



# The Dyslexia Guide

A Handbook for Parents, Educators, and Students

ISBE Division of Special Education Services — July 2019



# Illinois State Board of Education

July 2019

Non-Regulatory Guidance Document  
Public Act 100-0617

## DYSLEXIA HANDBOOK

*This document is intended to provide non-regulatory guidance on the subject matter listed above. For specific questions, please contact the Illinois State Board of Education's Special Education Services Division.*

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Dr. Carmen I. Ayala, State Superintendent

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## Acknowledgements

The following handbook was developed by Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) staff in consultation with a diverse group of professionals whose expertise, experiences, and perspectives were essential to the preparation of this handbook on dyslexia. These collaborative partnerships ensured that the guidance provided on these pages is comprehensive, accurate, and current. This guide is intended to be a resource for parents/guardians as well as educators, practitioners, and administrators to understand what dyslexia is and how students with dyslexia can be supported in school and at home.

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- Educational Consultants and Practitioners throughout Illinois
- Reading Instruction Advisory Group
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## INTRODUCTION

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) is committed to supporting the whole, healthy child nested in whole, healthy systems. Making ISBE's vision a reality requires the provision of resources to ensure that all Illinois administrators, teachers, practitioners, and parents/guardians are participants in the effort to secure equitable outcomes for all students.

Two of ISBE's Board goals are consistent with this effort as they articulate the state's intention to foster improved reading achievement among Illinois students:

- *All kindergartners are assessed for readiness*
- *Ninety percent or more of third-grade students are reading at or above grade level*

The following document is intended for use by all school district personnel and parents/guardians in support of making both of these goals a reality.

Dyslexia is one of the most common language-based disabilities. Yale University reports that dyslexia affects 20 percent of the population and represents 80–90 percent of all those with learning disabilities.<sup>1</sup> Despite these numbers, dyslexia remains a disability that is misunderstood by many people. There are numerous misperceptions about this learning disability – that it is a visual problem, dyslexic students are somehow not as talented or motivated as their peers, there is no treatment - and these need to be debunked. The following document provides resources, technical assistance, and some practical ways of addressing and supporting students who may be exhibiting signs of dyslexia. Readers of this handbook will find useful information on these pages that will dispel misperceptions and offer constructive solutions.

Please visit ISBE's webpage [Understanding Dyslexia](https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Understanding-Dyslexia.aspx) for more information, resources, and guidance.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity: <http://dyslexia.yale.edu/dyslexia/dyslexia-faq/>

<sup>2</sup> Understanding Dyslexia. Illinois State Board of Education. <https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Understanding-Dyslexia.aspx>

## BACKGROUND

In July 2014, [Public Act 98-0705](#) was signed into law in the state of Illinois. This law specified that the “State Board of Education shall adopt rules that incorporate an international definition of dyslexia” into the School Code.<sup>3</sup>

Effective January 2016, Illinois adopted the definition of dyslexia provided by the International Dyslexia Association in 23 Illinois Administrative Code Part 226.125 - Specific Learning Disability: Dyslexia.<sup>4</sup>

Additionally, the law required that the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) establish an advisory group (based on available funding) to develop trainings and provide education to school personnel around “multi-sensory, systematic, and sequential instruction” in reading.

ISBE established a group of stakeholders to discuss dyslexia and evaluate existing training modules. You can learn more about how this group’s work has progressed over the last several years on the [Reading Instruction Advisory Group’s \(RIAG\)](#) page on the ISBE website.<sup>5</sup>

In fact, Illinois was among the first states to introduce dyslexia legislation, and in recent years all but eight states across the country have enacted legislation related to dyslexia. This surge in legislation represents the widespread sentiment that there must be an appropriate understanding of what dyslexia is, how it manifests itself, and how and what interventions can be provided to students exhibiting characteristics indicative of dyslexia.<sup>6</sup>

Illinois legislators also advanced another bill to ensure greater awareness about dyslexia. As of July 20, 2018, House Bill 4369, now signed into law as [Public Act 100-0617](#), requires that ISBE develop, review every four years to update, and maintain a handbook that is made available on its Internet website to provide guidelines, educational strategies, and a description of resources and services for pupils, parents/guardians, and teachers on the subject of dyslexia.

The following is The Dyslexia Guide created by ISBE, pursuant to Public Act 100-0617.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?Name=098-0705>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ilga.gov/commission/Jcar/admincode/023/023002260B01250R.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Reading-Instruction-Advisory-Group.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.dyslexicadvantage.org/dyslexia-laws-2018/>

# FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS: UNDERSTANDING, IDENTIFYING, AND SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD WITH DYSLEXIA

## Questions Parents/Guardians Frequently Ask About Dyslexia

### What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is defined by Illinois state law as a

“Specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. Dyslexia 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.”<sup>7</sup>

This is the definition adopted by the International Dyslexia Association in 2002 and is now used by many states.

### What causes dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a learning disability that arises from variations in processing related to language and reading. Developmental dyslexia is caused by congenital and developmental factors, so there may be a hereditary/genetic component that may predispose some people for dyslexia over others. Research has yet to explore all possible causes, however, studies have found neurological differences in the brain which are believed to be at the root of dyslexia.<sup>8</sup> It can also vary in its impact or severity for each family member.

