GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS

Dyslexia

NEVADA
Department of
Education

Definition of Dyslexia

"Dyslexia" means a neurological learning disability characterized by difficulties with accurate and fluent word recognition and poor spelling and decoding abilities that typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language (NRS 388.429).
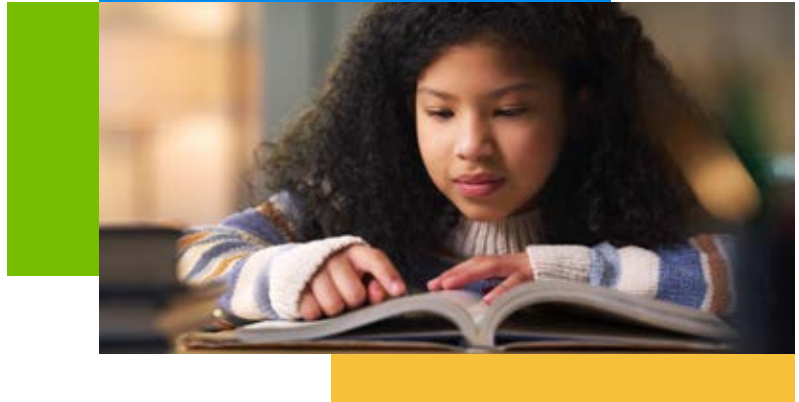
In this Document

The Nevada Department of Education has prepared the following documents as a resource guide for each school district, public school, and charter school to use to identify and provide instructional supports for students with or at-risk for dyslexia in accordance with Nevada laws (NRS 388.429 and NRS 388.443).

NEVADA Department of Education

TOPIC: **DYSLEXIA**

Common Myths and Misperceptions About Dyslexia

MYTH: **Dyslexia is a visual processing problem.**

Dyslexia is not a visual processing problem, children do not "see" letters and words as backward or jumbled up. Therefore, strategies focused on vision are not effective for improving reading, such as tinted/colored overlays or lenses, special dyslexia-specific fonts (e.g., "Dyslexie", "Open Dyslexic"), or vision exercises.

MYTH: **Dyslexia is different from specific learning disability in reading.**

Dyslexia is not distinct or unique from specific learning disability. Dyslexia is also synonymous with word-level reading disability, which is a term becoming more common in research. In some states, dyslexia is referred to as specific learning disability in basic reading; it means the same thing.

MYTH: **Specialized credentials specific to dyslexia are needed to provide instruction and intervention support for students who have characteristics or been diagnosed with dyslexia.**

Teachers or intervention staff do not need dyslexia-specific credentials or certifications to provide instruction or support. Any teacher or paraprofessional trained in evidence-based reading instruction or trained to implement an evidence-based intervention can be effective teachers of students with or at-risk for dyslexia.

MYTH: **Specialized curriculum or teaching approaches specific to dyslexia are needed.**

Support for students with or at-risk for dyslexia does not require unique or special teaching approaches or methods apart from evidence-based reading instruction. The key difference, however, is that students with reading difficulties, like dyslexia, often require intervention that is more explicit, systematic, intensive, data-driven, and provides more supported practice opportunities. The content and nature of instruction is not very different from teaching any student to read.

Early Literacy Assessment/ Screening Assessment

Nevada Law (NRS 388.429) requires school districts and charter schools to administer an early literacy screening assessment to each pupil enrolled in kindergarten, or grade 1, 2, or 3 who has indicators for dyslexia and needs intervention.

The assessment must screen for the following indicators:

☐ **Phonological and Phonemic Awareness:** The ability to attend to, discriminate, remember, and manipulate oral language units at the word, syllable, and phoneme (sound) level.

☐ **Sound Symbol Recognition:** Knowledge of how the sounds in the language correspond to the letters.

☐ **Alphabet Knowledge:** The ability to name, distinguish shapes, write, and identify the sounds of the alphabet.

☐ **Decoding Skills:** The ability to read unfamiliar words by using letter-sound knowledge, spelling patterns, and chunking the word into smaller parts, such as syllables or morphemes.

☐ **Rapid Naming Skills:** The ability to quickly name aloud a series of familiar items or objects.

☐ **Encoding Skills:** The ability to translate spoken language into print.

Confirmation

If the screening confirms that a pupil has indicators for dyslexia, the school district or charter school, as applicable, shall address the pupil's needs through the provision of a scientific, research-based intervention system of instruction, in the general education environment.

