TN Department of Education

Dyslexia Resource Guide

Guidance on the “Say Dyslexia” Bill

Tennessee Department of Education |

Table of Contents

Section I: Introduction

Section II: Defining Dyslexia

Section III: Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI²)

Section IV: Dyslexia Screening Procedures

Section V: School-Based Problem Solving Teams

Section VI: Parent Notification/Communication

Section VII: Instructional Approaches for Students with Dyslexia

Section VIII: Dyslexia-specific Interventions

Section IX: Progress Monitoring

Section X: Accommodations and Assistive Technology

Section XI: Professional Development Resources

Section XII: Reporting by School Districts

Section XIII: Independent Comprehensive Dyslexia Evaluation

Section XIV: Special Education and Dyslexia

Section XV: References

Appendix A: Glossary

Appendix B: Say Dyslexia" Bill (Public Chapter 1058 of the Acts of 2016)

Appendix C: Dyslexia Advisory Council Members

Appendix D: Teacher Observation Questionnaire for Dyslexia

Appendix E: Example Survey Level Assessments

Appendix F: Sample Parent Letter

Appendix G: Differentiation Inventory

Appendix H: Dyslexia Specific Intervention Checklist

Appendix I: Additional Resources

Section I: Introduction

Purpose of the Dyslexia Resource Guide

The Dyslexia Resource Guide is provided to assist districts in their implementation of the requirements established by the "Say Dyslexia" bill (Public Chapter 1058 of the Acts of 2016). In particular, this guide a) identifies and clarifies the bill requirements; and b) defines dyslexia and provides applicable resources.

The "Say Dyslexia" bill requires the department to develop guidance for identifying characteristics of dyslexia and to provide appropriate professional development resources for educators in the areas of identification and intervention methods for students with dyslexia. This bill also requires the creation of a dyslexia advisory council to advise the department on matters related to dyslexia (See Appendix B). This council is comprised of nine appointed members with three additional ex officio members. Council membership can be found in Appendix C.

The bill outlines specific roles and responsibilities for Local Education Agencies (LEAs), the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE), and the appointed Dyslexia Advisory Council. A summary of the requirements and related roles are detailed below (Table 1).

Table 1: *"Say Dyslexia" Bill Requirements and Related Roles*

Agency	Roles/Responsibilities				
Local Education Agencies (LEAs)	Implement procedures for identifying characteristics of dyslexia through the universal screening process required by the existing RTI². framework	Convene a school-based problem-solving team to analyze screening and progress monitoring data.	Notify students' parents and provide them with information and resources regarding dyslexia.	Provide appropriate tiered dyslexia-specific intervention through its existing RTI² framework.	Monitor students' progress using a tool designed to measure the effectiveness of the intervention.
TDOE	Develop procedures for identifying characteristics of dyslexia through the universal screening process required by the existing RTI² framework.	Provide appropriate professional development resources for educators in the areas of identification and intervention methods for students with dyslexia.			
Dyslexia Advisory Council	Advise the TDOE on matters relating to dyslexia.	Meet at least quarterly.	Submit an annual report to education committees.		

This guide will provide districts with information related to screening procedures for dyslexia, dyslexia-specific intervention, professional development resources, and reporting requirements. The Dyslexia Resource Guide will be developed and updated with input and feedback from the Dyslexia Advisory Council and other key stakeholder groups.

Section II: Defining Dyslexia

The "Say Dyslexia" bill requires screening for the characteristics of dyslexia in order to provide appropriate interventions; however, it does not refer to the identification or diagnosis of dyslexia. In order to provide guidance regarding the screening and programming needs for students who may display these characteristics, it is important to have an understanding of dyslexia.

What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurological in origin and is characterized by difficulties with accurate and 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.[1]

Dyslexia is a language-based condition rather than a vision-based condition. Students with dyslexia struggle with the relationship between letters and sounds. Because of this, they have a hard time decoding, or sounding out, unfamiliar words, and instead often misread them based on an overreliance on their sight-word memory. Deficits are unexpected relative to cognitive abilities in that the student's skills are lower than their overall ability and are not due to a lack of intelligence.[2]

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[1] International Dyslexia Association (2002). http://eida.org/definition-of-dyslexia/

[2] International Dyslexia Association https://dyslexiaida.org/dyslexia-basics/

Screening for characteristics of dyslexia is a proactive way to address skill deficits through appropriate interventions. Screening results that reflect characteristics of dyslexia do not necessarily mean that a student has dyslexia nor can dyslexia be diagnosed through a screening alone.

Characteristics of Dyslexia

Per the "Say Dyslexia" bill, dyslexia screening procedures shall include the following characteristics of dyslexia*:

- Phonological awareness: a broad category comprising a range of understandings related to the sounds of words and word parts;
- Phonemic awareness: the ability to notice, think about, and work with the individual sounds in spoken words;
- Alphabet knowledge: understanding that letters represent sounds, which form words;
- Sound/symbol recognition: understanding that there is a predictable relationship between phonemes (sounds in spoken language) and graphemes (the letters that represent those sounds);
- Decoding skills: using knowledge of letters and sounds to recognize and analyze a printed word to connect it to the spoken word it represents (also referred to as "word attack skills");
- Encoding skills: translating speech into writing (spelling); and
- Rapid naming: ability to connect visual and verbal information by giving the appropriate names to common objects, colors, letters, and digits (quickly naming what is seen). Rapid naming requires the retrieval of phonological information related to phonemes (letter/ letter combination sounds), segments of words, and words from long-term memory in an efficient manner. This is important when decoding words, encoding words, and reading sight words.

*See an additional breakdown of skills in the glossary found in Appendix A.

Students with dyslexia share some common characteristics, but it is important to remember that it manifests differently depending on the individual, their age, and other factors affecting his/her foundational reading skill development. In addition, students may have co-occurring disabilities/disorders, including twice exceptionality (i.e., gifted and dyslexia). Comorbid symptoms may mask characteristics of dyslexia (e.g., inattention and behavioral issues are more apparent or gifted students may compensate well); on the other hand, a student's

disability may impair participation in grade-level instruction, creating deficits that may be misinterpreted as characteristics of dyslexia.

Some common characteristics of dyslexia include:

Table 2: Common Characteristics of Dyslexia[3]

Age Group	Difficulties	Strengths
Grades K–1	▪ Reading errors exhibit no connection to the sounds of the letters on the page (e.g., will say "puppy" instead of the written word "dog" on an illustrated page with a dog shown) ▪ Does not understand that words come apart ▪ Complains about how hard reading is, or "disappears" when it is time to read ▪ A familial history of reading problems ▪ Cannot sound out simple words like *cat*, *map*, *nap* ▪ Does not associate letters with sounds, such as the letter b with the "b" sound	▪ The ability to figure things out ▪ Eager embrace of new ideas ▪ Gets "the gist" of things ▪ A good understanding of new concepts ▪ A large vocabulary for the age group ▪ Excellent comprehension of stories read aloud (i.e., listening comprehension)

[3] Taken from The Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity, Signs of Dyslexia. http://dyslexia.yale.edu/EDU_signs.html

Grades 2+	▪ Very slow to acquire reading skills; reading is slow and awkward ▪ Trouble reading unfamiliar words, often making wild guesses because he cannot sound out the word ▪ Doesn't seem to have a strategy for reading new words ▪ Avoids reading out loud ▪ Confuses words that sound alike, such as saying "tornado" for "volcano," substituting "lotion" for "ocean" ▪ Mispronunciation of long, unfamiliar, or complicated words ▪ Avoidance of reading; gaps in vocabulary as a result	▪ Excellent thinking skills: conceptualization, reasoning, imagination, abstraction ▪ Learning that is accomplished best through meaning rather than rote memorization ▪ Ability to get the "big picture" ▪ A high level of understanding of what is read aloud (listening comprehension) ▪ The ability to read and to understand highly practiced words in a special area of interest ▪ Sophisticated listening vocabulary ▪ Excellence in areas not dependent on reading

Every child is unique, and therefore the rate of development may vary. It is possible that a child may not reach a developmental milestone until the upper end of the expected range. Concerns are warranted, however, if the behaviors occur over an extended period of time and adversely affect the child's ability to progress and meet expectations. Many young children reverse letters and numbers, misread words or misunderstand words as a normal, developmental part of learning to read. Children with dyslexia, however, continue to do so after their peers have stopped.[4] This is one of many misconceptions that surround the term "dyslexia." Below are more of the myths and truths associated with dyslexia.

