



MELISSA SCHOOLS SPECIAL PROGRAMS

"A Special Time in a Special Place"

2019-2020

Dyslexia Plan

Melissa Schools District Guidance Manual

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Section 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” include disorders similar to or related to dyslexia such as developmental auditory imperceptions, dysphasia, specific developmental dyslexia, developmental dysgraphia, and developmental spelling disability.

The current definition from the International Dyslexia Association states the following:

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. (Adopted by the International Dyslexia Board of Directors, November 12, 2002.).

Students identified as having dyslexia typically experience primary difficulties in phonological awareness and manipulation, single-word reading, reading fluency, and spelling. Consequences may include difficulties in phonological awareness are unexpected for the student’s age and educational level, and are not primarily the result of language difference factors. Additionally, there is often a **family history** of similar difficulties.

The following are the primary reading/spelling characteristics of dyslexia:

- Difficulty reading words in isolation
- Difficulty accurately decoding unfamiliar words
- Difficulty with oral reading (slow, inaccurate, or labored without prosody)
- Difficulty spelling

It is important to note that individuals demonstrate differences in degree of impairment and may not exhibit all the characteristics listed above. ([The Dyslexia Handbook, 2018 Update.](#))

Section II: State and Federal Law Regarding Early Identification and Intervention Prior to Formal Assessment

Both state and federal legislation emphasize early identification and intervention for students who may be at risk for reading difficulties, such as dyslexia.

In accordance with TEC §28.006 Reading Diagnosis, Melissa Schools administers early reading instruments in kindergarten, first, and second grades to determine students' reading development and comprehension. Additionally, the law requires a reading instrument from the commissioner's approved list to be administered at the beginning of grade 7 to any student who did not demonstrate proficiency on the reading assessment administered under TEC §39.023(a). 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. The information from reading instruments administered under TEC§28.006 will be one source of information in deciding whether or not to recommend a student for assessment for dyslexia.

The provisions offered to students who are reported to be at risk for dyslexia or other reading difficulties should align to the requirements of Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) legislation. Melissa Schools will implement reading programs using scientifically based reading research as well as evidence proven effective results.

In 2017, the 85th Texas Legislature passed House Bill (HB) 1886, amending Texas Education Code (TEC) §38.003, Screening and Treatment for Dyslexia, to require that all kindergarten and first-grade public school students be screened for dyslexia and related disorders. Additionally, the law requires that all students beyond first grade be screened or tested as appropriate.

Under the Equal Education Opportunity Act (EEOA), Melissa Schools ensures that all students are given equal access to educational services regardless of race, color, sex, religion, or national origin. Therefore, research-based interventions are to be provided to all students experiencing difficulties in reading, including English language learners (ELL), regardless of their proficiency in English.

Section III: Procedures for Assessment

At any time (from kindergarten through grade 12) a student continues to struggle with one or more components of reading, Melissa Schools 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), reflect 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
- Parent information
- Classroom reading assessments
- Accommodations or interventions provided
- Academic progress reports (report cards)
- Results of the kindergarten-grade 1 universal screening as required in TEC §38.003
- Gifted/Talented assessments
- Samples of schoolwork
- Testing for limited English proficiency
- The K-2 reading instrument as required in TEC §28.006
- 7th grade reading instrument as required in TEC §28.006
- State student assessment program as described in TEC § 39.022
- Observations of instruction provided to the student
- Full Individual Evaluation (FIE)
- Outside evaluations
- Speech and language assessment
- School attendance
- Curriculum-based assessment measures
- Instructional strategies provided and student's response to the instruction
- Universal Screeners

Data that 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 Melissa Schools has available for the student is a recommendation that the student be assessed for dyslexia. Melissa Schools 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
- Characteristics and risk factors of dyslexia

Primary Reading/Spelling Characteristics of Dyslexia:

- Difficulty reading words in isolation
- Difficulty accurately decoding unfamiliar words
- Difficulty with oral reading (slow, inaccurate, or labored without prosody)
- Difficulty spelling

It is important to note that students demonstrate differences in degree of impairment.

The reading/spelling characteristics are most often associated with the following:

- Segmenting, blending, and manipulating sounds in words (phonemic awareness)
- Learning the names of letters and their sounds
- Holding information about sounds and words in memory (phonological memory)
- Rapid recalling the name of familiar objects, colors, numbers, or letters of the alphabet (rapid naming)

Consequences of dyslexia may include the following:

- Variable difficulty with aspects of reading comprehension
- Variable difficulty with aspects of written language
- Limited vocabulary growth due to reduced reading experiences

If a student continues to struggle with reading, the identification of reading disabilities, including dyslexia, will follow one of two procedures. Melissa Schools will typically evaluate for dyslexia through §504. If, however, a student is suspected of having a disability within the scope of IDEA 2004, all special education procedures must be followed.

