

Dyslexia

What Families Need to Know

What is dyslexia?

According to the International Dyslexia Association, (2008) dyslexia is a specific learning disability that 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 the growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.

For parents this means that dyslexia is not due to lack of intelligence or the desire to learn. With appropriate teaching methods individuals with dyslexia can learn. The impact of dyslexia for each person depends on the severity of the condition and the approach to remediation. The most common effects are problems with reading, spelling, and writing. Some individuals with dyslexia do not have much difficulty with early reading and spelling tasks, but do experience problems when more complex language skills are required, such as using correct grammar, understanding textbook material, and writing essays. Dyslexia occurs in people of all backgrounds and intellectual levels. People who are very bright can be dyslexic. They are often capable or even very talented in areas that do not require strong language skills, such as art, computer science, design, drama, electronics, math, mechanics, music, physics, sales, and sports.



How are learning disabilities including dyslexia identified?

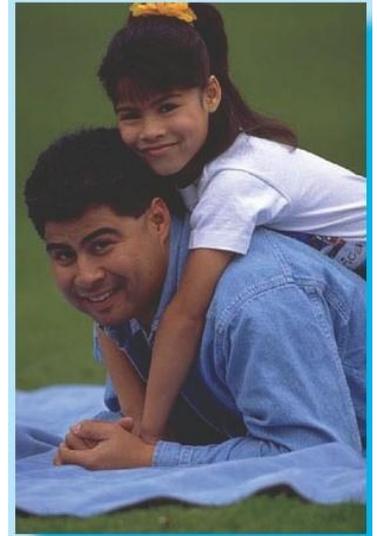
Kansas schools have processes in place to quickly find students who may need additional instructional support in order to be successful. Many schools utilize the Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports which is a school-wide approach used to collect data about student achievement and deliver interventions matched to student needs as early as possible. Some schools have a Student Improvement Team that is used to design and deliver interventions for individual students when a concern about student achievement is presented. Whichever approach a school uses, data is collected to determine whether or not the interventions provided are sufficient to support each student.

Sometimes, the data collected during intervention leads the school to propose conducting an evaluation to determine whether or not the student may have a learning disability. Parents may also request an evaluation at any time. During an evaluation, data is collected and used to determine if the student is a child with a specific learning disability and if the student has a need for specially designed instruction. The data must support both the presence of a disability and need in order for a child to be eligible for special education services. Sometimes a student may have been evaluated outside of the school setting and may have received a diagnosis of a learning disability such as dyslexia. Information from such an evaluation should be considered as part of an evaluation conducted in the school setting, but the need for specially designed instruction must be met for special education services to be provided. More information about the evaluation process may be found in Chapter 3 of the Kansas Special Education Process Handbook: <http://www.ksde.org/Default.aspx?tabid=3152>

How do schools provide support for learning disabilities including dyslexia?

It is not necessary to know the cause of dyslexia to understand how to manage it. All students including students with dyslexia benefit from systematic, explicit, instruction in reading, writing, and language. Dyslexia and other related learning disorders cannot be cured. Proper instruction promotes reading success and alleviates many difficulties associated with dyslexia. Instruction for individuals with reading and related learning disabilities should be:

- Intensive – given every day or very frequently for sufficient time.
- Explicit – component skills for reading, spelling, and writing are explained, directly taught, and modeled by the teacher. Children are discouraged from guessing at words.
- Systematic and cumulative – has a definite, logical sequence of concept introduction; concepts are ordered from simple to more complex; each new concept builds upon previously introduced concepts, with built in review to aid memory and retrieval.
- Structured – has step-by-step procedures for introducing, reviewing, and practicing concepts.
- Multisensory – links listening, speaking reading, and writing together; involves movement and “hands on” learning.



What can parents do?

- Work closely with your school team to develop your child’s intervention plan or IEP (Individualized Education Program). You are your child’s best advocate and keeping the lines of communication open with your school is the best way to help him/her be successful.
- If you suspect your child’s intervention plan or IEP is not being properly followed, speak with your child’s teacher keeping the best interest of your child in mind.
- Help your child stay organized. Using color coding or wall charts will help your child keep his/her goals and schedule on target.
- Teach your child to use his/her best method of learning or expressing himself/herself, whether that method is visual, auditory or tactile. If your child learns better by listening, he/she can use a tape recorder to gather information, or he/ she can try talking about a subject with a knowledgeable friend rather than reading a book about it. Books on tape are useful tools for many children with dyslexia.

Additional Resources

For more information about the Kansas MTSS, see **A Family Guide to a Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS)** at <http://www.kpirc.org/uploads/MTSSKS1.pdf>

Dyslexia is specifically cited as an example of a learning disability in the implementing regulations of the IDEA and in the Kansas Special Education for Exceptional Children Act, under the definition of specific learning disability. If you have questions about dyslexia and the statutes and regulations governing eligibility for special education services, please contact the KSDE Special Education Services Team at 1-800-203-9462 (*Kansas residents only*).

Kansas Parent Information Resource Center (KPIRC)
1-866-711-6711 www.kpirc.org

Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE)
1-800-203-9462 www.ksde.org

The International Dyslexia Association
(410) 296-0232 www.interdys.org

The Kansas/Missouri Branch of the International Dyslexia Association www.ksmolda.org

www.ksdetasn.org

www.familiestogetherinc.org

www.kansasmtss.org

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