Definitions
As defined by TEC §38.003: Dyslexia means a disorder of constitutional origin manifested by difficulty in learning to read, write, or spell, despite conventional instruction, adequate intelligence, and socio-cultural opportunity.
The current definition from 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 Association Board of Directors, November 12, 2002).

“...dyslexia is an unexpected difficulty in reading. Unexpected refers to children and adults who appear to have all the factors necessary to become good readers: intelligence, motivation and exposure to reasonable reading instruction – and yet struggle to read. (Dr. Sally Shaywitz, from the Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity)
Research Studies
Comments from Overcoming Dyslexia by Sally Shaywitz, M.D., 2003:
Dyslexia is no longer a hidden disability due to neural brain research and other studies.
Dyslexia is the most common and studied of learning disabilities.
Dyslexia is a reading difficulty in a child or adult who otherwise has good intelligence, strong motivation, and adequate schooling.
Dyslexia affects 80 percent of all individuals identified as LD.
Dyslexia affects 15-17 percent of all children and adults in the United States.

Results of Neural Brain Research Studies

During fetal life when the brain is hard-wired for language, a glitch takes place resulting in incorrect connections that carry phonological messages. Tens of thousands of neurons carrying these messages necessary for language do not appropriately connect to form the resonating networks that make skilled reading possible. The severity of this fault in wiring will determine the varying degrees of reading difficulty.

Based on MRI studies, dyslexics use different areas of the brain for language than people without dyslexia. Dyslexics rely on a “manual” rather than automatic system for reading. Therefore, the brain of a dyslexic individual does not work efficiently during reading; reading is slow and labored. However, the brain can be rewired through appropriate instruction; struggling readers can become skilled readers.
Characteristics of Dyslexia

The following are the primary reading/spelling characteristics:

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

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

- The development of phonological awareness (segment/blend)
- Learning the names of letters and their associated sounds
- Phonological memory
- Rapid naming of familiar objects, colors, or letters

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
Strengths of the Dyslexic Student

Due to the persistent reading difficulties the dyslexic student experiences, his strengths are often overlooked, and there is a tendency to underestimate his talents and abilities. The student’s thinking and reasoning abilities are intact and perhaps even enhanced. Since the student’s low reading skills are very obvious to himself and other students, the dyslexic student develops a low self-image. Time spent encouraging the student and helping him to find his talents or strengths is time well spent. Below are many talents and strengths of the dyslexic student:

- Highly creative
- Links previously unrelated ideas, processes
- Finds new ways to do old things
- Problem solver
- Inventor
- Builder
- Diplomat
- Good sense of humor
- Likes and enjoys helping people
- May anticipate people’s emotions
- Excels at individual sports
- Works better alone than with team
- Understands animals, plants, living things
- Mechanically inclined
- Wants to know how things work
- Likes to repair or make things better
- Enjoys working with hands
- Likes building things
- Scientific thinker
- Very curious and observant
- A good motivator
- Has high energy
- Enthusiastic
- Is open minded
Appropriate Instructional Program

TEA mandates that the interventions provided to students who are reported to be at risk for dyslexia or other reading difficulties should align with the requirements of NCLB legislation. This legislation requires districts and charter schools to implement reading programs using scientifically based reading research. TEA also requires each district’s dyslexia instructional program be offered in a small class setting and include reading, writing, and spelling as appropriate. The major instructional strategies should utilize individualized, intensive, and multisensory methods as appropriate.

