Overview of Senate Enrolled Act 217 for Parents and Families

Beginning with the 2019-2020 school year, Indiana's public and charter schools must meet added requirements to identify, as early as possible, struggling readers who show risk factors for dyslexia and then provide systematic, sequential, and multisensory instruction to meet their needs.

All students in grades kindergarten through second grade will undergo universal screener to check their skills in six different areas. These areas are: phonological and phonemic awareness (ability to separate and change sounds in words), alphabet knowledge (name different letters), sound symbol relationship (phonics), decoding (reading), rapid naming (quickly name common objects), and encoding (spelling).

Students who fall below a set score, or benchmark on the universal screener will be found "at risk" and "at some risk" for the characteristics of dyslexia and get extra help to learn these skills.

Schools will meet with families of the students who scored below benchmark to share the child's screener scores and seek parent permission to give another screener, a Level I Screener, which will acquire information on the student's skills and where to start the intervention.

Schools will also share information on the characteristics, interventions, and accommodations for students at risk or at some risk for the characteristics of dyslexia. Schools will also share a statement that parents may request a full educational evaluation. The Level 1 Screener is NOT a special education screener and your child taking the Level I Screener DOES NOT mean your child will be in special education. The Level I Screener will help the teacher figure out how to better help your child learn to read. A full educational evaluation is what is used to see if a child would be part of a special education program.

After the teacher gives your child a Level I Screener, the teacher and school will use the results of the screener to give your child extra lessons in their area of need. These lessons will show new and different ways of learning the skills needed to be a successful reader.

Throughout the year, schools will give parents updates on how your child is doing. The school may also ask your permissions to give an additional screener, a Level II Screener, so they can get more information on the student's progress and continue to track the student's skills.

None of this extra help or instruction means your child is receiving special education support.

At any point during this process, parents or the school may request a full special education evaluation to see if their child may qualify with a specific learning disability that is definitive of dyslexia.

Breakdown of the Definition of Dyslexia

The definition for dyslexia in Indiana law is as follows: " 'Dyslexia' means a specific learning disability that: is neurological in origin and characterized by difficulties with accurate fluent word recognition; and poor spelling and decoding abilities; typically results 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; may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede the growth of vocabulary and background knowledge; and may require the provision of special education services after an eligibility determination is made in accordance with 511 IAC 7-40."

Part One: Dyslexia is distinguished from other learning disabilities due to weaknesses occurring at the phonological level. A student who has a weakness at the phonological level has difficulty manipulating units of oral language such as words, syllables, or individual sounds. One of the more complex skills at the phonological level is being able to blend and segment individual sounds. This is called phonemic awareness. An example of a phonemic awareness task is giving a student three sounds to blend together such as c-a-t, the student produces the word cat. A student with dyslexia may struggle with this task and produce the word *cap* instead of *cat*. Students with dyslexia who have a significant weakness at the phonological level will have difficulty acquiring basic foundational reading skills.

Part Two: Dyslexia is a Specific Learning Disability. This means the student struggles with basic early reading and language problems. Dyslexia is neurobiological in nature and not due to educational or environmental factors. Family history is one of the strongest risk factors for struggling readers and developing the characteristics of dyslexia. Today, we have scientific evidence supporting our understanding that dyslexia is caused by a difference in how the brain processes phonological information.

Part Three: Dyslexia is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. In the classroom, students with dyslexia may struggle with decoding or sounding out words, reading words accurately and fluently, and developing basic spelling skills. These basic literacy skills typically develop in kindergarten through second grade, but may remain a challenge for a student with dyslexia as they progress through school.

Part Four: These struggles 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. Typically, the reading difficulties a student with the characteristics of dyslexia experiences are not expected in relation to the strengths the student demonstrates in other academic areas. For example, a student with dyslexia struggles with basic reading skills, but may demonstrate average or above average academic ability in other subjects. Additionally, the difficulties a student with dyslexia experiences are not expected given the student has been provided the same effective classroom instruction as peers who are making adequate grade level progress.

Part Five: Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge. For the student with the characteristics of dyslexia, the inability to decode fluently and accurately may impair the ability to comprehend text. Because of this challenge, the student with characteristics of dyslexia who has not received appropriate intervention may read less, and therefore have less opportunity to develop vocabulary, background knowledge, and less practice at reading to comprehend.

Indicators of Struggling Readers or "At Risk" or "At Some Risk" for the Characteristics of Dyslexia

It is important to note that students with characteristics of dyslexia are not the same. While students often share common characteristics, the severity of the characteristics of the disability will vary greatly among individuals.

