

# Cuero ISD



## Dyslexia Handbook

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## **I. Definition of Dyslexia**

As defined in Texas Education Code §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 definition of 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 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.

## **II. Procedures Required by State Law Prior to Formal Assessment**

In accordance with TEC §28.006, Cuero ISD administers early reading instruments in kindergarten, first grade, second grade, and as appropriate, seventh grade to determine students' reading development and comprehension. If, on the basis of the reading instrument results, students are determined to be at risk for dyslexia and other reading difficulties, the students' parents/guardians are notified. In addition, an accelerated (intensive) reading program that appropriately addresses students' reading difficulties and enables them to "catch up" with their typically performing peers is implemented. Should students continue to struggle with reading, writing, and spelling during the intensive reading instruction, then Cuero ISD will initiate procedures to recommend these students for assessment for dyslexia. The information from the early reading instruments will be one source of information in deciding whether or not to recommend a student for assessment for dyslexia. Other sources may include, but are not limited to, performance on state mandated test(s), a student's grades/performance in reading and written spelling, and teachers' observations of the characteristics of dyslexia.

## **III. Referral Process**

At any time that a student continues to struggle with one or more components of reading, Cuero ISD will collect additional information about the student.

### **Data Gathering:**

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 assessments 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:

Vision screening

Hearing screening

Teacher reports of classroom concerns

Basal reading series assessment

Accommodations provided by classroom teachers

Outside evaluation	Observations of instruction provided to student
Academic progress reports and/or report cards	Speech and language screening through a referral process
Samples of schoolwork	School attendance
Parent conferences	The K-2 reading instrument as described in TEC §28.006
Testing for limited English proficiency, TEC §28.006	State student assessment program as described in TEC §39.002
Full Individual Evaluation (FIE)	Curriculum-based assessment

Data should support the student 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.

Among the actions that Cuero ISD has available for the student is a recommendation that the student be assessed for dyslexia. Cuero ISD recommends 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, and;  
 Characteristics of dyslexia.

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

- Difficulty reading real words in isolation
- Difficulty accurately decoding nonsense words
- Slow, inaccurate, or labored oral reading (lack of reading fluency)
- Difficulty with learning to spell

The reading/spelling characteristics are the result of difficulty with the following:

- The development of phonological awareness, including segmenting, blending, and manipulating sounds in words
- Learning the names of letters and their associated sounds
- Phonological memory (holding information about sounds and words in memory)
- Rapid naming of familiar objects, colors, or letters of the alphabet

## **Secondary consequences of dyslexia may include the following:**

- Variable difficulty with aspects of reading comprehension
- Variable difficulty with aspects of written composition
- A limited amount of time spent in reading activities

The Student Support Team will evaluate the collected data and make a recommendation for further assessment when these criteria are met.

## **IV. Assessment for Dyslexia**

Students enrolling in Cuero 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 early 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.

### **The procedures followed for assessment include:**

Notify parents or guardians of proposal to assess student for a Full Individual and Initial Evaluation (FIIE)

Inform parents or guardians of their rights under IDEA

Parents are given a copy of the Procedural Safeguards and the Parent's Guide to the ARD Process.

Obtain parent or guardian written consent to assess the student for a Full Individual and Initial Evaluation (FIIE)

Assess student, being sure that individuals/professionals who administer assessments have training in the evaluation of students for dyslexia and related disorders (19 TAC §74.28).

### **Tests, assessments, and other evaluation materials will (§504):**

Be validated for the specific purpose for which they 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

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 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**

The district or charter school 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
- Word decoding
- Fluency (rate, accuracy, and prosody)
- Reading comprehension
- Written spelling and composition

### **Cognitive processes that underlie the reading difficulties:**

**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, read words fluently, and to read connected text at an appropriate rate.)

**Orthographic processing** (memory for letter patterns, sequences, and letters in whole words)

**Various language processes** (morpheme and syntax awareness, memory and retrieval of verbal labels, and the ability to formulate ideas into grammatical sentences)

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

Academic Skills

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

Cognitive Processes

- Phonological/phonemic awareness
- Rapid naming of symbols or objects

Possible Additional Areas

- Vocabulary
- Listening comprehension
- Verbal expression
- Written expression
- Handwriting
- Memory for letter or symbol sequences (orthographic processing)
- Mathematical calculation/reasoning
- Phonological memory
- Verbal working memory
- Processing speed

## **Bullying**

If a student serviced under a 504 plan or an IEP is accused of bullying or is the victim of bullying- a 504/ ARD meeting will be convened to look at solutions such as a behavior plan or safety plan.

### **Cuero ISD (§504) Coordinator:**

Kim Fleener, (361) 275-1922

### **Cuero ISD Special Education Director:**

Crystal Hamilton, (361) 275-1903

## **Emergent Bilingual**

**This refers to students served in Bilingual and ESL programs as well as students designated Emergent Bilingual (EB) whose parents have denied services.**

Much diversity exists among Emergent Bilinguals (EBs). The identification and service delivery process for dyslexia must be in step with the student's linguistic environment and educational background. In Cuero ISD, the LPAC (Language Proficiency Assessment Committee) will be involved in the decision making process.