Section IV: Procedures for Assessment of Dyslexia

Students enrolling in Melissa Schools 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.

When formal assessment is recommended, Melissa Schools completes the evaluation process as outlined in §504 unless a referral to special education is indicated.

Through §504 process, Melissa Schools will complete the evaluation using the following procedures:

1. Notify the parents or guardians of proposal to assess student for dyslexia (§504).
2. Inform parents or guardians of their rights under §504.
3. Obtain parent or guardian consent to assess the student for dyslexia.
4. 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).

In compliance with §504 and IDEA 2004, test instruments, and other evaluation materials must meet the following criteria:

- Be validated for the specific purpose for which the tests, assessments, and other evaluation materials 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.
- Be selected and administered in a manner that is not racially or culturally discriminatory
- 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 observation)
- Be administered by trained personnel and in conformance with the instructions provided by the producer of the evaluation materials
- Be used for the purpose for which the assessment or measures are valid or reliable

- 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

Melissa Schools 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 will be assessed:

Academic Skills

- Letter knowledge (name and associated sound)
- Reading words in isolation
- Decoding unfamiliar or nonsense words accurately
- Reading fluency (rate, accuracy and prosody)
- Reading Comprehension
- Spelling

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 and read words and to read connected text at an appropriate rate.)
- **Orthographic processing** (Memory for letter patterns, letter sequences, and the letters in whole words may be selectively impaired or may coexist with phonological processing weaknesses.)
- **Various language processes** (Language processes such as morpheme and syntax awareness, memory and retrieval of verbal labels, and the ability to formulate ideas into grammatical sentences, may also be factors affecting reading.)

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

- Vocabulary
- Listening comprehension
- Verbal expression
- Written expression
- Handwriting
- Mathematical reasoning and calculation

- Phonological memory
- Memory for letter or symbol sequences (orthographic processing)
- Verbal working memory
- Processing speed

English Language Learners: This refers to students served in an ESL program as well as students designated Limited English Proficient (LEP) whose parents have denied services.

Much diversity exists among English Language Learners (ELLs). The identification and service delivery process for dyslexia must be in step with the student’s linguistic environment and educational background. Involvement of the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) in the decision making process is required.

Additional data to be gathered when assessing English Language Learners:

- 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 student assessment data results when available
 - Texas English Language Proficiency system (TELPAS) information (Reading Proficiency Test in English (RPTE))
 - 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 English Language Learners:

- Comprehensive oral language proficiency testing should be completed for a dyslexia evaluation due to the importance of the information for
 - Consideration in relation to academic challenges
 - Planning the assessment, and
 - Interpreting assessment results.

Interpretation

Test results of English Language Learners (ELL) will be interpreted in light of the student’s language development (in both English and the student’s native language), educational history, linguistic background, socioeconomic issues, nature of the writing system and any other pertinent factors that affect learning.

Section V: Identification of Students with Dyslexia

The identification of dyslexia is made by a §504 committee or, in the case of a special education referral, the admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee. In order to make an informed determination, either committee **must** include members who are knowledgeable about:

- The student being assessed
- The reading process
- Dyslexia and related disorders
- Dyslexia instruction
- District, state, and federal guidelines for assessment
- The assessment used
- The meaning of the collected data

The §504 or ARD committee will review all accumulated data to determine whether the student demonstrates a pattern of evidence for dyslexia based on the dyslexia evaluation report. This report will include the following:

- The observations of the teacher and parent or guardian
- Data gathered from the classroom and information found in the student's cumulative folder
- The results of administered assessments
- Language Assessment Proficiency Committee (LPAC) documentation, when applicable
- All other accumulated data regarding the development of the student's learning and his/her educational needs

§504 or ARD Committee Decision Points for Dyslexia Identification:

- The pattern of evidence for the primary characteristics of dyslexia with unexpected performance for the student's age and educational level in some or all of the following areas:
 - Reading words in isolation
 - Decoding unfamiliar words accurately and automatically
 - Reading fluency for connected text (both rate and/or accuracy)
 - Spelling (an isolated difficulty in spelling would not be sufficient to identify dyslexia).
- Based on the data, if the committee determines weaknesses are indicated in the listed academic skills, the committee will look next at the underlying cognitive processes for the difficulties seen in the student's word reading and written spelling. These difficulties will typically be the result of a deficit in phonological or phonemic awareness. Additionally, there is often a family history of similar difficulties.
- The student may also demonstrate difficulties in other areas of cognitive processing, including one or more of the following:
 - Rapid naming
 - Orthographic processing

- Phonological memory
- Verbal working memory
- Processing speed
- If the student exhibits reading and written spelling difficulties and currently has appropriate phonological/phonemic processing, it is important to examine the student's history to determine if there is evidence of previous difficulty with phonological/phoneme awareness. **Note:** Because previous effective instruction in phonological/phonemic awareness may remediate phonological awareness skills in isolation, average phonological awareness scores alone do not rule out dyslexia. Ongoing phonological processing deficits can be exhibited in word reading and/or written spelling.
- If the §504 or ARD committee determines the student exhibits weaknesses in reading and written spelling, the committee will then examine the student's data to determine whether these difficulties are **unexpected** for the student in relation to the student's other cognitive abilities (the ability to learn in the absence of print) and **unexpected** in relation to the provision of effective classroom instruction.