According to most experts, the characteristics of dyslexia manifest differently from childhood to adulthood. Someone does NOT need to exhibit all the characteristics listed below to be considered a struggling reader or "at risk" or "at some risk" for the characteristics for dyslexia.

Indicators and Characteristics of Dyslexia in Preschool

In preschool, children with dyslexia may exhibit some common characteristics, which include, but are not limited to: delayed speech, slow vocabulary growth, inconsistent memory for words, lists or directions, mispronunciation of words and names, poor letter-sound recall, and difficulty learning the alphabet letter names, forms, and sounds.

Indicators and Characteristics of Dyslexia in Kindergarten and First Grade

Children with dyslexia in kindergarten and first grade may demonstrate difficulty with developing basic foundational reading skills which may include, but are not limited to: producing rhyming words, identifying and manipulating the individual speech sounds in spoken words (phonemic awareness), remembering the names of letters and recalling them quickly, recalling the sounds the letters represent, recognizing common words by sight, and using the sounds of letters to spell so words can be recognized by the teacher.

As "typically developing readers" in the classroom context, students with dyslexia may progress more slowly and continue to struggle. It is not uncommon for students who struggle at this age to recognize their weaknesses with reading and begin to develop anxiety or try to avoid reading altogether.

Indicators and Characteristics of Dyslexia in Second and Third Grade

During second and third grade, students with characteristics of dyslexia may have learned some skills, but they typically continue to demonstrate difficulties with reading, writing, and spelling. These students may still struggle with the skills listed above. Additionally, identifying sight words automatically continues to be problematic as well as sounding out or decoding words. Spelling may be affected with sounds omitted, letters used incorrectly for sounds, and misspellings of sight words such as *said, that*, and *why*.

Indicators and Characteristics of Dyslexia in Upper Elementary Grades

In upper elementary grades, students with dyslexia may continue to demonstrate some of the core characteristics of dyslexia listed in the previous grade bands.

These students may also experience difficulty with timed oral reading fluency tests that require a student to read aloud for one minute and dysfluent reading may persist, even after or while receiving appropriate instruction and intervention.

Indicators and Characteristics of Dyslexia in Middle and High School

Middle and high school students with dyslexia may experience a slower reading rate, which may result in an increased time needed to complete literacy tasks when compared to their peers without dyslexia. For many students, note-taking, time management, and organization are often an issue at this stage.

Indicators and Characteristics of Dyslexia in College and Adults

College students with dyslexia typically need accommodations for slow reading rate, note-taking difficulties, and problems with written expression.

Recommended Instructional Approaches

In addition to scientifically-based core instruction in the general education classroom, students identified "at risk" or "at some risk," need evidence-based instruction to address the students' area(s) of deficit.

Senate Enrolled Act 217 gives recommended instructional approaches on to how to address these deficits. Schools are encouraged to choose or create interventions that include all of the recommended approaches listed below.
The recommended instructional approaches are:

- Explicit, direct instruction that is systematic, sequential, cumulative, and follows a logical plan of presenting the alphabetic principle that targets the specific needs of the student without presuming prior skills of knowledge;
- Individualized instruction to meet the specific needs of the student in a setting that uses intensive, highly concentrated instruction methods and materials that maximize engagement;
- Meaning based instruction directed at purposeful reading and writing;
- Instruction that incorporates the use of two of more sensory pathways; and
- Other instructional approaches as determined appropriate by the school corporation or charter school.

Explicit and direct means instruction and practice of all concepts is thoughtful and clear. This instruction also provides a constant teacher-student interaction. For example, teachers provide explicit and direct instruction when they explain to students that when a one syllable word with a short vowel ends in f, l, s, or sometimes z, we double the consonant. This is why we spell the word "pass" with two s's.

Systematic and sequential means instruction during the lesson and its content are presented in a logical order. Teachers use a predictable lesson plan structure that students become familiar with and the concepts taught progress from simple to complex. For example, students are taught to read and spell simple three letter words that contain a short vowel sound like in the word *bug,* before they are taught to read and spell longer words that contain more difficult vowel sounds and patterns like in the word *oyster.*

Cumulative interventions provide a review of previously taught skills to provide the additional practice and reinforcement necessary to ensure mastery. An example of this principle is a teacher who provides time each day to review all or many of the letter sounds that students have been previously taught.

Diagnostic means instruction includes continuous assessment. For example, if a student misreads the word dig for dug, the teacher should record the miscue and plan to provide additional practice with short u and short i.