## **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 Assessment documentation when available
  - Texas English Language Proficiency system (TELPAS) information.
  - 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 in English and the student's native language whenever possible
- If the student has received academic instruction in his/her native language, as well as English, then the "Domains to Assess" need to be completed in both languages to the appropriate extent, if possible.

## **Interpretation:**

Test results of Emergent Bilingual students will be interpreted in light of the student's language development (in both English and the student's native language when possible), educational history, linguistic background, socioeconomic issues, and any other pertinent factors that affect learning.

## **V. Identification of Students with Dyslexia**

The ARD Committee determines whether the student has dyslexia. The members must be 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

This committee determines the identification of dyslexia after reviewing all accumulated data including the following areas:

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

Language Assessment Proficiency Committee (LPAC) documentation, when applicable

The results of administered assessments

All other accumulated data regarding the development of the student's learning and his/her educational needs

The degree and level of instructional support as well as placement will be directly correlated to the educational needs of the student as demonstrated by their classroom performance and success as measured by their standardized assessments.

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

The Multidisciplinary team (MDT), should examine subtest scores, including discreet phonological awareness skills, instead of limiting interpretation to composite scores since a deficit in even one skill will limit reading progress. The MDT will 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. The MDT reports the analysis of strengths and weaknesses within the FIIE. The following list of questions 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:

- Does the data show the following characteristics of dyslexia?
  1. difficulty with accurate and/or fluent word reading
  2. poor spelling skills
  3. poor decoding ability

- Do these difficulties (typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language?
- Are these difficulties unexpected for the student's age in relation to the student's other abilities and provision of effective classroom instruction.

The MDT, using input from the parent/guardian, completes the FIIE, which determines if the student meets the criteria for dyslexia, and if so, explains the impact of dyslexia on the student's access and progress in the enrolled grade-level general curriculum.

The next step is for the ARD committee, which includes the parent/guardian as a committee member, to determine prong 1 and prong 2, which means the student has both the identification of a qualifying disability and the need for special education and related services. Eligibility is determined by the ARD committee in accordance with federal and state law and regulations. When a student is determined to have dyslexia and the data shows a need for specially designed instruction, i.e., evidence-based dyslexia instruction, then the student meets the two prongs of special education eligibility. That is, the student has a qualifying disability - dyslexia is an SLD under the IDEA and state law - and demonstrates a need for specially designed instruction. When considering initial or continued special education eligibility for dyslexia, the MDT and ARD committee must include at least one member who has specific knowledge regarding the reading process, dyslexia and related disorders, and dyslexia instruction. This member must also sign a document describing the member's participation in any resulting individualized education program (IEP) of the student.

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

A student who is found not eligible under the IDEA because the student is determined to not need dyslexia instruction(i.e., specially designed instruction), but who is identified with dyslexia through the FIIE process should not be referred for a second evaluation under Section 504. Instead, the Section 504 committee will use the FIIE and determine eligibility for Section 504 as necessary.

## **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.

## **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. Cuero ISD may choose to accept the outside assessment, or may re-assess the student. In either situation, the ARD committee will determine the identification status of a student enrolled in Cuero ISD, and the placement of the student into Special Education.

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

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

*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.*

The following procedures must be followed:

- Instructional decisions for a student with dyslexia are made by the ARD committee consisting of individuals that are knowledgeable about the student, the meaning of the evaluation information, and instructional components and approaches for students with dyslexia.
- School districts and charter schools 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 explicit, individualized, and multi-sensory instruction (19 TAC §74.28).
- The components of instruction and instructional approaches are described in the next section of this handbook.
- Each school 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 IDEA 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 handbook (19 TAC §74.28).
- Teachers who provide the appropriate instruction for students with dyslexia must be trained in the professional development activities specified by each district, charter school, and/or campus planning and decision making committee which shall include the instructional strategies indicated above (19 TAC §74.28).

Districts 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 accommodations, especially accommodations allowed on standardized testing (19 TAC §74.28)

### **Components of Instruction**

The instructional program should be offered in a small group arrangement (e.g., 1:3 – 1:6) and include reading, writing, and spelling as appropriate. The major instructional strategies should utilize individualized, intensive, and multisensory methods as appropriate.

**Components of instruction, as appropriate for the reading needs of the student, include the following:**

Phonemic awareness instruction that enables students to detect, segment, blend, and manipulate sounds in spoken language

Sound-symbol association instruction that enables student to have knowledge of the various speech sounds in any language to the corresponding letter or letter combinations that represent those speech sounds

Syllabication instruction of the unit of oral or written language with one vowel sound.

Orthography instruction that is the written spelling patterns and rules in a language.