[4] Harvard Medical School http://www.health.harvard.edu/developmental-milestones/dyslexia-

Table 3: Common Myths

Reversals	Myth: Dyslexia is a visual problem. Students with dyslexia see and write letters and words backwards.	Truth: Many children reverse their letters when learning to read and write. Reversing letters is not a sure sign of dyslexia, and not all students with dyslexia reverse letters.[1]
School Success	Myth: If you perform well in school, you must not have dyslexia.	Truth: Some students with dyslexia perform well in school. These students work hard, are motivated, and have the accommodations necessary to show their knowledge.[1]
Intelligence	Myth: Smart students cannot be dyslexic; students with dyslexia cannot be very smart.	Truth: Dyslexia is defined by an unexpected difficulty in learning to read. Said another way, dyslexia is a paradox—the same person who struggles to read quickly often has very high intelligence.[1]
Reading Ability	Myth: Students with dyslexia cannot learn to read.	Truth: Most students with dyslexia do learn to read, but with greater effort. They tend to remain "manual" rather than "fluent" readers, reading slowly and with great effort.[1]
Reading Difficulties	Myth: All reading difficulties can be attributed to dyslexia.	Truth: The hallmark of dyslexia is an unexpected reading difficulty in a child who seems to have all the equipment (intelligence, verbal skills, motivation) necessary to become a reader.[1] There are other ways students can struggle

		to read: (1) 3–10 percent of students who are strong decoders don't understand what they are reading (specific reading comprehension deficit),[3] and (2) some students struggle with both the code of the language and the meaning of language (mixed reading deficit).
Eligibility	Myth: If a student has dyslexia, they will have an IEP. An IEP is the only way to get the appropriate instruction and accommodations needed.	Truth: Dyslexia comes in many degrees from mild to severe.[2] Some children with dyslexic characteristics meet the requirements for TN SLD eligibility and some do not. All students receive appropriate, differentiated instruction and universal accommodations in Tier 1, and when needed, the student may receive Tier II or Tier III intervention. Students who do not respond to these interventions may be eligible to receive interventions through special education.
Gender	Myth: Only boys are affected by dyslexia.	Truth: Students of both genders can have dyslexia. The higher number of male referrals may be due to differences in classroom behaviors.[1]
Short-term Problem	Myth: Most students will eventually outgrow dyslexia.	Truth: Dyslexia is the result of a processing difference in the brain and will last a lifetime.[1]

Comprehension	Myth: Students who have dyslexia have poor reading comprehension skills.	Truth: Students with dyslexia tend to have strong comprehension skills, but this can be masked by (1) the amount of mental effort required to decode, limiting access to the ability to think critically, and (2) a limited amount of reading, leading to a gap in the student's vocabulary as compared to students who read large amounts of appropriate text.[1]

Section III: Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI²)

Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI²) is a framework designed to meet the needs of all students through increasingly intensive interventions. With RTI², all students receive core instruction; some students may need more targeted support in addition to this core instruction through Tier II interventions; and a few students may need more intensive support in addition to core instruction through Tier III interventions. As outlined in Public Chapter 1058, districts must identify characteristics of dyslexia through their existing RTI² universal screening process and provide appropriate tiered dyslexia-specific interventions for students identified with these characteristics.

Tier I

Tier I instruction, also known as core instruction, provides rich learning opportunities for all students that are aligned to the Tennessee academic standards and are responsive to student strengths and needs through differentiation. The entire range of learners, including those identified with disabilities, students with the characteristics of dyslexia, students who are identified as gifted, and English learners, are included and actively participate in Tier I instruction. Differentiation, based on multiple sources of data, is a hallmark of Tier I (see Component 2 of the RTI² manual).

Tier II

Tier II addresses the needs of struggling and advanced students. Those students who require assistance beyond the usual time allotted for core instruction should receive additional skill-based group intervention daily aligned to the specific area of need. Tier II intervention is explicit and systematic. Advanced students should receive reinforcement and enrichment. Intervention includes explicit instruction within the area of need for all struggling students. For example, students with the characteristics of dyslexia should receive interventions that address the specific phonological deficits identified through targeted assessments (see Section VIII: Dyslexia-Specific Interventions and Component 3 of the RTI² manual).

Tier III

Tier III is in addition to the instruction provided in Tier I. Tier III addresses 3–5 percent of students who have received Tier I instruction and Tier II interventions and continue to show marked difficulty in acquiring necessary reading, mathematics, and writing skills. It could also include students who score below a designated cut score on the universal screening. These cut scores should be based on national norms that identify students who are at risk. As a guideline, students below 10th percentile would be considered the most "at risk" and in possible need of Tier III intervention. When teachers and school-level RTI² support teams are making placement decisions for Tier III interventions, it may be necessary to consider other assessments, data, and information on the student. Such examples may include attendance records, past retention, or performance on TCAP. Students at this level should receive daily, intensive, small group, or individual intervention targeting specific area(s) of deficit, which are more intense than interventions received in Tier II. Intensity can be increased through length, frequency, and duration of implementation. A problem-solving approach within an RTI^2 model is highly recommended so that the data team can tailor an intervention to an individual student. It typically has four stages: problem identification, analysis of problem, intervention planning, and response to intervention evaluation. Intervention includes explicit instruction within the area of need for all struggling students. For example, students with the characteristics of dyslexia shall receive interventions that address the specific phonological deficits identified through targeted assessments (see Section VIII: Dyslexia-Specific Interventions and Component 4 of the RTI² manual).

If a student is not successful with interventions provided through general education (i.e., RTI²), s/he *may* be referred for evaluation to consider eligibility for special education as this may indicate a possible specific learning disability (see Section XIV: Special Education and Dyslexia).

Section IV: Dyslexia Screening Procedures

Per current legislation, Public Chapter No.1058, the Tennessee Department of Education shall develop procedures for identifying characteristics of dyslexia through the universal screening process required by the existing RTI² framework or other available means.

The requirement that districts must implement RTI² has resulted in districts establishing a universal screening process that best meets the needs of their students. Districts should implement a universal screening process that uses multiple sources of data to identify individual student strengths and areas of need and that provides them with accurate information for making informed decisions about skills-specific interventions, remediation, reteaching, and enrichment for each child. All students must participate in a universal screening process to identify those who may need additional support and/or other types of instruction.

The universal screening process also plays an important role in fulfilling the requirements of Tennessee's dyslexia legislation (Public Chapter 1058 of the Acts of 2016). Passed during the 2016 legislative session, this law requires that districts implement a screening process for identifying characteristics of dyslexia.

Districts with an appropriate, effective universal screening process in place will be able to use the information they collect to make important determinations about dyslexia-specific accommodations and interventions.

The universal screening process involves three steps:

Step One:

In grades K–8, districts should administer a nationally normed, skills-based universal screener as part of the universal screening process. Universal screeners are not assessments in the traditional sense. They are brief, informative tools used to measure academic skills in six

general areas (i.e., basic reading skills, reading fluency, reading comprehension, math calculation, math problem solving, and written expression).

If a standards-based assessment is used to screen all students instead of a skills-based universal screener, a skills-based screener is still necessary to identify more specific skill area(s) of focus and to determine alignment of interventions for students identified as "at risk."

A skills-based **universal screener** is the most appropriate, defensible tool for identifying students that have skills deficits and informing the need for a skills-based intervention. If a skills-based **universal screener** is not used, districts might not identify students with underlying skills deficits or properly align interventions. Further, if districts do not use a skills-based **universal screener** and are unable to collect accurate data associated with a suspected area of disability, they may run the risk of violating their Child Find obligation.

When considering characteristics of dyslexia, screening in the areas of basic reading, reading fluency, and written expression help identify students who may need additional assessment to determine possible deficits related to the characteristics of dyslexia and the need for intervention. These areas are outlined below.

Table 4: Assessment Areas

Assessment area	Definition	Measures
Basic Reading	Phonemic awareness, sight word recognition, phonics, and word analysis Essential skills include identification of individual sounds and the ability to manipulate them; identification of printed letters and sounds associated with letters; and	K–1 measures include letter and sound identification, segmentation, and blending skills Grades 1+ include accuracy of word reading/ decoding within text (i.e. correct words percentage)

	decoding of written language.	
Reading Fluency	The ability to read words accurately, using age-appropriate chunking strategies of syllables and phrases and a repertoire of sight words and with appropriate rate, phrasing, and expression (prosody)	Grades 1+: Curriculum-based oral reading fluency measures
Written Expression	Communication of ideas, thoughts, and feelings Required skills include using oral language, thought, grammar, text fluency, sentence construction, and planning to produce a written product. Spelling often affects written products. This is not a measure of handwriting.	Grades 2+: Curriculum-based measures of writing measuring correct word sequences and spelling

In grades 9–12, schools should collect multiple sources of data that can be incorporated into an early warning system (EWS). The EWS may include data from universal screeners, achievement tests (from both high school and grades K–8), end of course (EOC) exams, student records (e.g., grades, behavioral incidents, attendance, retention, past RTI^2 interventions), the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS), and the ACT/SAT exam or other nationally normed assessments. (A template can be found on the TDOE RTI^2 Instructional Resources webpage) Districts will establish criteria for identifying students who are at risk using this EWS by

determining appropriate thresholds for each indicator (e.g., Missing ten percent of instructional days may be a flag for attendance.) and weighting each indicator appropriately based on local context.