TEA also mandates that instructional approaches include the following:

- explicit, direct instruction that is systematic, sequential, and cumulative
- individualized instruction that meets the specific learning needs of each individual student in a small group setting
- intensive, highly concentrated instruction that maximizes student engagement, uses specialized methods and materials, and produces results
- meaning-based instruction that is directed toward purposeful reading and writing
- multisensory instruction that incorporates the simultaneous use of two or more sensory pathways (auditory, visual, kinesthetic, tactile) during teacher presentations and student practice

All of the Components of Instruction mandated in 19 TAC §74.28 (for more specific information refer to TEA Dyslexia Handbook, Revised 2007, pgs. 11-16)

Information included in Overcoming Dyslexia by Sally Shaywitz, M.D., 2003, states that the essentials of a successful reading intervention program are:

- Early intervention: The best intervention begins in kindergarten with remediation beginning in first grade (pg. 257).
- Intense instruction: “Reading instruction must be delivered with great intensity...Optimally, a child who is struggling to read should be given instruction in a group of three and no larger than four students, and the child should receive this specialized reading instruction at least four, and preferably five, days a week” (pg. 258).
High-quality instruction: “High-quality instruction is provided by a highly qualified teacher. Recent studies highlight the difference that a teacher can make in the overall success or failure of a reading program” (pg. 258).

Sufficient duration: “One of the most common errors in teaching a student with dyslexia to read is to withdraw prematurely the instruction that seems to be working. A child who is reading accurately, but not fluently at grade level still requires intensive reading instruction” (pg. 259).
Accommodations for Students with Dyslexia

What are Accommodations?
Accommodations are practices and procedures that provide equitable access during instruction and assessments for students with special needs. Typically, accommodation use does not begin and end in school. Students who use accommodations will generally also need them at home and in the community. Some students will continue to need accommodations as they get older, in postsecondary education and at work. Accommodations for instruction and assessment are very closely connected.

Accommodations are intended to reduce or even eliminate the effects of a student’s disability or limitation; however, they do not reduce learning expectations. The accommodations provided to students should be the same for classroom instruction, classroom assessments, and district and state assessments. Certain accommodations may be needed more often at some grade levels than others depending on academic content and rigor. It is critical to note that although some accommodations may be appropriate for instructional use, they may not be appropriate for use on a standardized assessment. For example, a student may routinely listen to text read aloud as part of instruction, but an oral administration of a reading test changes the construct of what is being measured. In other words, reading aloud a standardized reading test is no longer testing reading comprehension, but rather listening comprehension. There may be consequences (e.g., invalidating a student’s test score) that result from the use of some accommodations during state assessments. It is very important that educators become familiar with state policies as outlined on TEA’s website for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Taking STAAR, STAAR Spanish, STAAR Modified, STAAR L, and TELPAS, regarding the use of accommodations.

http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/accommodations/staar-telpas/

Source: Texas Education Agency
Selecting Accommodations for Assessment of Dyslexic Students

“For many children, accommodations represent the difference between academic success and failure, between a growing sense of self-confidence and an enduring sense of defeat.” Sally Shaywitz, M.D.

To assure that students with dyslexia are engaged in standards-based instruction and assessments, educators must be knowledgeable about the TEKS and state and district assessments. The dyslexic student requires accommodations to “level the playing field” so that they can participate in general education curriculum and assessments.

Dyslexia Accommodations for State Reading Assessment (STAAR)

All types of accommodations are listed on the TEA website on the Accommodations Triangle. Each accommodation listed has a detailed eligibility criteria sheet. Please refer to the TEA website for specific allowable accommodations.

Authority for Decision

For a student with dyslexia not receiving special education services who meets any criteria for a specific accommodation, the decision to provide the accommodation must be made either by the student’s placement committee as required by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 or by the committee of knowledgeable persons as outlined in The Dyslexia Handbook. In Comal ISD the committee of knowledgeable persons for non 504 dyslexic students is the RTI committee. In both of these cases, the committee’s decision must be documented in writing in accordance with district policies and procedures.

For a student receiving special education services who meets any criteria for a specific accommodation, the decision to provide the accommodation must be made by the student’s ARD committee and documented in the student’s IEP.
Classroom Accommodations for Students with Dyslexia

The decision to use a particular accommodation with a student should be made on an individual basis and should take into consideration both the needs of the student and whether the student routinely receives the accommodation in classroom instruction and testing. If a student receives special education services or Section 504 services, all accommodations must be documented in the student’s IEP or individual accommodation plan (IAP). Information about testing accommodations should be communicated to test administrators and other individuals. It is critical for all students to understand their strengths and weaknesses and learn self-advocacy strategies for success in school and throughout life. Educators can play a key role in working with students to advocate for themselves in the context of selecting, using, and evaluating accommodations.