Language structure instruction that encompasses morphology (the study of meaningful units of language such as prefixes, suffixes, and roots), semantics (ways that language conveys meaning), syntax (sentence structure), and pragmatics (how to use language in a particular context)

Reading comprehension instruction which teaches the process of extracting and constructing meaning through the interaction of the reader with the text to be understood and the specific purpose for reading. This depends on word recognition, oral language development, background knowledge, use of appropriate strategies, and the reader's interest and motivation to understand.

Reading fluency instruction which teaches the ability to read text with sufficient speed and accuracy to support comprehension

**Instructional approaches, as appropriate to meet the instructional needs of the student, include the following:**

- Explicit, direct instruction that is systematic (structured), sequential, and cumulative (Instruction is organized and presented in a way that follows a logical, sequential plan, fits the nature of language [alphabetic principle] with no assumption of prior skills or language knowledge, and maximizes student engagement. This instruction proceeds at a rate commensurate with students' needs, ability levels, and demonstration of progress.)
- Individualized instruction that meets the specific learning needs of each individual student in a small group setting
- A reading curriculum that matches each student's individual ability level and contains all of the Components of Instruction mandated in 19 TAC §74.28
- Intensive, highly concentrated instruction that maximizes student engagement, uses specialized methods and materials, produces results, and contains all the Components of Instruction mandated in 19 TAC §74.28
- Meaning-based instruction that is directed toward purposeful reading and writing, with an emphasis on comprehension and composition
- Multisensory instruction that incorporates the simultaneous use of two or more sensory pathways (auditory, visual, kinesthetic, tactile) during teacher presentations and student practice

Teachers of students with dyslexia shall be prepared to utilize these techniques and strategies. They may also serve as trainers and consultants in the area of dyslexia and related disorders to regular, remedial, and special education teachers.

**Dyslexia Instruction Program**

Cuero ISD uses the Reading by Design Program, a systematic, multisensory set of instructional routines which include content and pedagogically appropriate practices compiled from sources, such as Foundations for Literacy: Structures and Techniques for Multisensory Teaching of Basic Written English Language Skills by Aylett Royall Cox (1980). This program is aligned with research-based practices for developing literacy and is designed for students with basic

reading difficulties, such as dyslexia. This intervention follows an intensive, explicit, and cumulative design for remediation of reading and writing skills at all grade levels. Reading by Design includes all of the components of instruction and instructional approaches supported through research as cited in the The Dyslexia Handbook – Revised 2024: Critical, Evidence-Based Components of Dyslexia Instruction (pp. 38-41).

Dyslexic students are served in a pullout setting by trained dyslexia teachers utilizing the Reading by Design Program.

Cuero ISD uses the Take Flight program as an alternative program for dyslexia instruction when data determines a student is not making sufficient progress.

Take Flight is a curriculum written by the staff of the Luke Waites Center for Dyslexia and Learning Disorders at Scottish Rite for Children. Take Flight builds on the success of the three previous dyslexia intervention programs developed by the institution: Alphabetic Phonics, the Dyslexia Training Program and Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children Literacy Program. The curriculum was designed for use by dyslexia therapists with children ages 7 years and older who have developmental dyslexia. The purpose was to enable students with dyslexia to achieve and maintain better word recognition, reading fluency, reading comprehension and aid in the transition from a therapy setting to ‘real world’ learning.

Take Flight includes all of the components of instruction and instructional approaches supported through research as cited in the The Dyslexia Handbook – Revised 2024: Critical, Evidence-Based Components of Dyslexia Instruction (pp. 38-41).

Dyslexic students are served in a pullout setting by trained dyslexia teachers utilizing the Take Flight Program when data supports the need.

## **VII. Timeline**

The following timeline applies to students in regular education programs, or who may qualify as §504:

Upon receipt of parent permission to assess until assessment is completed shall be 45 school days.

From the completion of the assessment to the ARD Committee meeting for

determination of dyslexia eligibility and program placement shall be within 30 calendar days.

Special education students shall follow the timelines required by federal law, under IDEA 2004.

### **VIII. Student Monitoring and Dyslexia Program Exit Criteria**

Upon successful completion of the district dyslexia program, as measured by program mastery checks (assessments) completed at regular intervals, the ARD committee will meet to determine eligibility and educational need.

Upon dismissal from Special Education, a referral to §504 can be made to provide accommodations if needed.

Students that have completed the Cuero ISD dyslexia program will receive regular monitoring during the first year.

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 consensus of the ARD committee. The



committee considers the following factors when recommending exiting or reduction of dyslexic services:

Completion of the district dyslexia program;

The reevaluation and/or post-testing of student shows student growth to be closer to grade level proficiency standards;

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;

Committee recommendation;

Parents request in writing that the student exit the program.

If a student has shown substantial progress and the committee of knowledgeable persons 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 ARD will be held and the IEP will be placed in the child's folder.

## **IX. State Assessments**

Accommodations in taking the state-mandated assessments may be made for a Special Education or §504 student when the accommodations have been determined not to destroy the validity of the test, are necessary for the student to take the test, are consistent with accommodations provided the student in the classroom, and are approved by TEA.