### What are the effects of dyslexia?

Dyslexia affects people in different ways and may present barriers to learning which can be overcome with proper interventions. Most people with dyslexia can become good readers while others may read slowly and inaccurately. While the most common and persistent issues are with spelling, dyslexia is not just an issue with written words. Some people with dyslexia may have difficulty coming up with specific names or dates when pressured by time, remembering a list or sequence of spoken words such as a telephone number, following a conversation, following instructions, and/or expressing a point of view.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> P.A. 100-0617, in effect July 20, 2018. <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/100/100-0617.htm>

<sup>8</sup> Frequently Asked Questions. *What causes dyslexia?* Dyslexia Success Starts Here. University of Michigan. <http://dyslexiahelp.umich.edu/answers/faq>

<sup>9</sup> Debunking the Myths About Dyslexia. Dyslexia Success Starts Here. University of Michigan. <http://dyslexiahelp.umich.edu/dyslexics/learn-about-dyslexia/what-is-dyslexia/debunking-common-myths-about-dyslexia>



## Does dyslexia only influence reading?

No, dyslexia primarily influences reading but can also affect other areas of learning, such as spelling because a child may not be able to break down and/or reconstruct words using letters and sounds. Other learning problems may arise in areas secondary to reading and spelling, including vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension, writing, and math.

## What is the difference between a reading disability and dyslexia?

Reading disabilities occur when a person has trouble with any part of the reading process. In dyslexia, people have difficulty with phonics and phonological processing (the manipulation of sounds), spelling, written expression, and rapid verbal responding. Dyslexia is the most common reading disability; however, not all reading disabilities are due to dyslexia.

## Can individuals who have dyslexia learn to read?

Yes, most children and adults with dyslexia can learn to read. Some people with dyslexia learn to read at a basic level but face challenges with reading that is more complex and may have difficulty with writing tasks. The reading skills that a person with dyslexia ultimately attains is affected by the severity of the dyslexia and the degree to which remediation strategies are utilized.

## How does dyslexia affect children in math and algebra?

It is not uncommon for children with dyslexia to have difficulties with math. Children with dyslexia may have problems both in understanding the symbols commonly used in math problems and equations and in making sense of word problems. They may find the concepts of time, sequence, and order to be challenging. Although students identified as dyslexic may have difficulties with memorizing math facts and comprehending word problems (any multi-step process), they may be able to do higher level math quite well.<sup>10</sup>

## Will my child outgrow dyslexia?

No, your child will not outgrow dyslexia; however, with the support of deliberately taught strategies that make reading and writing easier, children with dyslexia can grow up to be successful, educated adults with dyslexia.<sup>11</sup>

## Can a person with dyslexia be successful?

Yes, many people with dyslexia who struggle with reading and spelling in elementary school and high school go on to college, jobs, and careers. Most children with dyslexia adapt to their learning issue and are very enterprising. For example, people with dyslexia are often highly creative and

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<sup>10</sup> Woodin, Chris. "Demystifying Math Struggles and Identifying Strategies to Help." The Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity. <http://dyslexia.yale.edu/math.html/>

<sup>11</sup> The Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity. <http://dyslexia.yale.edu/>

resourceful as they learn to develop skills and strategies to help them figure out how to solve problems or tackle challenges. Although dyslexia may make learning more difficult, people with dyslexia have a range of talents and can be successful in college and in jobs and careers.<sup>12</sup>

## Supporting Your Child with Dyslexia

### Where do I start?

You are your child's greatest advocate. If you have concerns about your child's reading, spelling, and learning, start to explore these concerns by reviewing the characteristics of dyslexia on the following pages.

It is important to write down the concerns and observations you may have about your child and make an appointment to meet with your child's teacher at a mutually convenient time.

### How do I talk to my child's teacher about dyslexia?

Start by sharing your concerns and observations. Ask your child's teacher to discuss the following issues with you:

1. How much progress your child has made since the beginning of the school year
2. Your learning expectations for your child and what is being done to ensure that your child makes reading progress
3. Where your child is in relation to grade level standards
4. What you can do at home to help and support your child's reading

It is important that you ask how much time should be spent on homework. Teachers are often unaware of how much time is being spent at home on homework especially when studying spelling words or completing reading assignments.

Offer any suggestions you may have about what would help your child in school based on the strengths you have identified in your child within the home environment. Let the teacher know if either parent or another family member is dyslexic since dyslexia can be inherited.

Follow up with your child's teacher from time to time to discuss your child's progress and any ongoing concerns.

### What is the difference between a screening and an assessment?

Universal screening is a systemic process for the assessment of all students on critical academic skills within a given grade, school building, or school district. Universal screening yields data to make decisions about needed enhancements in the core curriculum, instruction and/or

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<sup>12</sup> "Success & Inspirational Stories." Dyslexia Success Starts Here. University of Michigan.  
<http://dyslexiahelp.umich.edu/success-stories>

educational environment and about which students may need additional assessment and/or supplemental or intensive intervention and instruction beyond what is provided through core programming. A *screening* is a brief, informal test used to provide a quick way to determine whether further, more in-depth testing is appropriate.

An *assessment* is a lengthier and more complex process by which an identification of a specific learning disability, and more specifically dyslexia, may eventually be made. The assessment will include data from repeated assessments (i.e., progress monitoring). An assessment may involve the use of other standardized tests, usually takes several hours, and requires an evaluation by an appropriately qualified professional. If a student is suspected of having dyslexia, the evaluation may include background information, intellectual functioning, oral language skills, word recognition, decoding, spelling, phonological processing, automaticity/fluency skills, reading comprehension, vocabulary knowledge, etc. Generally, the assessment professional will provide a detailed, written report summarizing the findings and may include recommendations for supports or interventions.

### How do I know what to ask for from my district or school?

If your student is having consistent difficulties with reading, you may request an evaluation for special education and related services.

It is best to put your request for an evaluation in writing.

Within 14 school days after receiving a written request for an evaluation, the district will decide whether or not to conduct an evaluation. If the district determines an evaluation is warranted because the student is suspected of having a specific learning disability such as dyslexia, then the district must provide you with the paperwork to provide formal written consent for the evaluation. If the district determines that the evaluation is not necessary, it must notify you in writing of the decision not to evaluate and the reasons for the decision.

