

DYSLEXIA

Early identification can make a positive difference in a student's success in school and beyond.

What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a language processing disorder. From a learning perspective, it is considered a learning disorder affecting a student's reading skills. According to the Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity, "Dyslexia is an unexpected difficulty in learning to read. Dyslexia takes away an individual's ability to read quickly and automatically, and to retrieve spoken words easily, but it does not dampen one's creativity and ingenuity."

How common is dyslexia?

Dyslexia has been reported to occur in 10-20% of the population, or 1 in 5 people.

What are the signs of dyslexia?

Dyslexia can present in a variety of ways and can look different in each person. These are some common signs of dyslexia, but this list is not exhaustive. If your child has several of these, talk to your child's teacher, principal, school psychologist and/or Director of Special Education.

Reading

- Difficulty learning and remembering the names of letters and the corresponding sounds in the alphabet
- Cannot separate the sounds within a word; for example, h-a-t.
- Makes errors that show no connection to the sounds of the letters on the page; for example, saying "puppy" instead of "dog" when shown picture labeled "dog"
- Difficulty remembering sight words
- Reading is slow, awkward, and/or robotic
- Trouble reading unfamiliar words, often making wild guesses because they cannot sound out the word, or makes same errors over and over
- Confuses words or reads words differently; for example, reads "saw" for "was" or "what" for "that"
- Omits small words or parts of words when reading aloud
- Difficulty spelling words or spells phonetically



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Signs of dyslexia (continued)

School and Life

- Trouble finishing tests on time because of slow reading or writing
- May be good in math but struggles with word problems
- Practiced spelling words do not stick; do not show up in daily writing
- Demonstrates low self-esteem and/or school avoidance
- May act out when required to read or avoid situations where reading/writing is required
- Family history of dyslexia

Speaking and Listening

- Difficulty recognizing rhyming patterns (sit, hit, bit)
- Mispronounces familiar words; persistent baby talk (i.e., hangaburger, refrigalator)
- Slow to find the word to use in a conversation
- Searches for specific word but uses vague language such as “stuff” or “thing” instead of naming object
- Needs extra time to respond to questions

Potential Strengths

- Understands most of what is read aloud
- Oral language is stronger than phonemic awareness and decoding abilities
- Larger vocabulary than peers
- Stronger with tasks that are meaningful rather than rote memorization
- Stronger listening vocabulary than indicated by reading and writing scores and samples
- Curious
- Creative
- Imaginative
- Ability to figure things out
- Good understanding of new concepts
- Relatively strong thinking skills: conceptualization, reasoning, imagination, abstraction, gets the “big picture”

Can a school test for dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a medical diagnosis, so schools will not typically identify a student as having dyslexia. However, the school can conduct evaluations to see if a student struggles in the areas associated with dyslexia. Ask the Director of Special Education for an educational assessment that includes:

- Phonemic awareness
- Decoding
- Spelling
- Reading accuracy
- Reading fluency
- Reading comprehension



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Who can diagnose dyslexia?

Clinical psychologists, neuropsychologists, child neurologists, and reading specialists can test for dyslexia. A pediatrician will not typically evaluate for dyslexia unless the pediatrician is a developmental-behavioral pediatrician. It can be helpful to interview a doctor ahead of time to ensure they are knowledgeable about dyslexia and will use the word dyslexia if warranted in their report (as opposed to describing the student with a reading disability).

At what age should a student be evaluated for dyslexia?

A student can accurately be identified with dyslexia as young as 5 ½ years old.

Is a diagnosis of dyslexia necessary for a student to receive an IEP?

A diagnosis is not necessary, nor does it automatically qualify a student for an IEP or special education services. However a diagnosis can be helpful in the following ways:

For the student, a diagnosis may help them understand why they are struggling, that their struggles in reading are common, and that they are not “stupid”, which is a common feeling among struggling readers.

For families and educators, a diagnosis helps them understand why a student is struggling to read and consider new approaches to help the student learn to read. People with dyslexia often require a structured literacy approach rather than guided reading or balanced literacy approaches.

Once a student has been evaluated and/or diagnosed, what is the next step?

Every student's situation is unique so the next step will vary depending on many factors including (but not limited to):

- severity of dyslexia
- dyslexia-related areas of need (decoding, spelling, comprehension, etc.)
- student's age and/or grade
- concomitant conditions and other areas of need
- student's priorities and perspective

If you'd like to talk through various options for your specific situation, please call Starbridge.



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If a student is diagnosed with dyslexia, can the school use the word dyslexia?

Yes, if the student has been identified as having dyslexia, then the term can be used by the school. In 2015, the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS) issued a Dear Colleague memo encouraging the use of terms such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia if it helps identify the needs of the student. In addition, the term dyslexia is used in the definition of IDEA's "specific learning disability" classification.

What does NYS Education Department say about dyslexia?

In August 2018, NYS Education Department issued a memo to key stakeholders, including parents. It states: "All students with disabilities must receive an appropriate education that meets their unique, individual needs in order to meaningfully participate and progress in the general curriculum."

Three guidance documents were issued and are available at www.nysed.gov

- Meeting the Needs of Students with Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, and Dyscalculia
- Identification of Students with Learning Disabilities with a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) - Flowchart
- Students with Disabilities Resulting from Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, and Dyscalculia: Questions and Answers

Where can you find more information about dyslexia?

There are several resources for more information about dyslexia and recommended methods to support students with dyslexia in their learning. A few are listed here:

- International Dyslexia Association (dyslexiaida.org)
- Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity (www.dyslexia.yale.edu)
- Made by Dyslexia (madebydyslexia.org)
- Dyslexia Training Institute (www.dyslexiatraininginstitute.org)

Still have questions?

Contact us at (585) 546-1700 or starbridgeinc.org/contact-us

