



ISSUED TO: **OREGON TEACHER STANDARDS
AND PRACTICES COMMISSION**

DYSLEXIA INSTRUCTION STANDARDS REPORT

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**Dyslexia Instruction
Standards Report:**

**NORTHWEST CHRISTIAN
UNIVERSITY
Eugene, Oregon**

Northwest Christian University respectfully submits this report in accordance with Oregon Administrative Rule 584-420-0016 and ORS 342.147.

Step One: (Program Review): The EPP reviews the Elementary-Multiple Subjects, Reading Intervention and/or Special Education: Generalist programs to determine if content, practica, assessments, and materials are sufficient to enable candidates to identify characteristics of dyslexia.

The NCU Teacher Education Department includes generalist programs for Undergraduate and Master's degrees. Within those programs students choose a concentration area of either multiple subject elementary or middle/high school. We have 3.75 full-time faculty and several highly qualified adjunct faculty who deliver an outstanding education for teacher candidates.

Our journey with the new Dyslexia law began in October, with a brief conversation about the OAR that would soon be a new requirement. In November following the commission meeting, a faculty meeting was held and the new rule, ORS 342.147 for dyslexia instruction was reviewed. We believe additional instruction and assessment methods for working with students with dyslexia should be embedded throughout our programs. We have identified courses in our programs where direct instruction to our candidates will be provided, ensuring that our graduates are well prepared to teach students that are identified or who may be identified as having dyslexia. The courses we identified for direct instruction and assessment in regards to dyslexia are:

Traditional Undergraduate Program:

EDUC 330 Child Development
EDUC 340 Elementary Literacy Methods and Children's Literature
EDUC 350 Elementary Math and Science Methods
EDUC 313 Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Adult Degree Program:

EDUC 326 Exceptional Learners
EDUC 331 Child Development and Learning Theory
EDUC 342 Elementary Literacy Methods
EDUC 369 Elementary Mathematics Methods

Masters of Arts Program:

EDUC 525 Exceptional Learners
EDUC 530 Child Development and Learning Theory
EDUC 541 Elementary Literacy Methods and Children's Literature
EDUC 551 Elementary Mathematics Methods

Multiple Subject Elementary Endorsement:

EDUC 530 Child Development and Learning Theory
EDUC 541 Elementary Literacy Methods and Children's Literature
EDUC 551 Elementary Mathematics Methods

ESOL Endorsement:

EDUC 485 ESOL Practicum

ESOL 315 English Grammar and Syntax

ESOL 410 Theory and Methods

ESOL 425 ESOL Teaching Oral and Literate Skills

Step two: (Standard met determination): If the EPP determines the program currently meets the standard, the EPP describes in the plan how the current program components teach candidates to identify characteristics that may predict or are associated with dyslexia. The description must be adequate to allow Commissioners to determine that the program has met the standard.

The courses that I have listed above (Step 1) currently address assessments and instructional strategies for students who may be struggling in core content areas. These courses include instruction for our teacher candidates which includes: characteristics of potential learning disabilities, evidence based reading instruction for all populations of students, administration and interpretation of universal screening and progress monitoring tools, and assessments that drive instruction for the students they will be teaching. One example is in the Elementary Literacy Methods class we discuss the Response to Intervention model in depth; as a means for diagnosing students who are struggling, and as a process to identify students with special needs. Despite our robust curriculum already being offered to our teacher candidates, it was determined by our Teacher Education team that more work needs to be done to better align our instruction with the specific needs of students with dyslexia.

Step three (Revisions needed determination): If the EPP determines the program does not currently meet the standard, the EPP describes, in the plan, how the EPP will revise content (Example: syllabi), assessments instructional materials and/or practica to ensure candidates are able to identify characteristics of dyslexia. The description of revised components must be adequate to allow Commissioners to determine the plan of compliance is sufficient to meet the new standard.

To further the development of providing our teacher candidates with this instruction, we have contacted a Special Education Consultant, Katie M. Conley, to provide our Teacher Education faculty with professional development, specifically in the area of dyslexia. The faculty will receive training in the following areas: identifying the characteristics that are associated with dyslexia, applying dyslexia assessments, and instructional knowledge to pedagogy practice. This training will be followed by a work session on how to incorporate this new learning into their classes and will be reflected on syllabi and in course objectives. We also recognize the practicum hours that will be added to our current programs. Our field placement coordinator has read the practicum requirements and will be including that within our teacher candidate's placements.

The Teacher Education faculty is also working vigorously at learning more about dyslexia to ensure accurate information be taught to our teacher candidates. One of the ways we are

working on increasing our knowledge about dyslexia is by reading and discussing the most current research available. I have attached one such article to this document (See Appendix A).

