

Understanding Dyslexia

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What is Dysgraphia?

Messy handwriting, poor spelling... when does it become a problem? Sometimes messy handwriting is just messy handwriting, and not all spelling difficulties mean there is a disorder. How do you tell the difference?

Dysgraphia is a Greek word. When we take it apart the prefix *dys* means difficulty or impairment, *graph* means to write, and *ia* means a condition. So, *dysgraphia* means having difficulty with writing. It is a specific learning disability that impacts the ability to write effectively and efficiently. It can affect handwriting, spelling, writing speed, and written expression (being able to get ideas out on paper in a way that makes sense). While dysgraphia often occurs along with dyslexia, the two can occur independent of one another as well.

Dysgraphia is sometimes caused by a motor planning deficit, but not always. When this occurs, the brain essentially has difficulty telling the hand what to do to write letters and words. Students with motor planning difficulty with letter formation and often appear to get "lost" in the letter. Dysgraphic writing often lacks consistency with letter formation, size, and spacing. Letters often float above or below the writing line.

Adaptive writing paper can be helpful such as those with raised or highlighted portions to help the student become more aware of where to place their letters. Working on typing skills can also help when spelling or idea generation are not difficult for the student.

Resource Corner

The Child Mind Institute has some great information for parents regarding dyslexia. Check them out at: <https://childmind.org/guide/parents-guide-to-dyslexia/>

District Resources:

You can find copies of the district Dyslexia Newsletter and links to important information and resources right on the district website.

From the district page (<https://www.nederland.k12.tx.us/>), go to:

- Departments
- Special Education
- Dyslexia Resources

Screenings: What do they tell us?

At various times of the year our schools perform screenings to help determine which students are considered at risk for reading difficulty. These screens can tell us what levels our students are performing at in various skills such as reading fluency, phonemic awareness, spelling, and decoding. They can also tell us which students are at risk for reading difficulty or dyslexia. They do not, however diagnose reading disabilities.



Dyslexia Assessment & HB3880

Recently in the state of Texas there has been a lot of conversation about how we identify and provide services for students with dyslexia. There has been concern that an assessment that only looks at dyslexia could lead to other difficulties going unnoticed or unassessed. There is also concern that section 504 does not come with the same level of protections for students and parents that are given under IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). The recent House Bill 3880 sought to address these concerns directly. The bill garnered bipartisan support as well as the support of parents and the International Dyslexia Association. While it passed in the House, it failed in the Senate. As a result, however, the state is going to collect data on how we identify and service students with dyslexia in Texas and allow that information to guide the next steps. It has also lead to updates to our state Dyslexia Handbook (which should be finalized later this year). While HB3880 did not pass, this is not the last time we will be hearing about the issues it covers.

So how is NISD addressing this topic? We are preemptively addressing how we assess for dyslexia. To ensure the same procedural safeguards, dyslexia assessment is now part of a more thorough Full Individual Evaluation (FIE) and is conducted through a collaborative effort between district diagnosticians and dyslexia specialist. By doing so, we can ensure that we get a full picture of the student's abilities and difficulties. Once the FIE is complete, a meeting takes place during which the appropriate path of service (504 or Special Education) is determined.

Dyslexia Awareness

October - *Dyslexia Awareness Month*

October 4th - *World Dyslexia Awareness Day*

The Dyslexia Awareness Ribbon is traditionally silver. However recent movements have adopted the color red as the color for dyslexia awareness. The idea behind it is to "reclaim" the color that has often marked up the papers of school children with dyslexia.



Characteristics by Age

Preschool

- Trouble learning rhymes
- Difficulty learning letters/sounds
- Mispronounces familiar words

Kindergarten & 1st Grade

- Reading errors that don't show connection to the sounds of the letters ("puppy" for "dog").
- Difficulty "sounding out" words
- Doesn't understand that words can be taken apart.

2nd Grade & Beyond

- Slow, labored reading
- Trouble reading unfamiliar words
- Lack of strategy to figuring out new words
- Avoids reading
- Searches for words when speaking & often substitutes with more simplified vocabulary
- Confuses words that sound alike ("volcano" for "tornado" or "Pacific" for "specific").
- Difficulty completing tests and assignments on time.
- Trouble remembering dates, names, lists



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