This system is typically multi-tiered and targets a student's phonemic awareness, reading fluency and accuracy which are characteristics of dyslexia. A continuous improvement process that is systematic, prevention focused, data-informed and provides a continuum of supports provides these research-based elements.

Additional Assessment

If the response to intervention determines that the pupil needs additional assessment to ascertain whether the pupil has a specific learning disability pursuant to **NRS 388.417(10)**, the pupil must receive additional testing and a comprehensive evaluation for special education, per state law.

Accommodations

The use of accommodations enables educators to assist a wide variety of students to access the regular education curriculum. Appropriate accommodations are useful in the identification, assessment, and provision of differentiated services to students with or at-risk for dyslexia.

Accommodation Examples

Accommodations should be based on the student's individual needs and target the areas of difficulty such as spelling, comprehension, processing speed and working memory. Accommodations which help reduce the cognitive load in reading and writing can promote student success. Examples of targeted and individualized accommodations **(CAST, 2017)** are as follows:

Presentation of Information

- Clarify or simplify written directions
- Present a small amout of work
- Reduce visual stimuli
- Highlight essential information
- Provide additional practice
- Provide a student-friendly glossary in content areas
- Develop study guides
- Use assistive technology (i.e., speech to text and text to speech software)
- Repeat words, as necessary
- Create targeted, categorical word walls

Delivery of Instruction

- Use explicit teaching procedures to include uniform, sequential, step-by-step instruction, guided practice with corrective feedback and monitored practice
- Provide a copy of notes
- Provide models and work samples that include the step-by-step process
- Provide a structured format for note taking
- Supplement verbal instruction with visual information, tactile devices – multisensory
- Use peer-mediated learning
- Design hierarchical worksheets – easiest to hardest
- Provide a set of texts for home use

Student Performance

- Adapt response mode
- Place students in need of additional support throughout a lesson in close proximity to the teacher or rotate around room
- Encourage use of assignment books
- Allow flexible work times
- Use assignment substitutions or adjustments
- Reduce redundant tasks
- Allow time for editing to check spelling with assistance on written work
- Only ask students with reading difficulty to read aloud if they volunteer
- Adapt spelling lists
- Adjust rubric to give credit for correct answers and do not mark off for spelling errors
- Employ text structure strategy for reading – provide sentence stems based on the type of text
- Use self-regulated strategy development for writing – use a pneumonic device to help organize the student's approach, depending on the type of writing the student is attempting and provide checklist of the prompts

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

When a student is evaluated for special education and determined to have a Specific Learning Disability, including dyslexia, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) must be developed and implemented, in accordance with federal and state law.

Nevada Law (NRS 388.443) requires the IEP team to consider the following instructional approaches:

☐ **Explicit, direct instruction** that is systematic, sequential, and cumulative and follows a logical plan of presenting the alphabetic principle that targets the specific needs of the pupil;

☐ **Individualized instruction** to meet the specific needs of the pupil in an appropriate setting that uses intensive, highly concentrated instruction methods and materials that maximize pupil engagement;

☐ **Meaning-based instruction** directed at purposeful reading and writing, with an emphasis on comprehension and composition; and

☐ **Multisensory instruction** that incorporates the simultaneous use of two or more sensory pathways during teacher presentations and pupil practice.

Explicit, Direct Literacy Instruction

Explicit, direct literacy instruction must be systematic and cumulative where the material follows the logical order of the language and begins with the easiest and most basic concepts and progresses methodically and cumulatively, building on concepts previously learned.

Explicit instruction requires deliberate teaching of all concepts and provides concentrated, continuous, individualized student-teacher interaction targeted toward phonology, sound-symbol association, syllable instruction, morphology, syntax, and semantics. Instruction must be individualized utilizing multiple sensory pathways and continuous monitoring. Content mastery coupled with purposeful meaning-based reading and writing, will enable students to focus attention and cognitive resources on comprehension and oral/written responses.

Assistive Technology

Assistive technology devices and services as well as the accommodations, referenced in the Accommodation section, can enhance learning for some students and may be considered for inclusion in the IEP.

All requirements of state and federal law, including those specific to students diagnosed with dyslexia, must be addressed in the development of IEPs. The State does not endorse any specific dyslexia program. It is the responsibility of trained district instructional leaders to help develop IEPs and select programs that provide a free appropriate public education and meet the unique needs of each student.

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K-5 READERS

Phonics Instructional Supports for Students With or At-Risk for Dyslexia

The most common features of effective programs or interventions for students with or at-risk for dyslexia are the use of explicit and systematic phonics instruction.