Accommodations Involving Materials
  Use of iPad, iPod, MP3, etc.
  Use of electronic dictionary/speller
  Clarify or simplify written directions
  Present a small amount of work
  Block out extraneous stimuli
  Enlarge the text or print or increase spacing
  Highlight essential information
  Provide additional practice activities
  Provide a glossary in content areas
  Develop and provide reading guides

Accommodations Involving Interactive Instruction
  Repeat directions
  Maintain daily routines
  Provide a copy of lecture notes
  Provide students with graphic organizers
  Use step-by-step instructions
  Simultaneously combine verbal and visual information
  Write key points or words on the board
  Use multi-sensory instruction and activities
  Use mnemonic strategies
Accommodations Involving Student Performance

- Allow extra time
- Change response mode
- Provide an outline of the lecture
- Encourage use of graphic organizers
- Place students close to the teacher
- Encourage the use of assignment books or calendars
- Use cues to denote important items
- Design hierarchical worksheets
- Allow use of instructional aids
- Display examples of completed assignments
- Use peer-mediated learning
- Encourage note sharing or provide copy of notes
- Use flexible work times
- Provide additional practice
- Use assignment substitutions or adjustments
Dyslexia Accommodations for Content Areas

**READING:** The reading rate of a dyslexic student can be very halting or slow. A dyslexic student may be prone to reading errors, such as reversals, omissions, substitutions, and transpositions of letters and words. He may have problems “tracking” as his eyes move across the page. He may lose his place due to skipping up or down to the wrong line, or rereading lines. A dyslexic student may have difficulty using punctuation as a guide and difficulty reading with appropriate intonation. He should **not** be required to read aloud in front of the class.

- Allow use of a card or marker to help the eyes with tracking
- Provide enlarged text
- Minimize auditory / visual distractions
- Use recorded texts
- Allow student to use a reading partner
- Provide highlighted text
- Provide texts written at a lower reading level
- Try to find relevant videos related to the reading
- Alter lighting conditions as needed
- Use visuals, concrete examples, and multisensory instruction
- Preview vocabulary prior to reading
- Preview questions prior to reading
- Question often to check for understanding
- Read in small increments and discuss what was read

**Do not require** student to read aloud in classroom setting
- Provide time for student to practice reading passage silently
- Encourage subvocalization when reading
- Omit timed reading assignments
- Copy pages of the textbook (i.e. science, social studies, etc.) so that:
  - text can be highlighted or marked
  - unknown words can be marked
  - unclear information can be marked
  - key ideas can be starred
  - main idea can be identified
  - use a personal and on-going word deck for vocabulary
**SPELLING:** The dyslexic student may have great difficulty spelling correctly. Some are able to retain the visual memory of a list of words just long enough to pass a test, but composition spelling usually remains erratic. The dyslexic student is frequently unaware that he has misspelled a word.

- Have student enunciate the words slowly and clearly
- Have student finger-spell the sounds of the words
- Monitor closely to ensure the student is pronouncing the word
- Allow oral responses for tests
- Give credit for level of improvement
- During spelling tests, have student say the words
- Shorten number of words to be tested, or split list
- Provide a quick chart for frequently misspelled words
- Allow use of spell check or electronic spelling dictionary

**WRITING:** Copying is often a difficult task for the dyslexic student. He may have difficulty forming letters and therefore, the simplest copying activity becomes extremely difficult, confusing, and meaningless. In addition, the student is prone to make the same type of errors in copying that he makes in reading, including reversals, substitutions and omissions. For writing activities, patience on the part of the teacher and the student is very important. Praise for effort and encouragement for following procedures is also important.