For more information and directions for requesting a special education evaluation, please visit the ISBE website and review the parent guide, [Educational Rights and Responsibilities: Understanding Special Education in Illinois](#).<sup>13</sup> This guide will explain special education procedures and processes, show you the required timeline of events, and provide you with sample letters and a blank letter template for your use.

### How will I know if my student qualifies for special education and/or related services?

Upon completion of the administration of assessments and other evaluation measures, a group of qualified professionals and the parent/guardian of the child will form the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team and will determine whether the child meets the criteria for eligibility for special education. In order to qualify as a “student with a disability” under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the student must meet the definition of at least one of the thirteen identified disabilities.

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<sup>13</sup> Information for Parents and Guardians. Illinois State Board of Education. <https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Special-Education-Parents-of-Students-with-Disabilities.aspx>

Specific Learning Disability (SLD) is defined by federal law as “a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, **dyslexia**, and developmental aphasia.” It “does not include the learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of intellectual disability, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.”<sup>14</sup>

In order to meet the criteria for SLD in Illinois, a student must:

- a. Demonstrate performance that is significantly below the performance of peers or expected standards (Discrepancy), and
- b. Exhibit significant deficiencies in his or her rate of learning based on progress monitoring data (Educational Progress), and
- c. Demonstrate that his or her needs in the area of curriculum, instruction, and/or environmental conditions are significantly different than that of his or her general education peers (Instructional Need), and in order to make educational progress, the student requires interventions of an intensity or type that exceed general education resources.

While SLD is the category of disability, the term “dyslexia” and the Illinois definition of dyslexia can further describe the student’s learning difficulties.

In addition to determining that the student meets the definition of at least one of the identified disabilities, the IEP team must determine that (1) the disability adversely affects the student’s educational performance and (2) that the student requires special education as a result of such disability. Special education means **specially designed instruction**, at no cost to parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability. Specially designed instruction means adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs of the child that result from the child’s disability and to ensure access of the child to the general curriculum.

This eligibility determination must occur by the end of the 60<sup>th</sup> school day after parental consent for evaluation is obtained. If the child is eligible to receive special education supports and services, an IEP team must then meet with the parent/guardian to develop the IEP for the student within 30 days, but no later than the 60<sup>th</sup> school day after consent for evaluation was obtained. Before the special education services can begin, the parent/guardian must provide written informed consent to allow the district to proceed with the services and placement. Placement may begin no sooner than 10 school days after the parent/guardian consents unless the parent/guardian gives permission for it to start sooner.

Not all students evaluated for an SLD will be identified with dyslexia. In addition, because dyslexia varies in its severity, not all of those with characteristics of dyslexia may qualify for special education and/or related services.

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<sup>14</sup> 34 C.F.R. 300.8(c)(10): Child with a disability.

If the evaluation team decides that the student is not a student with a disability as defined under IDEA and you do not agree, please review to the parent guide, [Educational Rights and Responsibilities: Understanding Special Education in Illinois](#) for further instruction.<sup>15</sup>

## Identifying Dyslexia

Many children have problems with learning and behavior from time to time, and variations in development are normal. Not every concern indicates a developmental problem. While dyslexia is not a medical diagnosis, you can always speak to your child’s doctor to rule out any vision, hearing, and/or medically diagnosed neurological issues.

The following table was adapted from Yale University’s dyslexia website<sup>16</sup> and the Understanding Dyslexia website.<sup>17</sup> This is not a comprehensive table of characteristics. For more information and a complete list, please visit the Yale University dyslexia website or the Understanding Dyslexia website (noted in footnotes below).

Areas of Need	Pre-school	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Struggles to learn common nursery rhymes and letters of the alphabet, recognize letters in their name, and pronounce words	X	X		
Struggles with sounding out words and breaking them into syllables	X	X	X	X
Misspells words or spells them the way they sound		X	X	X
Reading is slow and labored which could result in lack of comprehension		X	X	X
Avoids reading out loud		X	X	X
Shows a higher level of understanding when read to and a more sophisticated vocabulary from listening rather than reading	X	X	X	X
Difficulty learning a foreign/new language		X	X	X

<sup>15</sup> Information for Parents and Guardians. Illinois State Board of Education. <https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Special-Education-Parents-of-Students-with-Disabilities.aspx>

<sup>16</sup> “Signs of Dyslexia.” Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity. <http://dyslexia.yale.edu/dyslexia/signs-of-dyslexia/>

<sup>17</sup> “Signs of Dyslexia at Different Ages.” Understanding Dyslexia. <https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/signs-symptoms/could-your-child-have/checklist-signs-of-dyslexia-at-different-ages>

Does not enjoy school and appears to be unmotivated or lazy		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
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## What Parents/Guardians Can Do at Home to Help

### Reading to Children

Reading to children is an activity that promotes healthy relationships, sparks children’s imaginations, and according to recent research, enhances brain development. The latter has been proven through scientific research as recounted in the article, *Reading to Children Promotes Brain Development* which was published in *Neuroscience News* on April 25, 2015.<sup>18</sup>

The article outlines how functional magnetic resonance imaging which measures brain activity scientifically supports the idea that reading to your child from the time of birth is associated with increased brain development in areas that support semantic processing (the extraction of meaning from language) which is critical for oral language (vocabulary development and oral comprehension) and later for reading.

It is important to note, however, that reading to your child will not prevent dyslexia. Reading to your child supports vocabulary development, oral communication, and oral comprehension. Strong vocabulary, oral communication, and oral comprehension are the building blocks that will help your student when he or she begins to learn to read. For the dyslexic child, these early learning building blocks will enhance his or her reading development when the appropriate interventions are applied.