Explicit Instruction

Explicit instruction involves directly and unambiguously teaching students to "sound out" (segment) words using their knowledge of letter-sound correspondence and blend the sounds back together to read as a whole word.

Systemic Instruction

Systematic instruction refers to skills that are taught in a logical sequence, and skills build upon each other.

- Explicit and systematic instruction in letter sound correspondence starts with individual letter sounds and subsequently includes letter combinations and spelling patterns.
- As students learn to associate sounds with letters and letter units, immediately teach them to use this new letter or letter combination in decoding (reading) and encoding (spelling) words.
- Integrate writing instruction within reading instruction. Reading and writing skills have an interactive relationship and growth in one supports growth in the other.

Phonemic Awareness Instruction

Phonemic awareness instruction is critical:

- Phoneme segmenting and blending are the most important skills for learning to read and spell words.
- Phonemic awareness instruction is more effective when it is integrated with print (using letter tiles, letter cards, writing letters, and subsequently in decoding and encoding activities).
- Students' phonemic awareness skills develop as a result of learning to read and spell.
- Mastery of "advanced" phonemic awareness skills, such as phoneme deletion or substitution has not been shown to yield better results. The focus of instruction should be on phoneme segmenting and blending.

Vocabulary Instruction

All students can benefit from more vocabulary instruction, especially emergent bilingual students.

- Talk about word meanings (i.e., build vocabulary knowledge) and how they are used in speech as students learn to read them. Discussing what words mean or how they are used may enhance word reading skills.

Decoding Words

Decoding longer and more complex words:

- Teach decoding skills in similar ways to how students learned to sound out shorter words, but now use larger letter units.
- Teach students to identify syllables (i.e., portions containing a vowel with its surrounding letters), affixes, and roots
- Read the parts, then blend the parts together and adjust pronunciation to be correct.
- Include morpheme instruction, in which students are taught to read common morphemes and their meanings, which supports multisyllabic word reading and vocabulary knowledge.

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TOPIC: **DYSLEXIA**

K-5 READERS

Reading Instructional Supports for Students With or At-Risk for Dyslexia

All Students Should Read Every Day!

Students need frequent, repeated opportunities to read words to form connections between word spellings and pronunciations in memory. Students with or at-risk for dyslexia need more of these opportunities than typically developing readers. This must be student reading. Teacher read-alouds can benefit students' vocabulary skills and background knowledge, especially for early readers, but should not replace time for students to read.

Recommendations By Reading Level

Beginning and Pre-Readers

☐ "**Reading**" should include interaction with print such as identifying letters, letter-sound correspondence, and using letter tiles to build simple words.

K-5 Readers

☐ Use **highly decodable texts** for students to use their decoding skills in a connected text.

☐ Include opportunities for students to read **authentic texts** at an appropriate reading level

☐ Students should also be provided with supported opportunities to read "**stretch**" texts that are slightly more challenging than their current level.

• A skilled reader should be present to help preview the text, provide feedback for word reading, and provide support.

□ Students should **read aloud** to a teacher or skilled reader who can provide corrective feedback.

- Struggling readers do not benefit from silent reading, because it allows their reading errors to go unnoticed and uncorrected, developing bad word identification habits (like guessing)
- Independent (silent) reading is OK when you are confident that students can read with very few errors (e.g., at least 98% accuracy, or one error out of every 50 words)

□ Provide **feedback** for reading errors.

- If students cannot be expected to decode the word correctly because they have not yet been taught letters or letter combinations in the word or the word is much longer than the words they have been exposed to before, provide them with the word, have them repeat it, and continue reading.
- If students can be reasonably expected to decode the word, provide assistance with letter-sounds, letter combinations, blending, or adjusting an approximate pronunciation as needed. Have them repeat the word.
- DO NOT prompt students to guess at a word based on its shape, its initial letter, pictures/illustrations, or what they think the story is about. These are habits of students with dyslexia because of their underdeveloped decoding skills.
- Prompt students to sound out as their go-to word attack strategy. Pictures and story context can be used after to confirm or adjust their decoded pronunciations, but attention to the letters in the word should always come first.

□ Support **reading comprehension** skills.

- Although word reading accuracy problems are usually the primary factor that inhibits reading comprehension for students with dyslexia, instruction in skills that support reading comprehension are still important. This includes instruction in vocabulary, relevant background knowledge, inference-making, and useful comprehension strategies such as main idea identification, summarization, and text-structure identification.

□ Identify student **hobbies and interests**, and when possible, provide opportunities for students to read high-interest texts for enjoyment.