Step Two:

In grades K–12, school teams should consider the results of the skills-based universal screener or EWS compared to other classroom-based assessments. These may include but are not limited to: standards-based assessments, grades, formative assessments, summative assessments, classroom performance, and teacher observations, in addition to any other relevant information such as medical or family history. This information should be used to corroborate performance on the skills-based universal screener. School teams should also consider sources that measure early risk factors or indicators of dyslexia. See Appendix D for an example checklist.

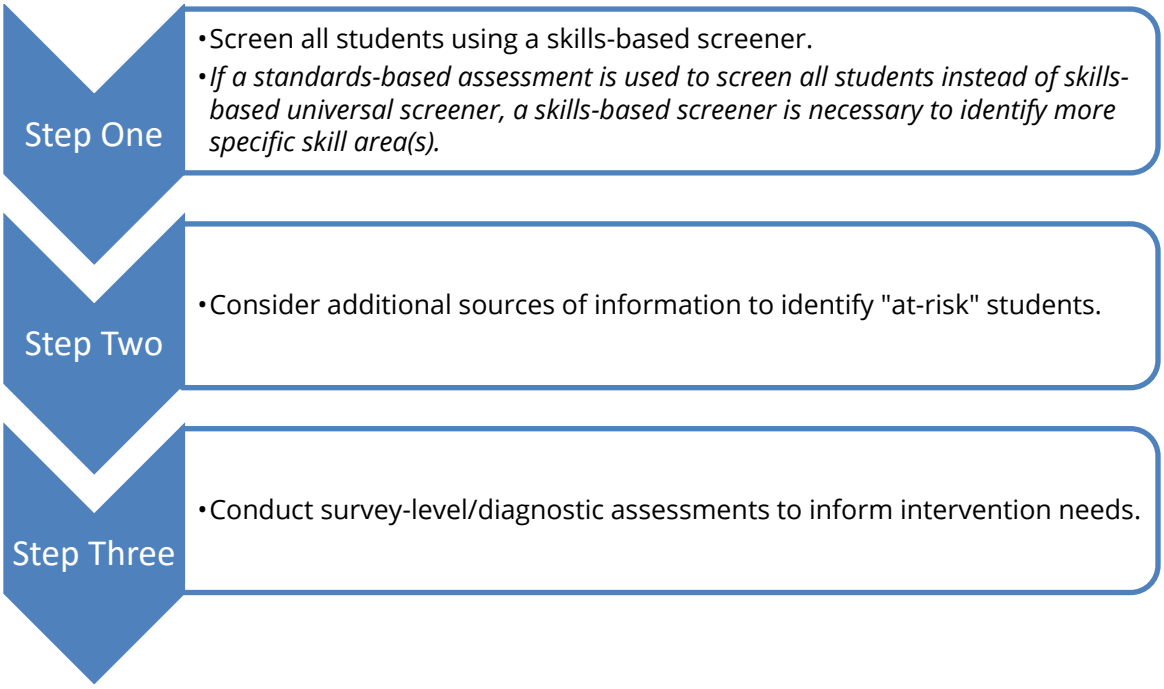
The school team should also consider a parent's request for additional screenings if there are concerns beyond the results of the universal screening process. (Refer to Section XII for additional information regarding parent requests.)

Step Three:

In grades K–12, students identified as "at risk" based on multiple sources of data should be administered survey-level and/or diagnostic assessments to determine student intervention needs. As required by the "Say Dyslexia" bill (Public Chapter 1058 of the Acts of 2016), these survey-level assessments for reading must explicitly measure characteristics of dyslexia to include: phonological and phonemic awareness, sound symbol recognition, alphabet knowledge, decoding skills, rapid naming, and encoding skills.

Example survey-level assessments that can be used to help drill down further to measure characteristics of dyslexia can be found in Appendix E.

Figure 1: Universal screening process



More information regarding the universal screening process can be found in the RTI^2 manual here under component 1.3.

Section V: School-Based Problem Solving Teams

As part of the existing data-based decision-making process within the RTI^2 framework, school-based teams shall meet to review and analyze data obtained through the universal screening process, including data found through survey level assessments. Using multiple sources of data, the team will discuss, plan, and determine appropriate evidenced-based tiered instruction and interventions for students with skill deficits including deficits associated with the characteristics of dyslexia. Teams may suggest ways to meet student needs such as classroom accommodations and usage of assistive technology. Appropriate professionals with specific skill sets may be needed to assist in decision making for interventions, accommodations, and the use of assistive technology (e.g., school psychologist, speech language pathologist, occupational therapist, reading specialist, school counselor, etc.).

Teams may refer students for additional considerations when appropriate such as a 504 plan or special education evaluation if additional accommodations or specialized instruction beyond tiered interventions are required to the meet the student's needs.

Section VI: Parent Notification/ Communication

After a school-based team has reviewed multiple sources of data in the screening process and identified skill deficits in need of intervention, parents shall receive notification of the student's performance and need for intervention. The notification should include specific areas of deficits associated with the characteristics of dyslexia. For example, if a student demonstrates weaknesses in phonological awareness inconsistent with developmental expectations and requires interventions, the parent notification should identify the area of weakness targeted in intervention (i.e., phonological awareness) and the intensity level of the intervention (e.g., Tier II, 30 minutes per day in a small group setting in addition to core instruction). Ongoing communication, at least every 4.5 weeks, should inform the parent(s) of the student's progress in skill development through tiered interventions, any changes in the intervention, and any additional concerns identified. A sample parent notification letter is included in Appendix F.

Section VII: Tier I (Core) Instructional Approaches

While interventions in addition to core instruction may be required for some children, access to high-quality classroom instruction for all students is key. Teachers should be responsive to students' needs as they teach foundational literacy skills, integrating methods that capitalize on these skills for broader reading proficiency. In addition to foundational skills, effective educators embrace strong curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices that support continuous progress based upon the learning strengths and needs of all students. These impactful experiences allow all students to listen to, read, think, talk, and write about texts. This section will highlight methods that can be utilized to ensure effective instruction is provided for students who display characteristics of dyslexia.

Classroom Instructional Context

Effective instruction occurs within classroom cultures that allow students and their teachers to demonstrate a joy for learning through positive relationships. These classrooms are responsive to all students' unique interests, experiences, and approaches to learning. In positive classroom cultures, students are encouraged to learn from mistakes, and the teacher creates learning opportunities in which all students can experience success. Positive relationships and interdependence characterize the classroom. For students with dyslexia, this creates a safe learning environment where their voices are heard and valued, and they can communicate ownership of their learning needs.

Effective classrooms utilize instructional time wisely to engage students in meeting the demands of the Tennessee academic standards. Students are actively engaged in opportunities to read and listen to text that is appropriately complex. In order to express and demonstrate their learning around concepts and texts, students are also given frequent chances to speak and write. They engage in learning opportunities within core instruction that include whole group and differentiated small group instruction as well as collaborative learning opportunities. All students, including those who display characteristics of dyslexia, are provided access to high-quality core instruction[5].

Students who display characteristics of dyslexia benefit from individualized instruction that immerses them in rich experiences with alphabetic knowledge, phonological awareness, phonics, and decoding during whole and small group instruction. This instruction is typically embedded within the Tier I literacy block and should involve explicit and systematic instruction as well as data-driven decision making. Interventions that occur, in addition to the core ELA block, support the unique needs of the student and are based upon multiple sources of evidence. Early identification and intervention of reading difficulties can prevent more serious and long-term problems.

Students displaying characteristics of dyslexia have multiple strengths and skill needs and as such, require assessments that identify each student's specific strengths and needs to tailor instruction that is responsive to those particular assessed needs (Coyne et al., 2013; Phillips &

[5] See Teaching Literacy in Tennessee document: https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/readready/documents/rpt_teaching_literacy_in_tn.pdf

Smith, 1997; Simmons, 2015). When considering different evidence-based options of instruction for students, it is imperative that teachers continuously monitor selected methods for effectiveness and student progress.

