

DYSLEXIA: THE NEW IDA DEFINITION AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR EVALUATIONS

From Understanding to Implementation



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What is Dyslexia?

New definition of dyslexia per IDA: "Dyslexia is a specific learning disability characterized by difficulties in word reading and/or spelling that involve accuracy, speed, or both and vary depending on the orthography. These difficulties occur along a continuum of severity and persist even with instruction that is effective for the individual's peers. The causes of dyslexia are complex and involve combinations of genetic, neurobiological, and environmental influences that interact throughout development. Underlying difficulties with phonological and morphological processing are common but not universal, and early oral language weaknesses often foreshadow literacy challenges. Secondary consequences include reading comprehension problems and reduced reading and writing experience that can impede growth in language, knowledge, written expression, and overall academic achievement. Psychological well-being and employment opportunities also may be affected. Although identification and targeted instruction are important at any age, language and literacy support before and during the early years of education is particularly effective."



What has changed?

*The revised definition excludes reference to **other cognitive abilities**, an element in the 2002 definition that often led to unsupported use of IQ-discrepancy or cognitive profile analyses to identify dyslexia. **There is robust evidence that word-level literacy difficulties occur across a range of cognitive profiles, and that general intelligence bears little relationship to the nature of the word-level literacy difficulties, their underlying cognitive and neurological bases, or how students respond to intervention.***



Areas to Assess

Steps to Identify Dyslexia

Dyslexia diagnosis is a structured process that involves professional evaluation, detailed reading and language assessments, and a thorough review of the individual's learning history.

1

Phonological Awareness

2

Rapid Automatized Naming (RAN)

3

Basic Reading

- Regular Words (Decoding)
- Irregular Words (Sight Words)

4

Spelling

- Regular Spelling Words
- Irregular Spelling Words

5

Reading Fluency

Focus on rate, accuracy, and error analysis

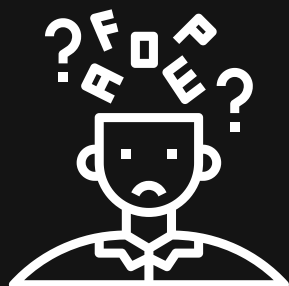
6

Written Expression

Spelling in context of writing vs. Spelling in isolation

Cognitive Testing:

While Cognitive ability does not determine who can or cannot have dyslexia, it can still provide useful information. Use Cognitive data to:



Understand Co-Existing Conditions



Distinguishing Dyslexia from Broader Learning Challenges



Identify Working Memory and Processing Speed Weaknesses

Enhance Intervention Strategies

Cognitive testing can be helpful, but it is not necessary to confirm a diagnosis of dyslexia!

Factors to Consider

When evaluating for dyslexia, consider the following factors that can impact and skew data.

Previous Interventions

Dyslexia is a lifelong condition. Prior interventions can raise Phonological Awareness and Basic Reading Scores, so results may not show the full pattern of need..

Chronological Age vs. Grade

Consider when it is appropriate to norm student scores by age rather than by grade level.

Comorbidities

Things like AHD may show discrepancies in testing results. Be sure to review classroom data and work samples to identify any patterns of weaknesses.

Highly Gifted

Students may have created compensatory strategies for comprehension; however, a lack of phonemic awareness is often a significant warning sign.





Preponderance of Evidence:

More Than Just A Score...

A dyslexia evaluation should rely on a preponderance of evidence. The goal is to look at consistent patterns across time, tasks, and settings. Decisions should not hinge on a single score. Instead, evaluators should use multiple data points to confirm ongoing difficulty with decoding, spelling, and word reading that persists despite strong instruction.

Consistent Challenges with Word Decoding and Encoding

Weak basic reading impacts comprehension

Sufficient phonological awareness, yet a challenge in applying rules to unfamiliar words.

Challenges Persist Despite Sufficient Intervention

Actions You Can Take

Effective Assessment Practices to Keep in Mind:



Center Decisions Around Word-Level Reading Data



Document the student's instructional history



Identify Patterns that Persist Over Time



Utilizing Writing Samples to Identify Phonological and spelling difficulties



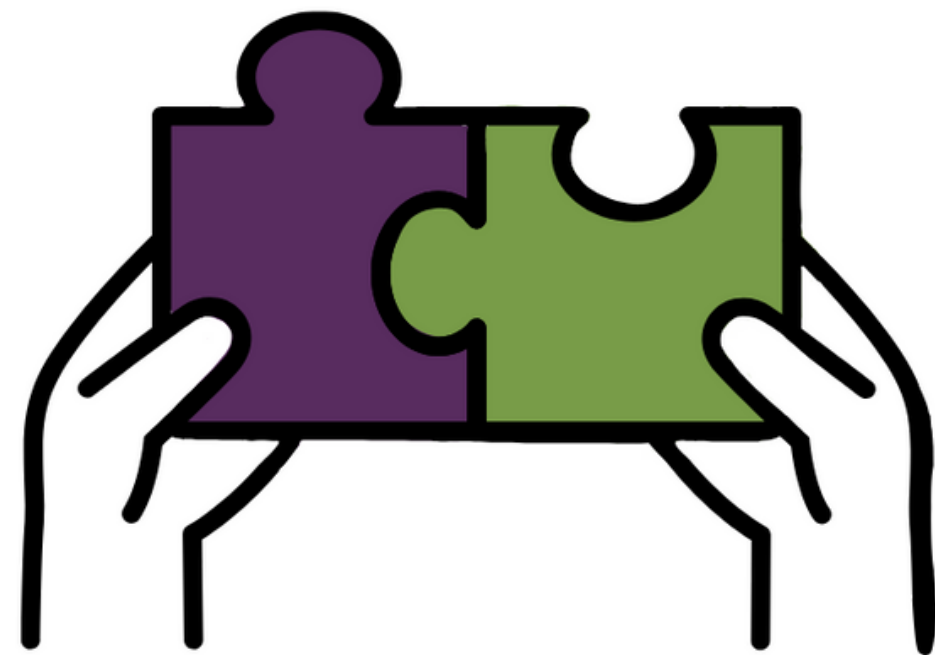
Concluding Thoughts...



Cognitive scores may help explain the pattern, but do not determine the diagnosis.

A student might have dyslexia if:

- ➔ **Word Reading Accuracy is low**
- ➔ **Word Reading Fluency is Low**
- ➔ **Spelling is Inconsistent or significantly weak**
- ➔ **Difficulties Persist After Strong Instruction**



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