### Supporting Your Child

Talking to your child’s teachers and building strong lines of communication can provide the foundation for the support system your child needs to be successful in school. Sharing information about your student’s strengths and areas of need will help your child’s teacher support your student’s learning. You can also suggest alternative ways for your child to demonstrate learning in addition to work completed on paper. It is additionally beneficial to monitor the communication sent home by your child’s teacher so you are aware of coming events and assignments. Your awareness of your child’s current lesson topics and homework assignments and your ongoing support will encourage your child to become more engaged in and confident about school.

It would be helpful for your child if you review his or her school or teacher’s website to check your student’s agenda and for specific instructions about the homework found in your student’s book bag. It is a good practice for parents/guardians to organize the homework so that the easier, less time-consuming assignments are completed first. For older students, a parent/guardian can separate large projects and research into manageable parts that can be noted on a calendar or timeline to ensure timely completion.

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<sup>18</sup> Hutton, John, M. D. April 25, 2015. Reading to Children Promotes Brain Development. *Neuro Science News*. <https://neurosciencenews.com/mri-early-reading-brain-activity-1996/>

Homework can be a very stressful time for both parent and student. It is important to keep perspective, avoid power struggles, and remember that your student may be tired or even be feeling a bit defeated and frustrated. Giving your student a short break when he or she gets home to decompress and be more refreshed before tackling homework assignments may be very helpful. Ongoing homework problems may warrant a conference with the teacher in order to determine the source of your child's difficulty.

The website [Understood for Learning and Attention Issues](https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/partnering-with-childs-school/instructional-strategies/8-multisensory-techniques-for-teaching-reading?view=slideview) (Understood.org)<sup>19</sup> is a website that offers parents/guardians eight multi-sensory ideas for approaching vocabulary and spelling. A multi-sensory approach allows the student to access written language through visual (sight), tactile (touch), and auditory (hearing) means which engages more than one part of the brain and increases your student's engagement with the content.

For reading tasks, [Intervention Central](https://www.interventioncentral.org/academic-interventions/reading-fluency/paired-reading)<sup>20</sup> provides clear instructions on how parents can share-pair-read with their student. This strategy is a powerful tool that will help support your child and minimize frustration for both of you.

For middle school, high school, and college-aged students as well as adults, it is important to keep in mind that people identified as dyslexic are typically very creative, intelligent, and adaptive individuals.<sup>21</sup>

## FOR EDUCATORS: SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA

Early intervention using a [structured literacy](https://www.interventioncentral.org/academic-interventions/reading-fluency/paired-reading)<sup>22</sup> approach is the key to overcoming the effects of dyslexia on reading. Remediation from an early age in areas such as phonological awareness and phonics is crucial. With early intervention and the use of systematic, research-based supports, individuals with dyslexia can become excellent readers. It is never too late for an individual with dyslexia to get help and improve his or her reading, spelling, and writing skills.

Research has shown that structured literacy and phonological training have a positive impact on brain development. The graphic below illustrates the brain development of a dyslexic child before and after training.<sup>23</sup> After phonological and literacy training, the brains of dyslexic children more closely resemble the brains of the children in the control group with regard to understanding the fundamental components of language, including word meaning and spelling.

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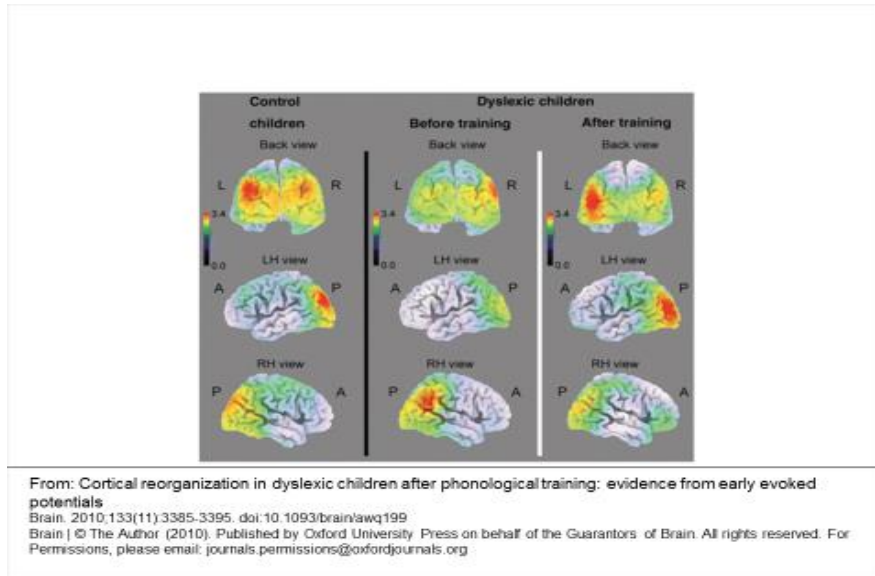
<sup>19</sup> <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/partnering-with-childs-school/instructional-strategies/8-multisensory-techniques-for-teaching-reading?view=slideview>

<sup>20</sup> Paired Reading. Intervention Central. <https://www.interventioncentral.org/academic-interventions/reading-fluency/paired-reading>

<sup>21</sup> Dyslexic Kids & Adults. The Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity. <http://dyslexia.yale.edu/resources/dyslexic-kids-adults/>

<sup>22</sup> Effective Reading Instruction. International Dyslexia Association. <https://dyslexiaida.org/effective-reading-instruction/>

<sup>23</sup> Spironelli, C., Penolazzi, B., Vio, C., & Angrilli, A. 2010. Cortical reorganization in dyslexic children after phonological training: evidence from early evoked potentials. *Brain: A Journal of Neurology*, 133(11), 3385-95. Oxford University Press.