Foundational Skills

Explicit instruction in foundational skills should be provided for all students, including those who display characteristics of dyslexia. These foundational literacy skills can be defined as a set of skills that develop students' understanding and knowledge of print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, word composition, and fluency; these skills are sequenced and serve as a platform for later competence and proficiency in reading and writing across text types and disciplines.

Explicit instruction, informed by multiple assessments that identify students' specific skill knowledge and needs, immerses students in instruction focused on phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, alphabet knowledge, sound/symbol recognition, and decoding skills.

With the reciprocal nature of reading and writing, it is helpful for students to apply foundational literacy skills while both decoding and encoding connected text. The word composition and sentence composition sections of the Tennessee academic standards specifically address elements of strong Tier I instruction focused on encoding at the word and sentence levels. As students practice these basic foundational skills, this learning is then transferred into the writing process with more lengthy text.

During core instruction in the early years, foundational reading instruction should be both explicit and systematic. As students progress through the grades, they are provided purposeful and intentional instruction that is guided by age- and developmentally appropriate assessments. Starting in the early years and across the grades, students practice their newly acquired foundational skills within authentic reading and writing activities that develop students' independent applications of phonics to pronounce unknown words.

Reading/Listening Comprehension

While explicit instruction in foundational skills is necessary for all students, including those with characteristics of dyslexia, this instruction alone is insufficient for achieving reading proficiency. Both skills-based competencies (i.e., letter knowledge, decoding, phonological awareness, concepts about print, high-frequency words, and oral reading fluency) and knowledge-based competencies (i.e., vocabulary acquisition, concept development, and reading comprehension) need to be taught in balance in order for students to progress in their reading development[6] (). Students need opportunities to apply both skills-based competencies and knowledge-based competencies in authentic reading contexts. Thus, instruction should include the use of high-quality and content-rich texts for: monitoring and predicting; vocabulary enrichment; integration of reading, writing, and spelling; and discussions that support reading comprehension.[7]

Vocabulary

Vocabulary acquisition is a critical component of reading comprehension. In order for one's vocabulary to grow at an adequate rate, one needs to read or be exposed to a variety of text on a regular basis. Students need to learn 3000–4000 new words per year[8]; students can reasonably learn 300–500 words through direct instruction at a rate of 8–10 words per week.[9,10] This means that only 10–15 percent of new vocabulary can reasonably be learned through explicit instruction, and the remaining 85–90 percent of vocabulary comes from reading and listening. Struggling readers tend to read less, so the vocabulary gap between them and

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[6] Paris, 2005

[7] Vellutino, 1991; Vellutino, Fletcher, Snowling, & Scanlon, 2004

[8] Graves & Watts-Taffe, 2002

[9]Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002

[10] Chall, 1996

proficient readers grows each year.[11] Additionally, this gap makes decoding unfamiliar words more difficult.[12]

This vocabulary gap contributes to the secondary consequences on comprehension for students with the characteristics of dyslexia, as "students with restricted vocabulary have declining comprehension scores in later elementary years."[6,13] "One of the most enduring findings in reading research is the extent to which students' vocabulary knowledge relates to their reading comprehension."[14] Students need access to texts at their comprehension level, even when decoding is far more difficult. Districts may consider assistive technology to allow students to access text through listening when decoding is difficult.

Differentiation

For all students, including those with characteristics of dyslexia, a wide range of assessment tools, including diagnostics, provide specific information about their foundational skills, text comprehension, and knowledge development. They also offer opportunities for students to demonstrate what they do know in addition to providing information for educators to evaluate the instructional conditions that best support students' learning and engagement. For example, assessments might allow students to demonstrate their knowledge effectively in a variety of ways, including writing or speaking. When teachers have a clear understanding of both students' strengths and needs, they can utilize scaffolds and accommodations that provide students with assistance in targeted areas.

As explained in the department's *Teacher Differentiation Handbook*: K–2 (p.7), "when teachers differentiate, they make proactive adjustments to **content, process**, and **product,** according to patterns in student readiness, interest, or learning profile using instructional strategies informed by standards-aligned learning goals; pre- and formative assessment; and interest/preference surveys and inventories, implemented through varied instructional

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[11] Stanovich, 1986

[12] Ehri, 2002

[13] Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990

[14] Osborn & Heibert, 2004

groupings, flexible classroom routines, and efficient management tools and techniques in the context of supportive, growth-oriented, community-centered classrooms."

Thus, content, process, and product goals are informed by assessing patterns in students' readiness, interests, and learning profile (Tomlinson, 2014), as we describe below.

- *Content goals* address the skills and information students will need to learn to reach their academic goals. For students demonstrating characteristics of dyslexia, attention is given to developing foundational skills that students need, as identified by multiple assessments, in combination with knowledge-building competencies.
- *Process goals* draw attention to the activities that are the most appropriate for engaging learning. For students demonstrating characteristics of dyslexia, attention is given to multisensory modes of teaching and learning that capitalize on their comprehension strengths and giving access to read alouds for grade-level text.
- *Product goals* focus on how students demonstrate and build on what they know and understand as a result of the instruction. For students demonstrating characteristics of dyslexia, attention is given to the various ways that students can show what they know, such as verbally giving information for assessments or using a word processor for written information.

As teachers consider what they want students to know, understand, and be able to do, they consider different pathways for learning that help students reach their goals. In other words, teachers are able to make adjustments within the content, process, or product by gaining a clearer understanding of each student's readiness, interests, and learning profiles, as offered below.

- *Readiness* for learning new information is determined through multiple instruments that measure students' ongoing proximity to meeting content goals. Are students learning the skills and content that is taught? What areas continue to present difficulties, requiring further instruction?
- *Student interests* that motivate learning are gained through multiple means, such as inventories, surveys, or interviews. Formative assessments that include teacher observations and student conferences are also useful for gauging students' interests.
- *Learning profiles* that identify students' preferred approaches to learning (i.e., learning styles, intelligence preference) guide instructional practices and accommodations. Formative

assessments, teacher observations, or student interviews help teachers distinguish individual learning styles and methods that are optimal for learning.

Successful differentiation is based on the identification of each student's strengths and need(s). First, educators determine students' readiness for learning new information, their interests, and learning profile; then, they effectively plan to meet their content, process, and product need(s). For additional guidance on providing optimal differentiated instruction, educators should consult the Differentiation Inventory for Classroom Observation to help assess differentiation in the classroom (see Appendix G).

Section VIII: Dyslexia-Specific Interventions

Once a school identifies that a student shows characteristics of dyslexia, it is important to provide aligned interventions. Districts should evaluate their existing intervention resources to ensure they include evidence-based interventions that are:

- **Explicit** – skills explained, directly taught, and modeled by the teacher
- **Systematic and cumulative** – introduces concepts in a definite, logical sequence; concepts are ordered from simple to more complex
- **Multi-sensory** – links listening, speaking, reading, and writing together; involves movement and "hands-on" learning
- **Language-based** – addresses all levels of language, including sounds (phonemes), symbols (graphemes), meaningful word parts (morphemes), word and phrase meanings (semantics), and sentence formation (syntax)
- **Aligned to individual student need** – should address the skill deficit(s) identified through targeted assessments.

School districts may refer to the tools used in the department's intervention peer review process to assist in their review of existing resources and/or the selection of new intervention programs. Through the peer review process, vendors and products were evaluated independently by multiple reviewers, and after compiling all evaluation data, the department created an intervention product guide found on the Dyslexia Advisory Council webpage which

identifies each vendor and product as having “met” or “not met” the evaluated categories. This is not an exhaustive list as not all vendors submitted their intervention products for review. Also, please note that districts are not required to purchase or use interventions evaluated through this process. School districts may apply the same rubric, also found on the Dyslexia Advisory Council webpage, in their review of additional resources. A Dyslexia-Specific Intervention Checklist is also included in Appendix H for use when choosing intervention programs.

Section IX: Progress Monitoring

Per current legislation, Public Chapter No.1058, schools must monitor the progress of students who are provided tiered interventions using tools designed to measure the effectiveness of intervention. This means that students should be progress monitored regularly with reliable and valid measures that address the targeted skills addressed through intervention to determine if the student is making expected gains or if the team needs to take a deeper look regarding reasons associated with insufficient progress. (e.g., Is the intervention implemented with fidelity? Does it address the root skill deficit? Are there factors such as attendance or behavior impacting the effectiveness of the intervention? Does the student need a different intervention?)