Multisensory approach of teaching and learning is a major emphasis of the recommended approaches. Simultaneous visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile modalities are used in the learning process to increase the likelihood of the content being learned. For example, when students are learning their letters, they say the name of the letter, the sound the letter makes, see the letter, and trace the letter at the same time.

Accommodations Explained

Accommodations are an important component of a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

An accommodation is a change in timing and scheduling, setting, response, and presentation regarding instruction and assessment. This ensures access to the general education grade level curriculum for students with disabilities. An accommodation does not change learning expectations.

Accommodations should enable students to participate more fully in instruction and assessments to better demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Accommodations should foster and facilitate independence for students, not create dependence. Accommodations should be aligned with and part of daily instruction. Accommodations do not give an advantage to a student but rather level the playing field. An accommodation should not alter, in any significant way, what the test or assignment measures.

The case conference committee, which includes the parent, must base an accommodation on the individual needs of the student and not the category of the disability, level of instruction, or program setting. Accommodations are documented in the student's IEP.

Accommodations should be used regularly and not be introduced for the first time during the administration of a state assessment. Some accommodations provided for classroom instruction or assessment may not be allowed on statewide or national assessments. Information on the use of test accommodations for students with disabilities can be found in the Indiana Department of Education's special education website.

Examples of Accommodations

The following accommodations may be appropriate for a student with a Specific Learning Disability that is exhibiting the characteristics definitive of dyslexia. Each category contains examples that MAY be included. This is not an exhaustive list. IDOE is not endorsing any one accommodation over another. Students DO NOT need every accommodations listed on this resource page. Accommodations should be individualized to the student.

Timing and Scheduling Accommodations
- Extending time
- Segmenting or chunking work time
- Providing extended time on assignments

Reading Accommodations:
- Use of audio books for read aloud of books
- Use of video for read aloud of books preview story through pictures prior to reading
- Read story or passages with partner
- Teacher read aloud
- Preview story before reading
- Introduce specific vocabulary words used in passage before reading
- Do not insist that students read aloud in class but allow the student to volunteer for oral reading

Classroom Environment Accommodations
- Cleaned up and put away unnecessary materials in learning environment
- Preferred seating to reduce distractions
- Teacher maintains classroom routines for predictability
- Uses visual labels in classroom
- Use visual instructions and visual directions for procedures and materials in the classroom

Writing Instruction Accommodations
- Student word graded for content and not spelling on writing assignments except on spelling assignments
- Use speech to text software on longer assignments
- Accept oral answers on writing assignments use of scribe or allow adult to write oral answer
- Use fill-in-the-blank questions with word bank on tests and assignments
- Minimize need of copying
- Provide a copy of teacher's notes
- Use of spelling and grammar software on computer/tablet for writing assignment

Instructional Accommodations
- Break long assignments into smaller or manageable parts
- Provide frequent and specific teacher feedback on assignments throughout the process
- Create hands-on learning experiences when possible
- Develop rhymes and mnemonic devices to increase retention of information
- Give frequent practice and checks for understanding of new material
- Continual practice of previously taught skills
- Access to recorded lessons to allow for repeated review
- Extra time for oral responses in classroom discussions
- Use video self-modeling to learn content
- Accompany written instruction with oral instructions and follow-up to check for understanding

Homework Accommodations
- Break down large assignments into smaller chunks
- Break multi-step directions into small parts
- Use visuals for prompts and directions instead of text
- Use of voice recorder for longer answers
- Use of speech to text software
- Providing fewer questions on a page but same amount of assignments
- Accept drafts of work and providing feedback, Accept corrected draft work for a grade
- Before completing homework, review directions with student and highlight key words

Organizational Accommodations
- Providing syllabus or project pacing guide ahead of time
- Announce tests and projects in advance
- Use a countdown timer to track time
- Use an organizer to track assignments worked on over multiple days
- Color coding assignments worked on over multiple day (e.g. math goes in a green folder or binder, reading goes in an orange folder or binder), using of daily planner with adult check

Testing Accommodations
- Extended test time
- Flexible test time (E.g., same amount of test time, but broken up into smaller testing sessions vs. one long test session)
- Allow additional breaks during the testing period
- Reduce or remove distraction is testing area
- Tests in a small group or individually
- Uses sound blocking headphones
- Reads aloud test content, especially when testing comprehension skills
- Give test questions one at a time or in smaller chunks
- Allow the student to take test in a different order or change the order of tests or subtests (when allowed)

Other Accommodations
- Provide examples of what is expected (such as mentor text and completed work samples)
- Use of visual and graphic organizers to explain new concepts to students
- Provide clarifying statements and simplified written directions
- Highlight important information in text
- Use slow and deliberate language when explaining new material or directions