- Allow student to use computers to generate essays
- Allow student to record his/her thoughts before writing them
- Allow alternative assignments: recorded reports, drawings etc.
- Allow student to dictate to peer or teacher
- Provide an outline of lecture
- Provide a copy of notes
- Omit timed assignments
- Modify essay tests (use computer or provide more time)

**MATH:** Math is often a strength for many dyslexic students. A dyslexic student may have trouble with the “language” of math. This means he may have problems with the vocabulary and reading of the questions and directions. He may have special problems with alignment of numbers, reversals, and transposition of numbers.

- Provide manipulatives and charts whenever possible
- Use visuals and concrete examples
- Provide reading assistance for story problems
Ask student to demonstrate that he/she understands directions
Provide grid paper to help student correctly line problems
Use a line-marker held vertically to line up math problems
Provide extra space on worksheets to work math problems
Present information in small increments when possible
Present information at a slower pace when possible
Take time to reteach when student is struggling to understand
Demonstrate self talk while solving problems

**TESTING in the classroom:** There is no clear-cut, universal trend as to which testing format is best for students. Individual needs should be studied and taken into account. The key in alternate format testing is to find the best way to **access what the student knows**.

- Give opportunity to test orally
- Refrain from “bunching” questions (visual appearance)
- Allow student to write on test instead of answer sheet
- Divide questions and word banks into smaller groups
- Group matching activities into small bundles
- Allow student to dictate responses
- Allow student to type responses
- Avoid essay questions – accept short answer
**MISCELLANEOUS TIPS:**
- Provide an area with minimal visual/auditory distractions
- Make contact with student before you speak to him/her
- Provide visual charts, etc. of expectations
- Speak slowly and enunciate well
- Allow time for student to process
- Place assignments/expectations in same place on board
- Have the heading on the paper the same in every class
- Have a classroom set and a home set of books if possible
- Have student keep assignment notebook and monitor it daily
- Pre-teach as much as possible
- Use large print whenever possible
- Educate and communicate with parents

**HOMEWORK:** Homework is extremely tedious and stressful for dyslexic students. The time that it takes an average student to complete a homework assignment can take a dyslexic student two to three times longer, and often cannot be completed independently without parent help. Therefore, homework should be minimal and used to practice concepts taught in the classroom. Accommodations used in the classroom should be used for homework assignments.
Comal ISD Dyslexia Program
DYSLEXIA REFERRAL PACKET CHECKLIST FOR CAMPUS DYSLEXIA DESIGNEE

Attention Campus Dyslexia Designee: Please be sure that RTI data has been collected before referring. The Campus Dyslexia Designee will compile the data provided by the teacher and attach the completed listed forms on this checklist. These forms will then be forwarded to the District Dyslexia Coordinator, Jennifer Johnson. Formal Testing will be scheduled at that time.

* For the purpose of Data Gathering, please provide the classroom teacher with the forms to be completed, denoted by the asterisk.

Step 1: Classroom teacher/s will request and submit a “CISD Dyslexia Referral Form” to the dyslexia designee.
- Form 1: Dyslexia/504 Referral Form *

Step 2: Once the classroom teacher returns the referral form, the “Campus Dyslexia Designee” will provide the classroom teacher with the following forms:
- Form 2: Classroom Observation Initial Screener (Elementary OR Middle/High School) *
- Form 3: Parent Input Form* (Classroom teachers, please send this form home and have it returned to you before the Initial Pre-Test Dyslexia Meeting.)
- Form 4: Consent for informal dyslexia screening *(Classroom teachers, please send this form home and return it to the campus dyslexia designee so an informal screening using DIBELS Next can be completed before the Initial Pre-Test Dyslexia Meeting.)