Based on the current RTI^2 model, progress monitoring measures should be administered weekly or every other week. If a student is not making adequate progress in a tiered intervention, the intervention may need to be changed. Research suggests that 8–10 data points are needed to establish a reliable trend when making data-based decisions to provide a more intensive intervention; however, the need to make changes to an intervention can be identified with as few as four data points. The team should consider factors influencing the performance of the student as data are collected. Only one or two variables should be changed at a time to measure effectiveness of the change.

When deciding on the appropriate progress monitoring tool for a student, the survey-level assessment completed as part of the screening process may assist in determining which instrument is most sensitive to change. However, if the student is progress monitored off grade level, the student should also be monitored at least monthly on a grade-level instrument as well in order to help track rate of improvement and the achievement gap as compared to same-

grade peers. See the RTI[2] manual for more guidance on progress monitoring and data-based decision making.

Section X: Accommodations

It is important to consider a student's access to the general education curriculum. Access is the opportunity and ability for an individual to participate in the instruction, discussions, activities, products, and assessments that are provided to all students within a public school. Accommodations are provided to "level the playing field." They are intended to offset the effects of a disability and to provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge and skills. Assistive technology (e.g., any equipment or product such as audio books, word processors, word prediction software) is a type of accommodation intended to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of children with disabilities.

Accommodations must be determined on an individual basis and specific to task and/or content area. Accommodations may require eligibility for Section 504 or an Individual Education Program (IEP); for a list of accommodations available for state testing, visit the department's accessibility and accommodations webpage.

The following accommodations are provided as examples and may not be appropriate for all students with characteristics of dyslexia[15]:

Text Reading

- Provide text-to-speech technology, allowing the student to hear digital text. This allows for digit textbooks and digital books to be read to the student in part or whole as the student follows along in the text.

- Provide audio books for literature and grade-level text. The student should have a copy of the text in front of him/her while listening to help focus his/her attention, to increase his/her visual memory of words, and so that he/she may take advantage of graphics within the text. (See www.learningally.org or www.bookshare.org for low cost and free

[15] Tennessee Center for the Study and Treatment of Dyslexia: Commonly Adopted Accommodations to Support Students with Characteristics of Dyslexia

audiobooks for schools and families; ebooks, which can be converted to audiofile, are another good option.)

- Oral testing or prompting upon request (i.e., allowing a student to request that certain words or text be read to him/her) when allowable.

Spelling and Writing

- Allow use of a personal 'vocabulary' notebook, a dictionary, a speller's dictionary, a Franklin Speller, or similar device for in-class assignments and to assist with correct spelling. (His/her spelling skills will need to be at a fifth to sixth grade level for this device to be helpful.)

- Allow Access to a computer for written assignments. A program, such as Kurzweil or Dragon, with word prediction and text-to-speech to compose writing assignments may be helpful as s/he gets older.

- Use of a recorder to record lectures or directions, especially as s/he gets older (e.g., Livescribe Pen, www.livescribe.com).

Section XI: Professional Development Resources

The department offers professional development on reading intervention (including dyslexia) at no cost to educators through the Centers for Regional Excellence (CORE).[16] In addition, the division of special populations will offer professional development opportunities to improve reading intervention practices for students with disabilities (including those with dyslexia) through web-based modules and regional support trainings. Targeted districted support is

[16] Reading course information can be found here: https://www.tn.gov/education/tdoe-educator-training/tdoe2-reading-course.html

available for districts identified as needs intervention status based on the indicators associated with poor performance on statewide assessments.

As indicated in the RTI[2] manual, an effective intervention is implemented by highly trained personnel and is implemented with fidelity, which is confirmed based on a measurement. Therefore, LEAs are responsible for training intervention providers on interventions used. If the intervention is not implemented with integrity of at least 80 percent or greater, the interventionist should be supported with training until integrity reaches 80 percent.

Professional learning opportunities provided by the department can be found on the department's special populations and student support professional development webpage.

Section XII: Reporting by School Districts

As required in Public Chapter 1058, the council will report to the education committee of the Senate and the education instruction and programs committee of the House of Representatives. The report shall include:

- the number of students screened and the number of students provided with dyslexia intervention services;
- information about specific accommodations needed for students who are provided dyslexia intervention services taking the annual state-mandated assessment or other state- or district-mandated assessments;
- descriptions from the districts that provided dyslexia intervention services of the intervention services provided to students; and
- the TVAAS growth data, when available, for the students receiving dyslexia intervention services.

Districts will report the dyslexia intervention services they provide in their LEA district plans through ePlan. In addition, districts will indicate through their Student Information System (SIS) the students that are receiving dyslexia-specific interventions so that information regarding

their TVAAS growth data and accommodation usage can be collected at the state level. No information identifying individual students shall be included in the report.[17]

Section XIII: Parent-Initiated Dyslexia Evaluations

A dyslexia evaluation is not required for a school to provide interventions to address characteristics of dyslexia; however, if a parent chooses to seek an evaluation (outside of the school system) for dyslexia and shares the results of the evaluation obtained at private expense with the school district, the school district must consider the results of the evaluation in any decision made with respect to the provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE).

Section XIV: Special Education and Dyslexia

The term ***Specific Learning Disability*** means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations, and that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Such term includes conditions such as perceptual disabilities (e.g., visual processing), brain injury that is not caused by an external physical force, minimal brain dysfunction, **dyslexia**, and developmental aphasia. Specific Learning Disability does not include a learning problem that is primarily the result of Visual Impairment; Hearing Impairment; Orthopedic Impairment; Intellectual Disability; Emotional Disturbance; Limited English Proficiency; or, Environmental or Cultural Disadvantage

Literacy deficits should be addressed through the least restrictive environment for individual students within a continuum of services. School teams, in collaboration with parents and families, should consider all available information to develop a plan to address the individual

[17] Professional Development information can be found here: http://www.tn.gov/education/article/special-education-training

needs of each student. This continuum of support may include tiered interventions through RTI², accommodations provided through Section 504, and/or special education interventions. If a student is not successful with interventions provided through general education (i.e., RTI²), s/he *may* be referred for evaluation[18] to consider eligibility for special education as this may indicate a possible specific learning disability.

The criteria for identifying a student with a specific learning disability are established by state and federal law. In Tennessee, this includes a student's response to research-based intervention. Although eligibility for special education *includes* students with dyslexia, students with dyslexia must meet state criteria for a specific learning disability in order to receive special education services. Dyslexia is typically associated with a specific learning disability in basic reading, which includes foundational skills related to decoding (i.e., phonemic awareness, letter/sound knowledge, sight word recognition, phonics, and word analysis).[19]

Pursuant to IDEA Regulations at 34 C.F.R. §300.301(b), a parent or the LEA may refer a child for an evaluation to determine if the child is a child with a disability. If a student is suspected of having an educational disability at any time, s/he may be referred by the student's teacher, parent, or outside sources for an initial comprehensive evaluation based on referral concerns. The use of RTI² strategies may not be used to delay or deny the provision of a full and individual evaluation, pursuant to 34 CFR §§300.304-300.311, to a child suspected of having a disability under 34 CFR §300.8. For more information on the rights to an initial evaluation, refer to Memorandum 11-07[20] from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

It is not required that the school team identify dyslexia in order to meet criteria for a specific learning disability; however, the team should consider referral concerns and determine the most appropriate assessment plan to identify student deficits and develop a plan based on a continuum of services in the least restrictive environment. There is nothing in IDEA that prevents the usage of the term "dyslexia" in evaluation, eligibility determinations, or IEP

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[18] IDEA and evaluation: CRF §300.304 (b)

[19] Standards for SLD Eligibility criteria:

http://www.tn.gov/assets/entities/education/attachments/se_eligibility_sld_standards.pdf

[20] OSEP 11-07 Memo https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/osep11-07rtimemo.pdf

documents (e.g., within basic reading present levels of performance, adverse impact statements, etc.). [21]

For more information regarding characteristics of dyslexia that teams may choose to assess as part of a comprehensive evaluation, refer to https://dyslexiaida.org/testing-and-evaluation/.

Special education interventions are considered the most intensive and are provided based on a student's eligibility and his/her need for specialized instruction. The student will remain in the core instruction (Tier I) and will have access to tiered intervention within the general education curriculum to the greatest extent possible. The same problem-solving approach used in the general education RTI² process will be used in special education. Furthermore, interventions will be tailored to the student in the area of identified disability (i.e., dyslexia-specific interventions when appropriate), and progress toward their IEP goals will be monitored weekly or every other week. If students fail to respond to intervention as a result of the provision of special education services, an IEP team meeting will be reconvened.