In conclusion, the NCU faculty currently teaches many courses that identify assessments and instructional strategies that promote academic success for all students. Many of our classes currently include content that ensures our teacher candidates know and understand the process of helping students who struggle with reading, writing, and language. Our next step will be to provide all Education faculty with professional development including our upcoming training with Ms. Conley and ongoing study pertaining to dyslexia research. Time will be given for faculty to incorporate this information into their courses and our Teacher Education programs.

Dyslexia: What Teachers Need to Know

by Joan A. Williams and
Sharon A. Lynch

By understanding the characteristics of dyslexia and implementing specific strategies, teachers can effectively address their students' instructional needs.

Joan A. Williams is an Assistant Professor at Sam Houston State University in the Department of Language, Literacy, and Special Populations. Her research focuses on dyslexia, academic language, and English learners. She also served 20 years in mainstream, bilingual, and dual language classrooms. She is co-counselor for the Delta Theta Chapter of KDP.

Sharon A. Lynch is a Professor and Acting Chair of the Department of Language, Literacy, and Special Populations at Sam Houston State University. Her research focuses on learning disabilities, behavioral interventions, and assessment. Formerly, she was as a teacher, speech-language pathologist, educational diagnostician, and consultant.

Jennifer's first year of teaching first grade had been a good one, in spite of the fact that she spent most of her nights and weekends preparing for class. She had poured her heart and soul into her first group of students and—with much help from her teacher mentor, Teacher Assistance Team, and parents—all of her students had emerged from first grade as readers.

The second year of teaching had gone more smoothly and, by December, all of her students except Mason were beginning to read with varying degrees of proficiency. Mason's mother had called for a conference to discuss her son's difficulty with reading, and Jennifer felt confident that her recommendations for Mason's mother would help. When Mason's mother came into the classroom for the conference, her first question was, "Do you think Mason has dyslexia?" She added, "I saw a program on dyslexia last week, and I am almost 100 percent sure that he is dyslexic. What can the school do to help him?"

Jennifer had heard of dyslexia, but very little in her teacher preparation program had been said about it. She remembered that it had been mentioned briefly in her special education survey course, but she had no idea about what she needed to do if Mason did, in fact, have dyslexia. This was a problem that Jennifer had not anticipated, and she was baffled about how to best help Mason.

Dyslexia Defined

Though the term *dyslexia* is familiar to the American public and is frequently seen in the media, it often is misunderstood, even in the educational setting (Hudson, High, and Otaiba 2007). The International Dyslexia Association ([IDA] 2002) established the following definition of dyslexia:

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.

The International Dyslexia Association (2008) also described the characteristics of dyslexia in young children: difficulty reading single words, difficulty learning to associate letters and sounds, confusion of small words such as

“at” and “to,” letter reversals, and word reversals. Because these difficulties with letter and word reversals are developmental in nature and are found typically in readers up through the age of 7, children who demonstrate the characteristic of dyslexia may sometimes not be identified as being dyslexic.

Myths about Dyslexia

Though dyslexia has been clearly defined and its characteristics are known, a number of myths surround this disability. One of the most common beliefs is simply untrue; letter and word reversals alone are not predictors of dyslexia (Badian 2005). In addition to the indicators listed previously, other signs of dyslexia include language difficulties, articulation or pronunciation problems, and word-finding problems (Siegel 2008).

Dyslexics have difficulty on an auditory level with phonological awareness. They have problems with rhyming and hearing individual sounds, syllables, and words in sentences. The individual sounds are called *phonemes*, which dyslexic children have difficulty separating and blending. Children with dyslexia often are late in developing language and may have difficulty formulating speech sounds after the age when these are typically acquired (Siegel 2008). They may use terms such as *things* or *stuff* because they cannot think of the specific word they want to use at the moment.

A number of myths about dyslexia need to be dispelled (Dyslexia Awareness and Resource Center 2002). First, dyslexia is not the result of brain damage (Shastry 2007). While the term *dyslexia* was used in early case

studies of individuals with brain damage, today the term dyslexia is used to refer to a specific type of reading disability that is neurological in nature. As affirmed by genetic studies (Galaburda 2005; Shastry 2007), dyslexia tends to run in families.

Second, words do not “jump around on the page” for persons with dyslexia (Badian 2005). Dyslexia is basically a language-based problem associated with difficulties in auditory processing, as opposed to a visual problem. The use of visual strategies such as ocular training and work on visual perception has not been successful (American Academy of Pediatrics 1972; Shastry 2007). Though there may be some visual confusion of letters and words, as well as delays in learning letters, the difficulty lies in auditory processing and memory (Badian 2005). Some Web sites promote the use of covered overlays with dyslexics (National Reading Styles Institutes 2008). Colored overlays are plastic sheets of various colors that can be placed over a text to make the text easier to read. The use of colored overlays, however, has not been found to be differentially effective with children who have dyslexia (Iovino et al. 1998).