Instructional Supports for Students with or At-Risk for Dyslexia

The hallmark characteristic of dyslexia is difficulty reading and spelling words, and this is true regardless of the student's age. However, word reading difficulties may not be as apparent among older students. In middle and secondary grades, difficulties are likely to persist in reading text fluently, reading unfamiliar words, and decoding words that are longer and more complex.

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension difficulties are highly likely among older students with dyslexia. However, this does not mean that their difficulties are due to poor comprehension skills. Reading comprehension is significantly impaired if words are not read accurately or if text is not read fluently, therefore, the core difficulties of dyslexia are reasons for problems understanding and learning from text.

Oral Language Skills

Some students with dyslexia will have very strong oral language skills (i.e., rich vocabulary knowledge) and extensive background knowledge. Other students with dyslexia may not. Because reading is one of the ways that children acquire new vocabulary and knowledge, older students with dyslexia may demonstrate below-average vocabulary or background knowledge because they've missed considerable reading experience in the preceding years. Deficits in these areas will pose additional challenges to reading comprehension.

Recommendations

☐ Word reading instruction should focus on support for reading **longer and more complex words**.

- Teach students strategies for attacking multisyllabic words by breaking them into smaller parts.
- Teach students to identify syllables, affixes, and roots
- Include morpheme instruction, in which students are taught to read common morphemes and their meanings, which supports multisyllabic word reading and vocabulary knowledge.

☐ Instruction should build upon students' **vocabulary** across content areas and relevant background knowledge.

☐ Teach **reading comprehension skills**, such as inference-making, and comprehension strategies such as main idea identification, text summarization, and text structure identification.

☐ Opportunities to **practice reading** are essential. Older readers are more likely to benefit from independent reading as long as you are sure that their word-reading accuracy is close to 100% (i.e., they make about two or less word-reading errors for every 50 words).

☐ Students should also be provided supported opportunities to read "**stretch**" texts that are slightly more challenging than their current level. A teacher or skilled reader should be present to help preview the text, provide feedback (affirmative and corrective) for word reading, and provide support to help them integrate new knowledge or comprehension strategies.

☐ Integrate **writing instruction** within reading instruction. Reading and writing skills have an interactive relationship and growth in one supports growth in the other.

Grades K-12: Sources

IES Practice Guides

The Institute for Education Sciences (IES) has developed a series of high-quality, user-friendly guides summarizing evidence-based practices in reading instruction and intervention. Some of the most relevant to dyslexia are listed here, but there are other practice guides on writing, mathematics, school readiness/pre-K, and behavior.

Foorman, B., Beyler, N., Borradaile, K., Coyne, M., Denton, C. A., Dimino, J., Furgeson, J., Hayes, L., Henke, J., Justice, L., Keating, B., Lewis, W., Sattar, S., Streke, A., Wagner, R., & Wissel, S. (2016). *Foundational skills to support reading for understanding in kindergarten through 3rd grade* (NCEE 2016-4008). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE), Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Available: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/practiceguides

Vaughn, S., Gersten, R., Dimino, J., Taylor, M. J., Newman-Gonchar, R., Krowka, S., Kieffer, M. J., McKeown, M., Reed, D., Sanchez, M., St. Martin, K., Wexler, J., Morgan, S., Yañez, A., & Jayanthi, M. (2022). *Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Grades 4–9* (WWC 2022007). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE), Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Available: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/practiceguides

Teaching students to read complex words:

Kearns, D. M., & Whaley, V. M. (2019). Helping students with dyslexia read long words: Using syllables and morphemes. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 51(3), 212-225.

Effective phonics instruction:

Beck, I. L., & Beck, M. E. (2013). *Making sense of phonics: The hows and whys (2nd edition)*. Guilford Publications.

Recent Reviews and Meta-Analyses

The following resources are recent reviews and meta-analyses on effective instruction and intervention for students with word-level reading difficulties:

Shanahan, T. (2021). A review of the evidence on tier 1 instruction for readers with dyslexia. *Reading Research Quarterly*. Available: https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.438

Hall, C., Dahl-Leonard, K., Cho, E., Solari, E. J., Capin, P., Conner, C. L., ... & Kehoe, K. F. (2022). Forty Years of Reading Intervention Research for Elementary Students with or at Risk for Dyslexia: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Reading Research Quarterly*. Available: https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.477

Al Otaiba, S., McMaster, K., Wanzek, J., & Zaru, M. W. (2022). What we know and need to know about literacy interventions for elementary students with reading difficulties and disabilities, including dyslexia. *Reading Research Quarterly*. https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.458