[21] Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Dear Colleague letter (2015): https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/guidance-on-dyslexia-10-2015.pdf

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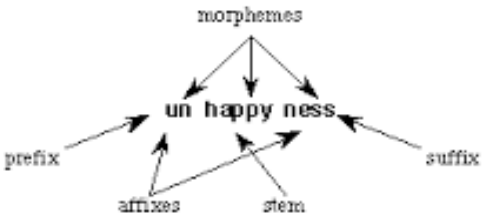
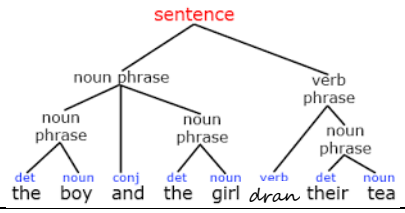
Appendix A: Glossary

Area	***Definition***	***Example/Explanation***
Phonological Awareness	broad category comprising a range of understandings related to the sounds of words and word parts	Includes: *listening *rhyming *blending *alliteration *segmenting *syllables
Phonemic Awareness	the ability to notice, think about, and work with the individual sounds in spoken words *deals only with sounds, not letters *a subcomponent of phonological awareness	*identifying and combining/blending the separate sounds of a word to say the word ("/c/ /a/ /t/ - *cat*.") *also, verbally manipulating sounds, changing "cat" to "mat"
Phonics/ Sound-Symbol Association	the understanding and use of the alphabetic principle, that there is a predictable relationship between phonemes (the sounds in spoken language) and graphemes (the letters that represent those sounds) in written language and that this information is used to decode and spell words	"coin" is decoded as /c/ /oi/ /n/ and spelled as c-oi-n
Syllable Structure	a syllable is a word part that contains a vowel or, in spoken language, a vowel sound (e-vent, news-pa-per) *syllabication is the act of breaking words into syllables	Six commonly used syllable types: *Closed: cat *Open: he *Vowel-consonant-e (vce): like *Consonant-l-e: candle *R-controlled: star *Vowel pairs: count, rainbow

Morphology	the study of how the aspects of language structure are related to the ways words are formed from prefixes, roots, and suffixes, and how words are related to each other	
Rapid Naming	the ability to connect visual and verbal information by giving the appropriate names to common objects, colors, letters, and digits (quickly naming what is seen)	seeing a picture of an airplane and being able to quickly retrieve and say the word “airplane”
Syntax	the arrangement of words and phrases to create well-formed sentences in a language *formulaic	
Semantics	the meaning, or an interpretation of the meaning, of a word, phrase, sentence, or text *interpretive	*subtle shades of meaning: "destination" vs. "last stop" *multiple meanings: "train" (railcars) vs. "train" (to teach) *idiom: "the ball is in your court" means the next step is up to you
Survey-level Assessment	a process of determining the most basic skill-area deficit and which skill/instructional level a student has mastered; effective in determining appropriate, realistic goals for a student and helps identify the specific deficit in order to determine accurate rate of improvement and growth	*Phonological Awareness Skills Screener (PASS), and Phonics and Word Reading Survey (PWRS) can be found here:* https://www.tn.gov/education/instruction/tdoe-rti2/rti2-rediect/rti-administrators/rti-intervention-resources.html

Appendix B: "Say Dyslexia" bill (Public Chapter 1058 of the Acts of 2016)

State of Tennessee

PUBLIC CHAPTER NO. 1058

SENATE BILL NO. 2635

By Gresham, Gardenhire, Tracy, Green, Massey

Substituted for: House Bill No. 2616

By Pitts, Keisling, Kevin Brooks, Shaw, Mark White, Moody, Byrd, Love, Dunn, Harry Brooks, Goins, Lynn, Dunlap, Rogers, Reedy, DeBerry, Akbari, Cooper, Terry, Camper, Mitchell, Butt, Johnson, Williams, Hazlewood, Powers, Kane, Fitzhugh, Smith, Clemmons, Powell, Armstrong, Cameron Sexton, Gravitt, Stewart, Sparks, Eldridge, Todd, Hardaway, Turner

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 4, Chapter 29, Part 2 and Title 49, relative to dyslexia.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 1, Part 2, is amended by adding the following as a new section:

(a)(1) The department of education shall develop procedures for identifying characteristics of dyslexia through the universal screening process required by the existing RTI² framework or other available means.

(2) The dyslexia screening procedures shall include phonological and phonemic awareness, sound symbol recognition, alphabet knowledge, decoding skills, rapid naming, and encoding skills.

(3) The dyslexia screening procedures shall be implemented by every LEA.

(4) Dyslexia screening may be requested for any student by the student's parent or guardian, teacher, counselor, or school psychologist.

(b) Following the universal screening procedures conducted by the LEA, the LEA shall convene a school-based problem solving team to analyze screening and progress monitoring data to assist teachers in planning and implementing appropriate instruction and evidence-based interventions for all students, including those students who exhibit the characteristics of dyslexia. Guidance may include suggestions of appropriate tiered interventions, dyslexia-specific interventions, academic accommodations as appropriate, and access to assistive technology.

(c) If the dyslexia screening conducted by the LEA indicates that a student has characteristics of dyslexia, the LEA shall:

(1) Notify the student's parent or legal guardian;

(2) Provide the student's parent or legal guardian with information and resource material regarding dyslexia;

(3) Provide the student with appropriate tiered dyslexia-specific intervention through its RTI² framework; and

(4) Monitor the student's progress using a tool designed to measure the effectiveness of the intervention.

(d) The department shall provide appropriate professional development resources for educators in the area of identification of and intervention methods for students with dyslexia.

(e)(1) There is created a dyslexia advisory council for the purpose of advising the department in matters relating to dyslexia. The council shall be composed of nine (9) members as follows:

(A) The commissioner of education, or the commissioner's designee, who shall be an ex officio member of the council and serve as chair;

(B) An education specialist from the department, appointed by the commissioner for a term of three (3) years;

(C) A representative from a dyslexia advocacy group, appointed by the commissioner for a term of three (3) years;

(D) A special education teacher with an understanding of dyslexia, appointed by the commissioner for a term of three (3) years;

(E) An elementary school teacher, appointed by the commissioner for a term of three (3) years;

(F) A middle school teacher, appointed by the commissioner for a term of three (3) years;

(G) A high school teacher, appointed by the commissioner for a term of three (3) years; and

(H) A parent of a child with dyslexia, appointed by the commissioner for a term of three (3) years;

(I) A licensed speech pathologist, appointed by the commissioner for a term of three (3) years.

(2) The terms of the council members shall commence July 1, 2016.

(3) When a member of the council's term expires, the appointing authority who originally appointed that member shall appoint a successor to serve the same length of term as the departing member. A member may be appointed to successive terms.

(4) If a seat on the council is vacated prior to the end of the member's term, the commissioner shall appoint a replacement to fill the vacant seat for the unfinished term.

(5) The members of the council shall serve without compensation; provided, that members of the council shall be reimbursed for travel expenses in conformity with the comprehensive state travel regulations as promulgated by the commissioner of finance and administration and approved by the attorney general and reporter.

(6)(A) The council shall annually submit a report to the education committee of the senate and the education instruction and programs committee of the house of representatives.

(B) The report required by subdivision (f)(6)(A) shall include:

(i) The number of students screened and the number of students provided with dyslexia intervention services;

(ii) Information about specific accommodations needed for students who are provided dyslexia intervention services taking the annual state mandated assessment or other state or LEA mandated assessments;

(iii) Descriptions, from the LEAs that provided dyslexia intervention services, of the intervention services provided to students; and

(iv) The TVAAS growth data, when available, for the students receiving dyslexia intervention services.

(C) No information identifying individual students shall be included in the report.

(7) The council shall meet at least quarterly. A quorum consists of a majority of the membership of the council.

(f) As used in this section:

(1) "Dyslexia-specific intervention" means evidence-based, specialized reading, writing, and spelling instruction that is multisensory in nature, equipping students to simultaneously use multiple senses, such as vision, hearing, touch, and movement. Dyslexia-specific intervention employs direct instruction of systematic and cumulative content, with the sequence beginning with the easiest and most basic elements and progress methodically to more difficult material. Each step must also be based on those already learned. Components of dyslexia-specific intervention include instruction targeting phonological awareness, sound symbol association, syllable structure, morphology, syntax, and semantics; and

(2) "RTI^2" means Response to Instruction and Intervention, which is a framework designed to identify both struggling and advanced students in order to provide them with appropriate interventions in their specific areas of need. RTI^2 relies on the premise of high-quality core instruction, data-based decision making, and research-based interventions aligned to students' needs.