## Best Practices in Screening, Assessments, and the Multi-Tiered System of Supports Related to Dyslexia

The International Dyslexia Association points out that it is possible to identify potential reading problems in young children even before the problems turn into a reading deficit. This can be done by assessing students three times a year using screening assessments. Additional information that may be helpful for assessment includes disclosing if there is a family history of reading difficulties and/or speech delay. These assessments and personal information can help schools determine students who are “at risk” for reading difficulties. Schools that implement a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) framework are able to adequately screen and identify students with reading difficulties, specifically to target a student’s phonemic awareness, reading fluency, and accuracy which are characteristics of dyslexia.

In Illinois, MTSS is a framework for continuous improvement that is systemic, prevention-focused, and data-informed, providing a coherent continuum of supports responsive to meet the needs of all learners. Those seeking resources in implementing MTSS with fidelity may access the ISBE-funded Illinois MTSS-Network through the following link: <http://www.iltss.net/>.

The following table provides information on reading instruction best practices that address some of the facts and recommendations from the International Dyslexia Association and researchers of dyslexia. It was developed by the Reading Instruction Advisory Group in June 2016.<sup>24</sup>

Facts Regarding Reading Disabilities or Dyslexia	Best Practices in Literacy
Curriculum-based Measurement-Reading Assessments (CBM-R) help teachers amend instruction until it is effective and give the clearest picture of student’s ongoing reading growth. <sup>25</sup>	All students to be screened three times a year in the area of reading to determine if they are displaying expected growth. Common skills to screen for include, depending on grade/development level, letter knowledge,

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Reading-Instruction-Advisory-Group.aspx>

<sup>25</sup> Universal Screening: K-2 Reading. International Dyslexia Association. <https://dyslexiaida.org/universal-screening-k-2-reading/>



	<p>sound-symbol recognition, rapid naming, phonemic segmentation, oral reading fluency, and accuracy.</p>
<p>A young child must develop phonemic awareness if he is to become a reader.<sup>26</sup></p>	<p>A kindergarten and first grade curriculum should provide instruction in early literacy skills, including phonemic awareness, blending, segmenting, rhyming, substitution of sounds, and letter/sound fluency.</p> <p>Identified students may receive additional small group instruction in phonemic awareness skills based on results of the screening measures.</p>
<p>Preventive intervention should begin immediately if dyslexia is suspected.<sup>27</sup></p>	<p>Based on screening results, classroom performance, and diagnostic information (if needed), students who are identified are provided with the required supplemental instruction (Tier 2) or intense instruction (Tier 3).</p> <p>Intervention plans are developed for either small groups or individuals based on identified skill needs.</p>
<p>Careful progress monitoring and analysis of student performance are the key elements of a scientific approach to instruction that has the most promise to meet the unique needs of students with dyslexia.<sup>28</sup></p>	<p>Progress monitoring is conducted in a targeted skill - for example, phonemic awareness, decoding, vocabulary specifically for students receiving supplemental (Tier 2) and more frequently for intense (Tier 3) instruction - so that teachers know if the intervention is working and how to adjust instruction.</p> <p>Teams are to meet regularly to review and analyze progress monitoring data.</p> <p>Intervention plans may be modified in the areas of frequency, duration, or grouping based on the ongoing analysis of the data.</p>

<sup>26</sup> Shaywitz, S. M. D. 2003. *Overcoming Dyslexia*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf Publishing.

<sup>27</sup> Testing & Evaluation. International Dyslexia Association. <https://dyslexiaida.org/testing-and-evaluation/>

<sup>28</sup> *Perspectives on Language and Literacy*. 2007. The International Dyslexia Association.

## Structured Literacy Instruction

According to information provided by the International Dyslexia Association<sup>29</sup> structured literacy instruction is marked by several elements:

- **Phonology.** “Phonology is the study of sound structure of spoken words and is a critical element of Structured Language Instruction. Phonological awareness includes rhyming, counting words in spoken sentences, and clapping syllables in spoken words. An important aspect of phonological awareness is phonemic awareness or the ability to segment words into their component sounds which are called phonemes. A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in a given language that can be recognized as being distinct from other sounds in the language. For example, the word *cap* has three phonemes (/k/, /ă/, /p/), and the word *clasp* has five phonemes (/k/, /l/, /ă/, /s/, /p/).”
- **Sound-Symbol Association.** “Once students have developed the awareness of phonemes of spoken language, they must learn how to map the phonemes to symbols or printed letters. Sound-symbol association must be taught and mastered in two directions: visual to auditory (reading) and auditory to visual (spelling). Additionally, students must master the blending of sounds and letters into words as well as the segmenting of whole words into the individual sounds. The instruction of sound-symbol associations is often referred to as phonics. Although phonics is a component of *Structured Literacy*, it is embedded within a rich and deep language context.”
- **Syllable Instruction.** “A syllable is a unit of oral or written language with one vowel sound. Instruction includes teaching the six basic syllable types in the English language: closed, vowel-consonant-*e*, open, consonant-*le*, *r*-controlled, and vowel pair. Knowledge of syllable types is an important organizing idea. By knowing the syllable type, the reader can better determine the sound of the vowel in the syllable. Syllable division rules heighten the reader’s awareness of where a long, unfamiliar word may be divided for greater accuracy in reading the word.”
- **Morphology.** “A morpheme is the smallest unit of meaning in the language. The Structured Literacy curriculum includes the study of base words, roots, prefixes, and suffixes. The word *instructor*, for example, contains the root *struct* which means *to build*, the prefix *in* which means *in* or *into*, and the suffix *or* which means *one who*. An instructor is one who builds knowledge in his or her students.”
- **Syntax.** “Syntax is the set of principles that dictate the sequence and function of words in a sentence in order to convey meaning. This includes grammar, sentence variation, and the mechanics of language.”
- **Semantics.** “Semantics is that aspect of language concerned with meaning. The curriculum (from the start) must include instruction in the comprehension of written language.”

