering a completely digital dyslexia intervention platform through [Amplio Learning](#) to all LEAs in Texas free of charge. The platform provides the MTA curriculum in English and the Esperanza curriculum in Spanish. All materials are digitized and contained within the platform. Additionally, the

platform provides embedded measures to track student progress and provides LEAs with options for reporting that progress to parents. As a part of the digital dyslexia intervention project, TEA has partnered with [ESC Region IV](#) to provide training to LEA staff in the MTA and Esperanza curriculums free of charge. This training prepares interventionists and teachers with the skills and understanding necessary to appropriately implement the respective curriculums and is available to any LEAs implementing the digital dyslexia platform.

House Bill 1525

Texas LEAs are experiencing a critical shortage in credentialed and highly trained dyslexia therapists and practitioners to provide services to students with dyslexia. House Bill 1525 of the 87th Texas Legislature provided TEA with \$50 Million to be used to support projects in LEAs to provide reimbursements and supports to staff to acquire credentialing in the area of dyslexia treatment. These funds will be made available later this school year. More specific information will follow in subsequent communications from TEA.

Upcoming Technical Assistance

TEA's [Child Find, Evaluation, and ARD Supports technical assistance network](#) is preparing a virtual training titled, Evaluating Dyslexia in the Full and Individual Evaluation (FIE) to be released in October 2021.

Other technical assistance is being planned and additional detail will come in subsequent agency communications once the effective date for the new version of the handbook approaches.