It is not one single indicator but a preponderance of data (both informal and formal) that provide the committee with evidence for whether these difficulties are unexpected.

Questions to Determine the Identification of Dyslexia:

1. Does the data show the following characteristics of dyslexia?
 - a. Difficulty with accurate and/or fluent word reading
 - b. Poor spelling skills
 - c. Poor decoding ability
2. Do these difficulties (typically) result from a deficit in the phonological component of language? (Please be mindful that average phonological scores alone do not rule out dyslexia.)
3. Are these difficulties **unexpected** for the student's age in relation to the student's other cognitive abilities and provision of effective classroom instruction?

Many students with dyslexia will have difficulty with the secondary characteristics of dyslexia, including reading comprehension and written expression.

The §504 or ARD Committee will also incorporate the following guidelines from TEC §38.003 and 19 TAC §74.28:

- The student has received conventional (appropriate) instruction
- The student has an unexpected lack of appropriate academic progress (in the areas of reading and spelling)
- The student has adequate intelligence (an average ability to learn in the absence of print or in other academic areas)
- The student exhibits characteristics associated with dyslexia

- The student's lack of progress is not due to socio-cultural factors such as language differences, irregular attendance, or lack of experiential background

Assessment under Section 504

Based on the above information and guidelines, the committee first determines whether the student has dyslexia. If the student has dyslexia, the committee also determines whether the student has a disability under §504. Whether a student is eligible for §504 accommodations is a separate determination from the determination that the student has dyslexia. A student is disabled under §504 if the physical or mental impairment substantially limits one or more major life activities, such as the specific activity of reading. Additionally, the §504 committee, in determining whether a student has a disability that substantially limits the student in a major life activity, must not consider the ameliorating effects of any mitigating measures that the student is using. If the committee does not identify dyslexia, but the student has another condition or disability that substantially limits the student, eligibility for §504 services related to the student's other condition or disability should be considered.

Students with additional factors that complicate their dyslexia may require additional support or referral to special education. If a student is already qualified as a student with a disability under special education, the Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee should determine the least restrictive environment for delivering the student's dyslexia intervention.

Assessment under Special Education

At any time during the assessment for dyslexia, identification process, or instruction related to dyslexia, students may be referred for evaluation for special education. At times, students will display additional factors/areas complicating their dyslexia that requires more support than what is available through dyslexia instruction. At other times, students with severe dyslexia or related disorders will be unable to make adequate progress within any of the programs for dyslexia or related disorders. In such cases, a referral to special education for evaluation and possible identification as a child with a disability within the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) will be made as needed. Students with additional factors that complicate their dyslexia may require additional support or referral to special education.

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 Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) 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.

If the student with dyslexia is found eligible for special education in the area of reading, and the ARD committee determines the student's instructional needs for reading are more appropriately met in a special education placement, the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) must include appropriate reading instruction. Appropriate reading instruction includes the components and delivery of dyslexia instruction listed in The Dyslexia Handbook – Revised 2018, Chapter IV, "Critical, Evidence-Based Components of Dyslexia Instruction"

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. Melissa Schools may choose to accept the outside assessment, or may re-assess the student. In either situation, the §504 or ARD committee will determine the identification status of a student enrolled in Melissa Schools, and the placement of the student in the dyslexia program.

Section VI: Instruction for Students with Dyslexia

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

The board of trustees of each school district shall provide for the treatment of any student determined to have dyslexia or a related disorder.

<http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/ED/htm/ED.38.htm#38.003>

The following procedures must be followed:

- Instructional decisions for a student with dyslexia are made by a team that is knowledgeable about the student, the meaning of the evaluation information, and instructional components and delivery of instruction for students with dyslexia.
- Melissa 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 simultaneous, multisensory, systematic and cumulative, explicit, diagnostic teaching to automaticity, synthetic and analytic instruction (19 TAC §74.28). The components of instruction and instructional approaches are described in the next section of the Melissa Schools plan.
- Melissa Schools 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.
- Parents/guardians of students eligible under §504 must be informed of all services and options available to the student under that federal statute.
- Specialists/Therapists 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 plan. (19 TAC §74.28).
- Teachers who provide the appropriate instruction for students with dyslexia must be trained in the professional development activities specified by Melissa Schools, and/or campus planning and decision making committee which shall include the instructional strategies indicated above (19 TAC §74.28).

