Dyslexia and State Literacy Plan Implications

Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) National Literacy Center
1-833-773-CLSD (2573) ◆ literacy@seiservices.com ◆ CLSD - State Literacy Plan Resources

Defining Dyslexia

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

~International Dyslexia Association (IDA, 2002)

Overview of Dyslexia

To best serve students with characteristics of Dyslexia, gaining consensus on the definition is important. Recognizing this need, the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) collaborated with the National Center for Learning Disabilities and National Institute of Child Health and Human Development to develop a common definition, which was adopted by the Board of Directors of IDA in 2002 and has become widely accepted by many States in their State literacy plans (SLPs).

Simply defined, Dyslexia is a specific learning disability (SLD) that impacts reading. Students who have characteristics of Dyslexia may exhibit difficulty with phonological awareness, decoding words, and reading fluently. These difficulties can also impact vocabulary acquisition, development of background knowledge, spelling, and writing.

Reading is cognitively demanding for all students, but can be especially demanding for students with characteristics of Dyslexia. Although students with Dyslexia process language differently, they are intelligent and often find creative ways to compensate for reading difficulties. Additionally, educators can employ evidence-based and effective teaching strategies to improve students' reading ability to meet and exceed grade-level expectations.

Characteristics of Dyslexia

Dyslexia is most often characterized as weaknesses in decoding, word reading, oral reading fluency, and/or spelling. Additionally, students with Dyslexia may also experience difficulty with writing, phonemic awareness, and attention.

Dyslexia may manifest in different ways across the grade-band continuum, as detailed in the subsequent columns.

Preschool

- Delayed speech
- Difficulty rhyming
- Difficulty learning the alphabet and numbers

Elementary

- Struggles to connect phonemes to graphemes
- Makes consistent reading errors
- Slow decoding

Middle School

- Avoids reading aloud
- Difficulty with word problems
- Avoids writing essays

High School

- Avoids writing and reading tasks
- Spends significant time on demanding tasks

Students with Dyslexia excel in:

- Spatial reasoning
- Creativity and imagination
- Long-term memory
- Problem-solving
- Observation and curiosity
- Abstract or three-dimensional thinking
- Exhibiting empathy
- Understanding the pic picture
- Resiliency

As you develop your comprehensive SLP, you might consider including these characteristics of Dyslexia across the grade-band continuum and effective, evidence-based instructional strategies to support all students' literacy skill acquisition, including those with Dyslexia.

Identification and Eligibility

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 recognizes Dyslexia as an SLD. Although IDEA defines an SLD, it does not specifically define Dyslexia.

Eligibility for special education services for students with characteristics of Dyslexia who struggle to meet grade level standards are guided by the identification and eligibility process for SLD.

State Literacy Initiatives to Address Dyslexia

The National Center on Improving Literacy (NCIL) provides an interactive map that shares each State's Dyslexia requirements, policies, and whether the State has adopted State-identified measurable result legislation. Currently, 49 states and D.C. have passed one or more bills that address Dyslexia, and 9 states have policies that address all areas.

To learn more, visit NCIL's State of Dyslexia interactive map.

To meet the needs of students with characteristics of Dyslexia, some States have employed a coordinated approach by developing and implementing literacy initiatives that are both student and educator focused.

Implications for SLPs

Addressing Dyslexia within an SLP may align with one or more of the following SLP components, which are further defined and detailed in SLP Starter Kit Phase Two: Understanding SLP Components as well as SLP Starter Kit Phase Three: Writing an SLP.

- Component 2: Infrastructure, Legislation, and Related Policies
- Component 3: Needs of Target Populations
- Component 4: Alignment of SLP with Other State Literacy Initiatives
- Component 5: Goals and Activities

- Component 6: Effective Evidence-Based Framework for Literacy Instruction
- Component 9: Resources and Tools

Component 2: Infrastructure, Legislation, and Related Policies

All States have adopted legislation and related policies to determine if a student has an SLD. Federal guidelines from IDEA provide guidance to states to assist with this process. Consistent with the Federal guidelines from IDEA, some States have developed or are developing criteria for identification specific to Dyslexia. In accordance with IDEA, criteria can include:

1. Determine procedures.
2. Include team approach.
3. Define criteria.
4. Describe observation.
5. Specify documentation.

In addition to guidelines for SLD determination, policies related to Dyslexia have become an important part of the literacy infrastructure for States. Given the emphasis on improving reading outcomes for all students, 49 of the 50 states and D.C. have passed one or more bills to address Dyslexia specifically. Dyslexia legislation typically requires:

- Screening
- Pre-service training
- In-service training
- Intervention

Examples of State legislation required for each of these policies are hyperlinked.