“Structured Literacy instruction is distinctive in the principles that guide how critical elements are taught,” according to the International Dyslexia Association:

- **Systematic and Cumulative:** “Systematic means that the organization of material follows the logical order of the language. The sequence must begin with the easiest and most basic

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<sup>29</sup> Effective Reading Instruction. International Dyslexia Association.

concepts and elements and progress methodically to more difficult concepts and elements. Cumulative means each step must be based on concepts previously learned.”

- **Explicit Instruction.** “Structured Literacy Instruction requires the deliberate teaching of all concepts with continuous student-teacher interaction.”
- **Diagnostic Teaching.** Teachers “must be adept at individualized instruction and the instruction based on the individual needs of the student based on careful and continuous assessment.” Once content is mastered, a dyslexic student may achieve an automatic response “needed to free attention and cognitive resources for comprehension and oral/written responses.”<sup>30</sup>

Included in the basic principles that guide Structured Literacy instruction, a well-developed structured literacy program is marked by syllable instruction, the deliberate and direct instruction of the six basic syllable types in the English language allows the reader to decode unfamiliar words.

- Closed: A syllable that ends in a consonant:
  - bat, cup, nod
  - Multi-syllabic words can have closed syllables, vowel-consonant-consonant-vowel pattern, or VC /CV: ballot (bal/lot), catnip (cat/nip), picnic (pic/nic)
  - Two syllable words: vowel-consonant/vowel pattern, or VC/V: salad (sal/ad), panic (pan/ic), wagon (wag/on)
- Vowel-consonant-silent e: rope, cake, pile
- Open: A syllable that ends in a vowel:
  - vowel/consonant-vowel pattern, or V /CV: music (mu/sic), robot (ro/bot)
  - vowel/vowel pattern, or V/V: neon (ne/on), giant (gi/ant)
- Consonant-le: word end in -le, the letters and the consonant before them form the last syllable.
  - If the syllable before the last syllable ends in a vowel, it is an open syllable and has a long vowel sound: cable (ca/ble), title (ti/tle)
  - If the syllable before the last syllable ends with a consonant, it is a closed syllable and has a short vowel sound: settle (set/tle), bubble (bub/ble), ample (am/ple)
- R-controlled: more commonly known as schwa-r sounds. The most common schwa-r sounds are *ar*, *er*, and *or*: car, player, core, herb
- Vowel pair: Every syllable contains one vowel sound. Some vowel sounds are spelled with two vowels: pointed (point/ed), floated (float/ed), maintain (main/tain)

## Assistive Technology

Assistive technology devices and services can enhance learning for some children diagnosed with dyslexia. For more information about assistive technology, please check the ISBE website via the following link: <https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Special-Education-Assistive-Technology.aspx>

The Assistive Technology Guidance Manual is an extremely useful resource for parents and educators and was developed collaboratively by Illinois State University, Infinitec, and ISBE. This manual can be

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<sup>30</sup> Multisensory Structured Language Teaching Fact Sheet. International dyslexia Association. <https://dyslexiaida.org/multisensory-structured-language-teaching-fact-sheet/>

accessed on the ISBE website and via the following link: <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/assist-tech-guidance-manual.pdf>

ISBE also partners with the Illinois Assistive Technology Program (IATP) (<https://www.iltech.org/>) which provides assistive technology evaluations, resources, and devices; Infinitec (<http://www.myinfinitec.org/>), a provider of technological devices, training, and support to promote inclusion; and Learning Ally ([www.learningally.org](http://www.learningally.org)), a developer and provider of audiobooks.

## English Learners and Dyslexia

### May a student who is an English Learner be identified as dyslexic?

The short answer is yes, a student who is an English learner may be identified as having dyslexia.

According to a presentation on distinguishing between typically developing English learners and those with reading and learning difficulties by Haskins Laboratories which is affiliated with Yale University,<sup>31</sup> the human brain processes language in the same manner regardless of the primary language of the learner. Dyslexia is a neurological learning disability and occurs at the same rate among English learners as it does among students who are not English learners.

The differences in how dyslexia presents itself, however, vary by language. Syntax awareness, writing/spelling, and reading comprehension may be impacted in the students' native language. This may, in turn, have an impact on the students' adeptness in learning another language, such as English, and/or meeting world language requirements for graduation.

A complicating factor in new language acquisition can be the orthography of languages, the relationship between sounds and letters. The English language has a deep orthography in that the relationship between sounds and letters is complex and irregular, whereas Spanish and Italian have a far less complicated correspondence between letters and sounds. It can take a longer time for a student whose native language has a shallow, less complicated orthography to learn a language with a deeper, more complicated orthography.

It is difficult to determine if an English learner is experiencing problems related to dyslexia or simply to the task of learning a new language. If, however, an English learner is not making expected progress in language acquisition skills and continues to exhibit difficulties in word reading, fluency, and spelling, a formal evaluation for a specific learning disability such as dyslexia could be warranted.

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<sup>31</sup> *Distinguishing Between Typically Developing English Learners and Those with Reading and Learning Difficulties*. Haskins Laboratories: The Science of the Spoken and Written Word.  
<http://www.haskins.yale.edu/hti/1-27-17%20presentations/raynolds%20slides%20for%20state.pdf>

## FOR DISTRICTS AND SCHOOLS: PROVIDING SUPPORTIVE SYSTEMS FOR STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA

Districts and schools have a state and federal obligation to identify students with dyslexia pursuant to Child Find. Illinois state regulation<sup>32</sup> defers to federal law<sup>33</sup> in the identification of students suspected with dyslexia. Generally, it requires that students suspected of having dyslexia or identified as dyslexic be referred for an evaluation. For more information regarding the characteristics of dyslexia or how dyslexia is identified, please refer to the “Questions Parents/Guardians Frequently Ask about Dyslexia” above.