Melissa Schools 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 especially modifications allowed on standardized testing (19 TAC §74.28)

Instructional decisions for a student with dyslexia must be made by a §504 or ARD committee that is knowledgeable about the instructional components and approaches for students with dyslexia. In accordance with 19 TAC §74.28 (c), districts shall purchase or develop a reading program for students with dyslexia and related disorders that incorporates all of the following components of instruction and instructional approaches.

Critical Evidence-Based Components of Dyslexia Instruction

- Phonological Awareness
- Sound-symbol Association
- Syllabication
- Orthography
- Morphology
- Syntax
- Reading Comprehension

Delivery of Dyslexia Instruction

- Simultaneous, multisensory (VAKT Instruction)
- Systematic and cumulative instruction
- Explicit instruction
- Diagnostic teaching to automaticity
- Synthetic instruction
- Analytic instruction

Both the teacher of dyslexia and the regular classroom teacher should provide multiple opportunities to support intervention and to strengthen these skills; therefore, responsibility for teaching reading and writing must be shared by classroom teachers, reading specialists, interventionists, and teachers of dyslexia programs.

Standard Protocol Dyslexia Instruction

For the student who has not benefited from the research-based core reading instruction, the components of instruction will include additional focused intervention as appropriate for the reading needs of the student with dyslexia. Standard protocol instruction provides evidence – based, multisensory structured literacy instruction for students with dyslexia. A standard protocol dyslexia instructional program must be explicit, systematic, and intentional in its approach. This instruction is designed for all students with dyslexia and will often take place in a small group setting. Standard protocol dyslexia instruction must be-

- Evidence-based and effective for students with dyslexia;
- Taught by an appropriately trained instructor; and
- Implemented with fidelity.

For students with dyslexia who have been determined eligible for and who are receiving special education services, specially designed instruction must also address the critical, evidence-based components described in this chapter. Specially designed instruction differs from standard protocol dyslexia instruction in that it offers a more individualized program specifically designed to meet a student's unique needs.

Section VII: Timeline

When a referral for dyslexia is made, Melissa Schools will ensure the evaluation procedure is followed in a reasonable amount of time. Section 504 does not require specific timelines; therefore, Melissa Schools will follow the timelines Texas has established for the completion of initial special education evaluations through TEC §29.004 (a). Melissa Schools will complete the dyslexia evaluation within 45 school days after receipt of signed consent from the parent or guardian.

Special Education students shall follow the timelines required by federal law, under IDEA 2004. Melissa Schools will complete the dyslexia evaluation within 45 school days after receipt of signed consent from the parent or guardian.

Section VIII: Student Monitoring and Dyslexia Program Exit Criteria

Upon successful completion of Melissa Schools program, as measured by program mastery checks (assessments) completed at regular intervals, students will be exited from the district dyslexia program. Additional criteria for exit may include but is not limited to: grades from progress reports or report cards, state assessment data, benchmarks, progress monitoring data, teacher and/or parent observations, and individual dyslexia program requirements.

Students that have completed the Melissa Schools dyslexia program will receive regular monitoring during the first year through the §504 committee. If it is determined that a student is not educationally successful and accommodations and interventions are not meeting the needs of the student, the §504 committee may determine that a referral for Special Education services may be needed.

Monitoring may include, but is not limited to the collection/evaluation of:

- Progress reports
- Report cards
- State assessment data
- Teacher reports
- Parent reports
- Additional assessment data, as available

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 the §504 committee or ARD committee. The committee considers the following factors when recommending exiting or reduction of dyslexic services:

- Completion of the district dyslexia program
- The student passed the reading portion of the state assessment (Note: passing the reading portion of the state assessment is never the sole source for exiting dyslexia services);
- Committee recommendation
- Parent request in writing that the student exit the program

If a student has shown substantial progress and the §504 committee or ARD committee 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 form will be completed and placed in the child's 504 folder.

Section IX: Procedures for Serving In-State or Out of State Transfer for Students Identified with Dyslexia

Students transferring from another state or another school within Texas will be considered for service in Melissa Schools Dyslexia Program, if a copy of their dyslexia evaluation is presented and that testing shows the student has characteristics of dyslexia due to a deficit in phonological awareness that is unexpected for that student's cognitive/academic ability.

If no testing is found, the student will be assessed for dyslexia with the understanding that the student has received intervention in the areas that would affect their scores in decoding, single word recognition, comprehension, spelling and/or phonological awareness (previous school records of that student's participation in intervention would be beneficial or personal contact with the student's previous intervention teacher). A committee of knowledgeable persons will consider all information presented to determine best placement for each student.