SECTION 2. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 4-29-239(a), is amended by inserting the following as an appropriately designated subdivision:

( ) Dyslexia advisory council, created by Section 1 of this act.

SECTION 3. For the purpose of appointing members to the dyslexia advisory council, this act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it. For all other purposes, this act shall take effect July 1, 2016, the public welfare requiring it.

SENATE BILL NO. 2635

PASSED: April 19, 2016

RON RAMSEY
SPEAKER OF THE SENATE

BETH HARWELL, *SPEAKER*
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APPROVED this 28th day of April 2016

BILL HASLAM, *GOVERNOR*

Appendix C: Dyslexia Advisory Council

During the 2016 Legislation Session, the general assembly passed the "Say Dyslexia" bill (Public Chapter 1058 of the Acts of 2016), which requires school districts to screen for characteristics of dyslexia through their existing Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI^2) procedures and to provide "dyslexia-specific tiered interventions" for students that demonstrate a need. In addition, the legislation requires the department to convene a dyslexia advisory council to provide input and feedback on matters related to dyslexia. The council will meet throughout each school year and will report on their work to increase dyslexia screening and identification. This report will be shared with districts, stakeholders, and the general assembly.

Members of the Dyslexia Advisory Council:

Name	Position
Theresa Nicholls	Director of School Psychology, Services, Tennessee Department of Education
Eileen Miller	Advocate, Decoding Dyslexia Tennessee
Allison McAvoy	Special Education Teacher, Hamilton County Department of Education
Melissa Miller-Benson	Elementary School Teacher, The Bodine School
Mercedes Chartrand	Middle School Teacher, Clarksville-Montgomery County School System
Briana Patrick	High School Teacher, Lauderdale County Schools
Anna Thorsen	Parent
Morgan Ashworth	Speech Language Pathologist, Loudon County School District

The council also includes three ex-officio members with expertise in dyslexia: Emily Dempster with the International Dyslexia Association; Erin Alexander, a school psychologist and assistant director for clinical services at the Tennessee Center for Dyslexia; and Susan Porter, a district lead coach of instruction with Metro Nashville Public Schools.

Appendix D: Teacher Observation Questionnaire for Dyslexia

Student Name _____ Grade _____
Teacher _____ School _____
Date _____

Please circle the term that indicates the degree of your concern regarding each skill area.

Phonological Awareness Skills

This student has:

Difficulty recognizing or reproducing rhyming words	Rarely	Often
Difficulty isolating sounds in beginning, final, and/or medial position	Rarely	Often
Difficulty segmenting individual sounds in words	Rarely	Often

Alphabet

This student has:

Difficulty learning or recalling names of letters	Rarely	Often
Difficulty learning or recalling sounds of letters	Rarely	Often

Decoding and Word Recognition

This student has:

Difficulty sounding out unfamiliar words	Rarely	Often
Difficulty reading words in isolation	Rarely	Often

Fluency

This student has:

Difficulty reading accurately in context	Rarely	Often
Difficulty reading grade-level material at expected rate	Rarely	Often

Spelling

This student has:

Difficulty memorizing words for spelling tests	Rarely	Often
Difficulty spelling in context	Rarely	Often

Comprehension

This student has difficulty with reading comprehension	Rarely	Often

Written Expression

This student has:

Difficulty constructing sentences	Rarely	Often
Difficulty organizing grade-appropriate written compositions	Rarely	Often
Difficulty producing sufficient written output	Rarely	Often

Cognitive/Academic Ability

The student appears to have intellectual ability equal to or above grade-level peers	No	Yes
The student has grade-level math calculation skills	No	Yes
The student has grade-level math reasoning skills	No	Yes

The student has reading difficulties that are unexpected compared to other abilities	No	Yes

Oral Language

When listening, this student has:

Difficulty understanding verbal directions	Rarely	Often
Difficulty understanding stories read to him/her	Rarely	Often

When speaking, this student has:

Difficulty acquiring new vocabulary	Rarely	Often
Difficulty finding the right word	Rarely	Often
Difficulty speaking in grammatically correct sentences	Rarely	Often
Difficulty explaining ideas or elaborating on thoughts	Rarely	Often

Attention

This student:

Displays difficulty organizing time and materials	Rarely	Often
Is easily distracted by sights or sounds	Rarely	Often
Does many things too quickly	Rarely	Often
Is often overactive or fidgety	Rarely	Often
Is inconsistent with production of classwork and homework assignments	Rarely	Often

Handwriting

This student:

Is slow with handwriting and copying tasks	Rarely	Often
Displays overall poor-quality/illegible handwriting on written assignments	Rarely	Often

Student's Academic Development

English is a second language for this student	No	Yes
This student was retained in _____ grade		
This student has been in special programs (Special Education, Reading Recovery, etc.)	No	Yes

Please identify these: _____

_____

_____

Suggested work samples to include:

1. The student's most recent spelling test
2. A sample of the student's unedited writing (journal entry, creative story, etc.)
3. The student's most recent progress report or report card
4. A copy of the most recent TPRI/early reading assessment results

Adapted from the Teacher Observation Questionnaire for Dyslexia, Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children.

Appendix E: Example Survey Level Assessments

Required Areas	Example Survey-Level Assessments and Diagnostic Measures
Phonological and phonemic awareness	DIBELS: First Sound Fluency (FSF) (off grade level) DIBELS: Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF) (off grade level) AIMSweb: Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF) (off grade level) easyCBM: Phoneme Segmenting (off grade level) Phonological Awareness Skills Screener (PASS) Curriculum-based skills checks Comprehensive Tests of Phonological Processing-2nd Edition (CTOPP-2) Phonological Awareness Test-2nd Edition (PAT-2)
Sound-symbol recognition	DIBELS: Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF) (off grade level) AIMSweb: Letter Sound Fluency (LSF) (off grade level) easyCBM: Letter Sounds (LS) (off grade level) Phonological Awareness Test-2nd Edition (PAT-2) Word Identification and Spelling Test (WIST) Curriculum-based skills check (Letter sounds)

Alphabetic knowledge	DIBELS: Letter Naming Fluency (LNF) (off grade level) AIMSweb: Letter Naming Fluency (LNF) (off grade level) easyCBM: Letter Names (LN) (off grade level) Phonological Awareness Test-2nd Edition (PAT-2) Curriculum-based skills check (Letter names)
Decoding skills	DIBELS: Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF) (off grade level) DIBELS: Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) (off grade level, with error analysis) AIMSweb: Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF) (off grade level) AIMSweb: Reading Curriculum Based Measure (RCBM) (off grade level, with error analysis) easyCBM: Passage Reading Fluency (PRF) (off grade level, with error analysis) Phonics and Word Reading Survey (PWRS) Phonological Awareness Test-2nd Edition (PAT-2) Qualitative Reading Inventory-5th Edition (QRI-5) Test of Word Reading Efficiency-2nd Edition (TOWRE-2)
Encoding skills	AIMSweb: Spelling (off grade level, with running records of errors/accuracy)

	Words Their Way Spelling Inventory Development Spelling Assessment (DSA) Word Identification and Spelling Test (WIST)
Rapid naming	Rapid Automatized Naming and Rapid Alternating Stimulus Tests (RAN/RAS) Comprehensive Tests of Phonological Processing-2nd Edition (CTOPP-2)

Appendix F: Sample Parent Letter

Date:

Dear Parent/Guardian of _____,

Our team at [school name] is committed to identifying and addressing the needs of each individual student to understand and maximize their potential. All students are given reading, math, and writing screenings throughout the school year.

These screenings are part of RTI^2, Response to Instruction and Intervention, which is a tiered instruction program used for all students. This multi-tier approach allows us to efficiently address the educational needs of students who may require additional support and/or other types of instruction.

All students receive core reading, math, and writing instruction in the general education classroom (RTI^2 Tier I), which provides rich learning opportunities aligned with the Tennessee academic standards. In addition to Tier I instruction, students whose screenings show the need for more assistance will receive the intervention in RTI^2 Tier II or Tier III. Generally, this means small group instruction focused on the area in which the student is struggling.