Third, girls are just as likely to have dyslexia as boys. The fact that boys are more frequently diagnosed than girls is a function of the greater likelihood of teachers and parents to refer boys for testing (Shaywitz et al. 1990)

Finally, children with dyslexia do not have low intelligence (Shastry 2007). Their IQ scores may not accurately indicate their actual abilities; this is likely a function of the language requirements of most IQ tests. Myths and truths about dyslexia are summarized in table 1.

Table 1. Myths and Truths about Dyslexia

Myths	Truths
Dyslexia is the result of brain damage.	The term <i>dyslexia</i> grew out of studies of persons with brain damage, but children with dyslexia do not have brain damage.
Words “jump around on the page” for persons with dyslexia.	Dyslexia is a problem with language processing at the phoneme level rather than a visual problem.
Reversals of letters and words are a sign of dyslexia.	Reversals of letters and words are typical of children up to age 7.
Dyslexia occurs more often in boys than in girls.	Boys may be referred for testing for dyslexia more often than girls.
Colored overlays improve the reading skills of children with dyslexia.	Colored overlays do not improve reading rate or accuracy.
Children with dyslexia have low intelligence.	Children with dyslexia have average and above average intelligence.

Public Education and Dyslexia

In public schools in the United States, the terms *reading disability* and *learning disability* are more likely to be used than *dyslexia*. This is because most states do not have programs specifically addressing dyslexia, and those that do may not provide additional funding for instruction.

Most college textbooks in literacy education and special education mention dyslexia, but provide scant information for preservice teachers about this problem. College instructors in general education typically imply that dyslexia is a special education issue, and special education instructors see dyslexia as a general education problem. Hence, dyslexia often is considered a minor problem that is beyond the scope of the regular classroom, but not serious enough to merit special education services. In one survey of 250 faculty members and students in the college of education at a large southern university, 87.8 percent of the survey participants reported that their formal education had not prepared them to work with students with dyslexia (Wadlington and Wadlington 2005).

The federal laws addressing learners with disabilities—the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act ([IDEA] 2004) and the earlier Education of All Handicapped Children Act (1975)—both addressed dyslexia under the category of learning disabilities. According to IDEA § 300.8 (c) (10), a specific learning disability is defined as follows:

(i) *General*. 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, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.

(ii) *Disorders not included*. Specific learning disability does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

To receive services under IDEA, the student must meet disability criteria that are defined individually by each state. Prior to 2004, when IDEA was enacted, most states required students to demonstrate a discrepancy between their IQ and achievement before receiving services under the category of learning disability. However, proving a discrepancy is difficult. Those same underlying characteristics of children with dyslexia—particularly dif-

ficulty with language, memory, auditory processing, and processing speed—often cause them to score lower on IQ tests (Berninger 2001). In addition, the nature of dyslexia in itself can cause children of average or above average intelligence to perform poorly academically. As a result, children had to be severely deficient in reading skills before a discrepancy could be found between IQ and achievement, and children waited many years to receive appropriate service (Kavale and Forness 2000).

Under IDEA, states no longer are required to use a discrepancy formula. Instead, many states use Response to Intervention (RTI), a system of universal screening and progress monitoring, to identify learning disabilities. Additionally, IDEA allows states to use up to 15 percent of their IDEA funding for early intervening services. These two provisions of the law have enabled schools to provide services to struggling readers at the primary grades so that more serious problems can be prevented.

Early intervening methods typically take a “protocol approach” at the initial level, where teachers work with students using reading strategies that are effective with most students, such as additional instruction and practice with letter sounds, sound blending, and sight words (Marston 2005). If these techniques are not effective, the RTI process typically calls for a more diagnostic approach to determine the nature of the problem. Once the problem is identified, teachers can use appropriate and effective instructional methods that target the specific areas of weakness.

Unfortunately, many schools do not provide effective early intervening services, and older students, in general, have not received the type of help they needed in the primary grades. These older students may have been identified as learning disabled and placed in special education resource rooms, where teachers instruct learners with various disabilities and at varying grade and ability levels. Others students never were identified and have languished in general education classes, where they are now at high risk for dropping out and serious social problems.

In recent years, many schools have been developing and implementing universal screening procedures to identify those students who are likely to have reading disabilities (Shinn 2007). Because students with dyslexia need intensive instruction using specific research-based techniques, it is critical that teachers recognize the indicators of dyslexia and know the strategies that are useful in meeting the needs of these learners.

Characteristics of Dyslexia

Physiologically, dyslexia is a disorder of the language processing systems in the brain (Hudson et al. 2007).