Step 3: Initial Pre-Test Dyslexia Meeting will take place with classroom teacher/s, dyslexia designee, the parent, and/or members of the RTI committee. At this time, the parent will be given a copy of the "Parent Notice of 504 Rights" and will sign two “Parent Consent for Testing” forms, one to keep and one to give to the dyslexia designee.
- Form 5: Parent Consent for Testing / Notice of 504 Rights

Step 4: All forms and documentation that indicate a student exhibits dyslexic tendencies are uploaded into Eduphoria formspace and Jennifer Johnson is emailed the name of the student to review completed documentation and recommend formal dyslexia assessment or request additional documentation.

Step 5: Dyslexia assessment personnel will test the student using the CTOPP, WJIII, and GORT-5. Results will be compiled on the “Student Profile Summary Sheet”
- Form 6: Student Profile Summary Sheet

Step 6: Post-Test Evaluation Meeting will take place with classroom teacher/s, dyslexia designee, counselor, campus administrator, and parent if the parent is able to attend. It will be decided if the student qualifies for dyslexia services and/or 504 accommodations at this meeting.
- Form 7: Dyslexia/504 Evaluation Form and Dyslexia Supplement
- Form 8: Dyslexia/504 Evaluation Results Letter (If Parent Cannot Attend Meeting)
- Form 9: Dyslexia and/or 504 Accommodations

Step 7: Dyslexia teachers will report progress on progress monitoring sheets.
- Form 10: Dyslexia Data Report

Step 8: Dyslexia teachers will exit students based on the above data.
- Form 11: Exit Information

Additional Forms:
- Form 12: Homebound Supplement
- Form 13: Notice of Dyslexia Committee Meeting
- Form 14: Reminder of Dyslexia Committee Meeting
- Form 15: Classroom Accommodation Notice
- Form 16: Consent to Request Confidential Information (when applicable)

Packet complied by________________________
Date __________________________
School __________________________
Incomplete packet returned __________________
Resubmitted _________________________
Attention Classroom Teacher,

_________________________ has been referred for a dyslexia screening based on the submitted Dyslexia/504 Referral Form. Please return the following information to the Campus Dyslexia Designee. Time is an important factor, so please keep a two-week turnaround time in mind when a dyslexia screening referral has been initiated. Thank you for your help in expediting this task.

- Elementary or Middle/High School Initial Screener Checklist
- Parent Input Form
- Parent consent for additional screening using DIBELS Next (elementary) or CORE (secondary).

Thank you,

_________________________
Dyslexia Teacher
**RTI Dyslexia Screening Referral Process**

Requested By: _______ RTI Committee/Teacher  

_______ RTI Committee/Parent

Prior to the DIBELS Next Screener, the following must be requested and reviewed by the RTI Committee:

_________ Interventions are documented in AWARE by classroom teacher/s, CIC, and/or RTI Committee.

_________ Near Point and Distance Vision Screenings and Hearing Screening documented in AWARE by school nurse. Copy of Screening Form is completed and returned to Dyslexia Support Teacher.

_________ Initial Screener Checklist (classroom observation) is completed by classroom teacher/s and returned to Dyslexia Support Teacher. CIC’s may also complete a Teacher Observation Inventory to provide additional information.

_________ Copy of signed Parent Consent Form for DIBELS Next and parent information sheet is obtained and returned to the Dyslexia Support Teacher.

_________ *In the case of a parent request, the parent input section of the RTI form should be updated by the person from whom the parent requested a dyslexia screening.

When the above items are complete, a DIBELS Next Screening (elementary) or CORE (secondary) may be administered.

_________ DIBELS Next Screening (elementary) or the CORE screening (secondary) is completed by Dyslexia Support Teacher.

_________ Dyslexia Support Teacher uploads DIBELS Next Screening or CORE, Teacher Observation Inventory, Consent for screening, and Vision/Hearing Screening Form.

_________ DIBELS Next Screening data (elementary) or CORE (secondary) is shared with RTI Committee. All collected data is reviewed.

_________ Parent letter is sent to notify parent of RTI Committee’s decision regarding further dyslexia evaluation.

_________ If a dyslexia evaluation is recommended by the RTI Committee, the 504 coordinator will begin the Dyslexia Referral Checklist located in the Dyslexia handbook.