### Federal Guidance on Dyslexia

The federal Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) released [guidance](#)<sup>34</sup> to state and local educational agencies which clarifies that students with specific learning disabilities such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia have unique educational needs and that there is nothing in the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that would prohibit the use of the terms dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia in a student’s evaluation, determination of eligibility for special education and related services, or in developing the student’s IEP.

OSERS acknowledged that there could be situations in which the child’s parents and the team of qualified professionals responsible for determining whether the child has a specific learning disability would find it helpful to include information about the specific condition (e.g., dyslexia, dyscalculia, or dysgraphia) in documenting how that condition relates to the child’s eligibility determination. Additionally, there could be situations where an IEP team could determine that personnel responsible for IEP implementation would need to know about the condition underlying the child’s disability (e.g., that a child has a weakness in decoding skills as a result of dyslexia).

Specifically, this guidance:

- Clarifies that the list of conditions in the definition of “specific learning disability,” which includes dyslexia, is not an exhaustive list of conditions that may qualify a child as a student with a learning disability.
- Reminds states of the importance of addressing the unique educational needs of children with specific learning disabilities resulting from dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia during IEP meetings and other meetings with parents under IDEA.
- Encourages states to review their policies, procedures, and practices to ensure that they do not prohibit the use of the terms dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia in evaluations, eligibility, and IEP documents.

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<sup>32</sup> 23 Illinois Administrative Code 226.125(c)

<sup>33</sup> 34 Code of Federal Regulations 300.304 – 300.311

<sup>34</sup> <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/idea/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/guidance-on-dyslexia-10-2015.pdf>

## ESSA and Dyslexia

The Every Student Succeeds Act,<sup>35</sup> more commonly referred to as ESSA, is a federal law that went into effect in December 2015 and directly addresses dyslexia. ESSA places a focus on literacy through new programs. It also created the National Center on Improving Literacy (<https://improvingliteracy.org/>), a national center on teaching reading and writing to all students, including students with learning disabilities. This site provides a wide variety of resources for parents and teachers who wish to improve “outcomes for students with literacy-related disabilities, including dyslexia.”<sup>36</sup>

## RESOURCES FOR COLLEGE AND BEYOND

### Dyslexia and Secondary Transition

It is the school's/district's responsibility to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living.

### Transition IEPs and the Summary of Performance

The Summary of Performance (SOP) is a required part of the IEP process. During a student's senior year before graduation, the SOP document will be developed to summarize the student's areas of academic strengths, areas of needed support, and reasonable accommodations that would be helpful during his or her postsecondary education, vocational education, and/or career after high school.

The IDEA does not require school districts to include the documentation necessary to determine a student's eligibility for another program or service in the SOP; however, the SOP should include information that may assist another program in determining a student's eligibility for services or accommodations.

It will be up to the student to disclose to his or her postsecondary program or employer the need or desire for accommodations. Further, the student should be able to talk about past accommodations and academic supports. For this reason, it is important that school/district representatives ensure the student understands and can articulate his or her needs.

ISBE's Indicator 13 website<sup>37</sup> provides the following information designed to help guide the development of transition plans and the SOP:

- Indicator 13 forms
- Webinars
- Transition information/PowerPoints
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document

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<sup>35</sup> Subpart A, Programs of National Significance – SEC. 2244 Technical Assistance and National Evaluations.

<sup>36</sup> <https://improvingliteracy.org/>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Special-Education-Indicator-13.aspx>

- Resources around evidence-based practices in secondary transition.

## College and Post High School Training

After a student’s graduation or exit from high school, he or she will no longer have an IEP but will be protected from discrimination under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. These laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of a disability.

It is important to keep in mind that there are differences between the responsibilities of postsecondary schools and a school district. Section 504 and Title II apply to both school districts and postsecondary schools; however, a postsecondary educational institution does not have to provide a free, appropriate education (FAPE). The postsecondary schools, including vocational and career schools, two- and four- year colleges, and universities are only required to provide appropriate academic adjustments as necessary to ensure that they do not discriminate based on a disability and do not compromise the overall quality and rigor of the postsecondary education program.

Accommodations such as extended time on exams/tests, class notes, a laptop for tests and exams, etc. may be provided based on the documented need of the student. In order to receive these accommodations, a student must provide documentation to the school’s disability services office when requesting such accommodations.

Many students who are entering postsecondary educational or training programs may wonder if they have to report that they had accommodations and an IEP in high school. The answer is that it is up to the student if he or she wishes to inform the program. The student’s high school will not inform the postsecondary program, and the College Board does not indicate the accommodations, if any, provided during testing. However, it is helpful to the postsecondary program and/or the employer if a student/trainee shares the SOP with them.

## Office of Civil Rights

Within the U.S. Education Department the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) [offers 8 keys to success](#) which provide an individual with information and suggestions to enhance his or her postsecondary experience and increase his or her ability to be successful.<sup>38</sup>

ISBE does not oversee or regulate postsecondary education, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, or Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you have questions or concerns, please contact the U. S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights.

<p>National Office: Office for Civil Rights U. S. Department of Education 400 Maryland Avenue SW Washington, D.C. 20202</p>	<p>Chicago Office: Office for Civil Rights U. S. Department of Education Citigroup Center 500 West Madison Street, Suite 1475</p>
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<sup>38</sup> <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transitionguide.html#padmissions>

Phone: 800-421-3481 TDD: 877-521-2172 Email: <a href="mailto:ocr@ed.gov">ocr@ed.gov</a>	Chicago, Illinois 60661 Phone: 312-730-1560 TDD: 800-877-8339 Email: <a href="mailto:OCR.Chicago@ed.gov">OCR.Chicago@ed.gov</a>
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## RELATED REGULATION & LAWS

### Federal Overview

#### **CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS TITLE 34, SUBTITLE B, CHAPTER III, PART 300, SUBPART A**

§300.8 Child with a disability.