In 2020, the Education Commission of the States developed a 50-State comparison of the requirements for pre-service qualifications and professional development for in-service educators in literacy for Kindergarten through third grade.

In addition, the National Center on Improving Literacy's (NCIL) State of Dyslexia website includes an interactive

map to visually see which States have legislation on pre-service and in-service training as well as select States to view their legislation.

To review CLSD grantees' publicly available plans as well as literacy legislation, consider referencing the professional learning module on State Literacy Plan (SLP) Findings.

Component 3: Needs of Target Populations

SLPs can address the specific needs of students with characteristics of Dyslexia. This can be done by States considering what instruction works, whether it works for students with Dyslexia, and if so under what conditions? As you plan to develop or revise your SLPs, you might consider disaggregating data for students with high-intensity needs who are receiving intervention services or students in need of special education services, including students with Dyslexia, to identify opportunity gaps, set goals to provide more equitable education, and develop strategies and activities aligned with supporting those goals.

Component 5: Goals and Activities

SLP goals should address the instructional needs of students with characteristics of Dyslexia. These specific goals should be driven by data and should include information on how you will collect data to monitor progress towards achieving them to drive continuous improvement.

Once goals have been identified for students with characteristics of Dyslexia, Statess can consider the activities that will help achieve those goals. Each goal may include multiple activities.

For more information about writing goals and activities, consider reviewing SLP Starter Kit Phase Two: Understanding SLP Components as well as SLP Starter Kit Phase Three: Writing an SLP.

Component 4: Alignment of SLP with Other State Literacy Initiatives

To support students with Dyslexia, many States have aligned the development of their SLP with other state literacy initiatives including multiiered systems of support (MTSS) and assessment. To determine a student's response to evidence-based instruction and intervention, States and districts have adopted MTSS. MTSS is a proactive and preventative, problem-solving approach to providing instruction and intervention. Often characterized by three tiers, MTSS uses a data-driven approach for providing high-quality instruction. Students with Dyslexia can be supported within a multi-level prevention systems. MTSS supports students with Dyslexia by including screening and progress monitoring to drive instructional decisions. The four essential components of MTSS include screening, progress monitoring, multi-level prevention systems, and data-based decision-making.

In addition to alignment with MTSS, States can consider aligning with assessment practices that are equitable and reflect student learning. Specific to Dyslexia, this can include screening, progress monitoring, and gathering data from multiple sources.

Using formative and summative, and formal and informal, assessments is critical for:

- Accurately measuring literacy skills.
- Making data-driven instructional decisions.
- Providing teachers with the opportunity to improve and refine their instruction.

Assessments should be valid and reliable, be culturally and linguistically responsive, and accurately measure a student's literacy skills. For students to show what they know and can do, States can consider including multiple types of assessments.

Component 6: Effective Evidence-Based Framework for Literacy instruction

Evidence-based reading instruction should be explicit, systematic, and multisensory.

Explicit instruction is particularly important when teaching foundational skills as well as new literacy strategies and concepts. Explicit instruction involves scaffolded support and gradually releasing support to the students through the I Do, We Do, You Do model. When directly teaching a new skill, during the I Do phase, the teacher models for the students. During the We Do phase, the teacher engages the students in the learning process and consistently provides corrective and/or affirmative feedback. The opportunities to respond in the We Do phase should engage as many

Resources:

- Washington State developed Dyslexia Guidance for implementing MTSS for Literacy across tiers and grade bands.
- The Meadows Center developed a resource based on evidence of effectiveness from high-quality research to share 10 key policies and practices for reading intervention.
- The Texas Gateway for online resources by Texas Education Agency includes access to the State's laws and regulations for assessment and students with Dyslexia.
- Additionally, consider visiting the websites for the Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports or the National Center on Intensive Intervention for more information and resources.

learners as possible chorally to provide as much practice for the full group or class of students as possible. Finally, after consistent guided practice, the teacher then releases the students to practice the skill independently. Explicit instruction involves breaking down complex skills into smaller instructional steps, scaffolding each step appropriately and gradually releasing the students to build their mastery independently.

In addition, instruction should be systematic. Systematic instruction means that the skills are taught in a logical order, with important prerequisite skills taught first. Evidence-based reading instruction should follow a scope and sequence that is systematic, building on foundational skills.

Multisensory instruction involves engaging the students visually, auditorily, and kinesthetically.

Explicit, systematic, and multisensory instruction should be considered when developing strategies and activities aligned with the goals and outcomes within your logic model or evidence-based literacy framework.

The CLSD National Literacy Center developed a Logic Models for State Literacy Plans guide.

Component 9: Resources and Tools

Some States have developed a Dyslexia handbook to supplement their SLP and support students with characteristics of Dyslexia, including:

- New Mexico
- Michigan
- Texas