Sometimes difficulties in reading can be attributed to characteristics that are associated with dyslexia. Based on performance within [school name]'s universal screening process, your child has been identified with difficulties in reading in the following areas:

- Phonological awareness: a broad category comprising a range of understandings related to the sounds of words and word parts
- Phonemic awareness: the ability to notice, think about, and work with the individual sounds in spoken words
- Alphabet knowledge: understanding that letters represent sounds which form words
- Sound/Symbol recognition: understanding that there is a predictable relationship between phonemes (sounds in spoken language) and graphemes (the letters that represent those sounds)
- Decoding skills: using knowledge of letters and sounds to recognize and analyze a printed word to connect it to the spoken word it represents (also referred to as "word attack skills")

- Encoding skills: translating speech into writing (spelling)
- Rapid naming: ability to connect visual and verbal information by giving the appropriate names to common objects, colors, letters, and digits (quickly naming what is seen)

When students struggle with any of these reading areas, dyslexia-specific interventions may be effective to address the skill deficit. Students requiring intervention in these areas do not necessarily have dyslexia but could benefit from this type of instructional support.

Recommendations for accommodations, interventions, and specific programs will be developed, monitored, and communicated with you through our school's problem-solving teams.

Reports on your child's progress will be sent to you at least every four and a half weeks.

We are committed to your child's academic success and are glad to have the opportunity to provide your child with the necessary instruction and supports. For more information about characteristics of dyslexia, testing, classroom accommodations, and resources, please visit the Dyslexia Resource Guide at [insert link] or request a printed copy. To request a copy or if you have questions, please contact [name] at [phone and email].

To learn more about RTI[2], please contact STEP's Parent Training and Information Center for workshops and/or training materials at www.tnstep.org or call 800-280-7837.

Example Parent Information Resources:

Local Education Agencies are required to provide parents with dyslexia-specific resources. The following are examples of parent friendly resource documents:

IDA Dyslexia Basics:
https://dyslexiaida.org/dyslexia-basics/
https://app.box.com/s/zflmi0e4a6xjt7tey3i9pw8nrmezftaw (in Spanish)

Kids Health Factsheet:
http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/dyslexia-factsheet.html

Understanding Dyslexia: (NCLD)
https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/child-learning-disabilities/dyslexia/understanding-dyslexia#item0

Appendix G: Differentiation Inventory

Differentiation Rubric				
Classroom Elements	**Novice**	**Apprentice**	**Practitioner**	**Expert**
Environment	o Flat affect o Fixed mindset evident o Low teacher-student connections o Few meaningful student interactions o Little student voice	o Student-aware o Growth mindset about some students o General respect o Some teacher-student connections o Seeks some input from students	o Clear teacher emotional support for students o Teacher growth mindset evident o Sense of community o High level of respect o Sporadic student voice	o Full teacher-student partnership o Teacher and student growth mindset evident o Team of learners o Learner and learning centered o Consistent evidence of student voice
Curriculum	o Low goal clarity (no evident KUDs) o Fact/skill based, with low emphasis on thinking/understanding o Low relevance o Sticks to the script/text	o Greater goal clarity o More thoughtful curriculum o Sporadic engagement o Occasional emphasis on understanding	o KUDs evident in planning o Frequent planning for engagement and understanding o Thinking often emphasized o Time and support for meaning making sometimes built in	o KUDs clear to students o High engagement for full range of students o Understanding and thinking central o Student voice incorporated into curriculum design o Supports “teaching up”
Assessment	o Assessment of learning dominates o Little/no use of formative assessment o Grades emphasized over feedback o Low alignment between KUDs and assessments o Right-answer emphasis o Repetition of facts and skills emphasized	o Some assessment for learning o Use of formative assessment, but little evidence of resulting instructional change o General alignment with KUDs o Feedback is general/vague o Growing emphasis on understanding	o Regular assessment for learning o Good alignment with KUDs o Understanding and thinking called for regularly o Feedback emphasized over grades o Some evidence of modifications based on formative assessment information	o Assessment as learning o Tight alignment with KUDs o Actionable feedback o Useful student-to-student feedback o Regular evidence of instructional planning based on assessment information o Student goal setting evident o Differentiated assessments

Differentiation Rubric				
Classroom Elements	**Novice**	**Apprentice**	**Practitioner**	**Expert**
Instruction	o One-size-fits-all/fixed, rigid o Shows vague alignment to KUDs o Teacher-centered o Take-it-or-leave-it approach o Emphasizes rote learning, right answers o Little instructional grouping or uses fixed groups	o Shows awareness of varied needs o Provides some choice o Uses largely reactive differentiation o Shows general alignment with KUDs o Calls for some thinking/understanding o Shows more planning for interest/learning profile differences than readiness o Features mostly low-prep differentiation strategies	o Features consistent, proactive differentiation o Shows good alignment with KUDs o Attends to readiness, interest, learning profile o Shows flexible use of some classroom elements o Features respectful tasks o Features some flexible grouping o Incorporates some “teaching up”	o Regularly attends to readiness, interest, learning profile o Is tightly aligned with KUDs o Allows for student autonomy o Allows for strong student voice in instructional design o Features consistent use of flexible grouping o Features consistent “teaching up”
Classroom Leadership and Management	o Rule oriented o Compliance focused o Teacher directed o Lockstep, tight ship, rigid o Low trust of students o “Manages” students	o Teacher-owned routines with some flexibility provided o Incorporates some conversations with students about differentiation o Some flexible use of time, materials, and space o More evidence of teacher studying and responding to students o Teacher still sometimes concerned with loss of control o Uneven teaching of routines to support success	o Regular conversations with students about differentiation o Teacher regularly seeks student input on routines o Teacher uses many classroom elements flexibly o Teacher balances need for flexibility with need for predictability o General careful teaching of routines to support student success	o Differentiated instruction philosophy guides teacher’s thinking and planning o Evident trust of students o Regular, rich conversations with students about differentiation o Teacher leads students and manages routines o Students partner with teacher to solve problems related to routines and processes o High student ownership of learning

Differentiation Rubric				
Classroom Elements	**Novice**	**Apprentice**	**Practitioner**	**Expert**
Culture and Collaboration	o Collaboration takes place in passing o Evidence of a culture of collaboration is minimal o Student expectations may be set but are not aligned to all aspects of the instructional day o Planning time is not a priority o Low trust of others' expertise	o Some conversation about student instruction takes place in the school but there is no set time or space for the collaboration o Data is classroom owned and not shared o Communication among teachers is limited to staff meetings and email (forced) o Some trust is visible in planned and structured meetings only	o Teachers regularly seek input from each other for instructional planning o Data with student expectations is shared o Communication takes place among all teachers via meetings, shared documents, online portals, teacher learning time, etc. o Trust is established and can be seen through expectations, planning, and understanding of student data and goals	o School staff are provided time and space for co-planning o General and special education teachers communicate regarding the needs of all students o Student goals are established based on a continuum of support based on all educator input o Trust is automatic, visible in conversations, planning, and the structure of the school day

Adapted from: Tomlinson, C. A., & Murphy, M. (2015). Leading for Differentiation: Growing Teachers Who Grow Kids. Alexandria: ASCD.

Appendix H: Dyslexia-Specific Intervention Checklist

		Cite evidence from the program materials and explain how the intervention meets each of these descriptors.
Program Design	Evidence-Based	
	Multisensory (visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetic)	
	Direct Instruction Targeting Reading, Writing, and Spelling	
	Systematic (from easiest/most basic progressing methodically to more difficult)	
	Cumulative (steps based on what has already been learned)	
	Systematic Review of Concepts	
Critical Concepts	Phonological Awareness	
	Sound-Symbol Association	
	Syllable Structure	
	Morphology	
	Syntax	
	Semantics	

Appendix I: Additional Resources

Center for Dyslexia / Middle Tennessee University (http://www.mtsu.edu/dyslexia)

Dear Colleague Letter (10-23-2015)/ Office of Special Education Programs/ United States Department of Education
(https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/guidance-on-dyslexia-10-2015.pdf)

Decoding Dyslexia Tennessee (https://decodingdyslexiatn.wordpress.com)

Florida Center for Reading Research (http://fcrr.org)

International Dyslexia Association (IDA) (https://dyslexiaida.org)

International Dyslexia Association-Tennessee Branch (http://tnida.org)

National Center for Learning Disabilities (www.ncld.org)

Support and Training for Exceptional Parents (STEP, Inc.) (http://www.tnstep.org/)

Vanderbilt University Research Study: Not all reading disabilities are dyslexia.
https://news.vanderbilt.edu/2013/06/14/reading-disabilities-not-dyslexia/

Wrightslaw Special Education Law and Advocacy (www.wrightslaw.com)

Yale Center for Dyslexia & Creativity (http://dyslexia.yale.edu/)