(a) General—

- (1) Child with a disability means a child evaluated in accordance with §§300.304 through 300.311 as having an intellectual disability, a hearing impairment (including deafness), a speech or language impairment, a visual impairment (including blindness), a serious emotional disturbance (referred to in this part as “emotional disturbance”), an orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, an other health impairment, a specific learning disability, deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities, and who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services.
  
- (2)
  - (i) Subject to paragraph (a)(2)(ii) of this section, if it is determined, through an appropriate evaluation under §§300.304 through 300.311, that a child has one of the disabilities identified in paragraph (a)(1) of this section, but only needs a related service and not special education, the child is not a child with a disability under this part.
  
  - (ii) If, consistent with §300.39(a)(2), the related service required by the child is considered special education rather than a related service under State standards, the child would be determined to be a child with a disability under paragraph (a)(1) of this section.
  
- (10) *Specific learning disability—*
  - (i) *General.* 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.
  
  - (ii) *Disorders not included.* Specific learning disability does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of intellectual disability, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage



**UNITED STATES CODE TITLE 20—EDUCATION: § 1401**

(30) Specific Learning Disability

- (A) In general  
The term “specific learning disability” means a disorder in 1 or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which disorder may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations.
- (B) Disorders included  
Such term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.
- (C) Disorders not included  
Such term does not include a learning problem that is primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of intellectual disabilities, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

**EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT - SECTION 2244**

**SEC. 2244. [20 U.S.C. 6674] TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND NATIONAL EVALUATION.**

- (a) IN GENERAL—From the funds reserved under section 2241(3) for a fiscal year, the Secretary—
  - 1. shall establish, in a manner consistent with section 203 of the Educational Technical Assistance Act of 2002 (20 U.S.C. 9602), a comprehensive center on students at risk of not attaining full literacy skills due to a disability that meets the purposes of subsection (b); and
  - 2. may—
    - (A) provide technical assistance, which may be carried out directly or through grants or contracts, to States and local educational agencies carrying out activities under this part; and
    - (B) carry out evaluations of activities by States and local educational agencies under this part, which shall be conducted by a third party or by the Institute of Education Sciences.
- (b) PURPOSES—The comprehensive center established by the Secretary under subsection (a)(1) shall—
  - 1. identify or develop free or low-cost evidence-based assessment tools for identifying students at risk of not attaining full literacy skills due to a disability, including dyslexia impacting reading or writing, or developmental delay impacting reading, writing, language processing, comprehension, or executive functioning;
  - 2. identify evidence-based literacy instruction, strategies, and accommodations, including assistive technology, designed to meet the specific needs of such students;
  - 3. provide families of such students with information to assist such students;
  - 4. identify or develop evidence-based professional development for teachers, paraprofessionals, principals, other school leaders, and specialized instructional support personnel to—
    - (A) understand early indicators of students at risk of not attaining full literacy skills due to a disability, including dyslexia impacting reading or writing, or developmental delay impacting reading, writing, language processing, comprehension, or executive functioning;

- (B) use evidence-based screening assessments for early identification of such students beginning not later than kindergarten; and
  - (C) implement evidence-based instruction designed to meet the specific needs of such students; and
5. disseminate the products of the comprehensive center to regionally diverse State educational agencies, local educational agencies, regional educational agencies, and schools, including, as appropriate, through partnerships with other comprehensive centers established under section 203 of the Educational Technical Assistance Act of 2002 (20 U.S.C. 9602), and regional educational laboratories established under section 174 of the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (20 U.S.C. 9564).

## Federal Guidance

Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Dear Colleague (October 23, 2015)

## State Overview

### ILLINOIS REGULATIONS

#### 23 ILLINOIS ADMINISTRATIVE CODE 226.125

Specific Learning Disability: Dyslexia

- a) For the purposes of this Section, dyslexia means 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. (Definition from the Board of Directors of the International Dyslexia Association.)
- b) In accordance with 34 CFR 300.8(b)(10), dyslexia is one of a number of disorders included as a specific learning disability that may adversely affect the student's educational performance and result in the child's eligibility for special education and related services.
- c) Each child suspected of having dyslexia or identified as dyslexic shall be referred for an evaluation in accordance with the requirements of 34 CFR 300.304 through 300.311 and Subpart B of this Part. (Source: Added at 40 Ill. Reg. 2220, effective January 13, 2016)

#### 105 ILLINOIS COMPILED STATUTES 5/2-3.161

Sec. 2-3.161. Definition of dyslexia; reading instruction advisory group; handbook.

- (a) The State Board of Education shall incorporate, in both general education and special education, the following definition of dyslexia:  
Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. Dyslexia 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.

- (b) Subject to specific State appropriation or the availability of private donations, the State Board of Education shall establish an advisory group to develop a training module or training modules to provide education and professional development to teachers, school administrators, and other education professionals regarding multi-sensory, systematic, and sequential instruction in reading. This advisory group shall complete its work before December 15, 2015 and is abolished on December 15, 2015. The State Board of Education shall reestablish the advisory group abolished on December 15, 2015 to complete the abolished group's work. The reestablished advisory group shall complete its work before December 31, 2016 and is abolished on December 31, 2016. The provisions of this subsection (b), other than this sentence, are inoperative after December 31, 2016.
- (c) The State Board of Education shall develop and maintain a handbook to be made available on its Internet website that provides guidance for pupils, parents or guardians, and teachers on the subject of dyslexia. The handbook shall include, but is not limited to:
  - (1) guidelines for teachers and parents or guardians on how to identify signs of dyslexia;
  - (2) a description of educational strategies that have been shown to improve the academic performance of pupils with dyslexia; and
  - (3) a description of resources and services available to pupils with dyslexia, parents or guardians of pupils with dyslexia, and teachers.

The State Board shall review the handbook once every 4 years to update, if necessary, the guidelines, educational strategies, or resources and services made available in the handbook.