

Texans Can!

Austin Can!, Dallas Can!, Fort Worth Can!, Houston Can!, & San Antonio Can!

DYSLEXIA

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Board Adopted November 2004

TABLE OF CONTENT

I. Definitions and Characteristics of Dyslexia -----	3
II. Procedures for Identification, Assessment, Placement and Services -----	4
III. Instruction for Students with Dyslexia -----	7
IV. Referral to Special Education/504 -----	10
V. Child Find -----	11
VI. Procedural Safeguards -----	12
VII. Pre-referral Process -----	13
VIII. Access to Records -----	15
IX. Grievance/Hearings Procedures -----	16

I. Definitions and Characteristics of Dyslexia

A. The student who struggles with reading, writing, and/or spelling often puzzles teachers and parents. The student displays adequate intelligence and receives the same classroom instruction that benefits most children. Still the student struggles with some or all of the many facets of reading, writing and/or spelling. This student may be identified as a student with dyslexia. As defined in TEC §38.003:

1. "Dyslexia" means a disorder of constitutional origin manifested by a difficulty in learning to read, write, or spell, despite conventional instruction, adequate intelligence, and sociocultural opportunity.
2. "Related disorders" includes disorders similar to or related to dyslexia such as developmental auditory imperceptions, dysphasia, specific developmental dyslexia, developmental dysgraphia, and developmental spelling disability.

B. The working definition of the International Dyslexia Association states: Dyslexia is one of several distinct learning disabilities. It is a specific language-based disorder of constitutional origin characterized by difficulties in single-word decoding, usually reflecting insufficient phonological processing. These difficulties in single-word decoding are often unexpected in relation to age and other cognitive and academic abilities; they are not the result of generalized developmental disability or sensory impairment. Dyslexia is manifested by variable difficulty with different forms of language, often including, in addition to problems with reading, a conspicuous problem with acquiring proficiency in writing and spelling (International Dyslexia Association Research Committee in collaboration with the National Center for Learning Disabilities and the National Institutes of Child Health and Human Development, April 1994).

C. The difficulties of a student identified as having dyslexia occur in phonemic awareness and manipulation, single-word decoding, reading fluency, reading comprehension, spelling, and/or written composition. These difficulties are unexpected for the student's age, educational level, or cognitive abilities. Additionally, there is often a family history of similar difficulties.

D. The following are the reading/writing/spelling characteristics of dyslexia:

1. Difficulty reading single words in isolation;
2. Difficulty accurately decoding nonsense or unfamiliar words;
3. Slow, inaccurate, or labored oral reading (lack of reading fluency); and/or
4. Difficulty with learning to spell.
5. The reading/writing/spelling characteristics are the result of:
 - a) Difficulty with the development of phonological awareness, including segmenting, blending, and manipulating sounds in words;
 - b) Difficulty learning the names of letters and their associated sounds;
 - c) Difficulty with phonological memory (holding information about sounds and words in memory); and/or
 - d) Difficulty with rapid naming of familiar objects, colors, or letters of the alphabet.
6. The reading/writing/spelling characteristics of dyslexia lead to:
 - a) Variable degrees of difficulty with word recognition in isolation or in context;
 - b) Variable difficulty with aspects of reading comprehension;
 - c) Variable difficulty with aspects of written composition; and/or
 - d) A limited amount of time spent in reading activities.

II. Procedures for Identification, Assessment, Placement and Services

A. At any time that a student continues to struggle with one or more components of reading, Austin Can! Academy will collect additional information about the student. Austin Can! Academy will use this information to evaluate the student's academic progress and determine what actions are needed to ensure the student's improved academic performance. Information to be considered includes the results from some or all of the following:

1. Vision screening;
2. Hearing screening;
3. Teacher reports of classroom concerns;
4. Basal reading series assessment;
5. Accommodations and modifications provided by classroom teachers;
6. Academic progress reports (report cards);
7. Samples of school work;
8. Parent conferences;
9. Testing for limited English proficiency;
10. Speech and language screening through a referral process; and/or
11. State student assessment program as described in TEC §39.022.

B. Austin Can! Academy will recommend a student to the Student Support Team for assessment for dyslexia if the student demonstrates the following:

1. Poor performance in one or more areas of reading and/or the related areas of writing and spelling that is unexpected for the student's age/grade, and;
2. Some or all of the characteristics of dyslexia.

C. Students enrolling in public schools in Texas shall be assessed for dyslexia and related disorders at appropriate times (TEC §38.003 (a)). The appropriate time depends upon multiple factors including the student's reading performance, reading difficulties, poor response to additional reading instruction (if placed in additional reading instruction), teachers' input, and parents' input. Additionally, the appropriate time for assessing is early in a student's school career (19 TAC §74.28), the earlier the better. While earlier is better, students should be recommended for assessment for dyslexia even if the reading difficulties appear later in a student's school career. The procedures to follow include:

1. Notify parents or guardians of proposal to assess student for dyslexia (§504 or IDEA);
2. Inform parents or guardians of their rights under §504 or IDEA;
3. Obtain parent permission to assess the student for dyslexia; and
4. Administer measures only by individuals/professionals who are trained in assessments to evaluate students for dyslexia and related disorders (19 TAC §74.28).

D. Tests, assessments, and other evaluation materials must:

1. Be validated for the specific purpose for which they are used (§504 or IDEA);
2. Include material tailored to assess specific areas of educational need and not merely materials that are designed to provide a single general intelligence quotient (§504 or IDEA);
3. Be selected and administered so as to ensure that, when a test is given to a student with impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills, the test results accurately reflect the student's aptitude or achievement level, or whatever other factor the test purports to

measure, rather than reflecting the student's impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills (§504 or IDEA);

4. Include multiple measures of a student's reading abilities such as informal assessment information (e.g., anecdotal records, lists of books the student has read, audio recordings of the student's oral reading) (§504 or IDEA); and

5. Be administered by trained personnel and in conformance with the instructions provided by the producer of the evaluation materials (§504 or IDEA).

E. Domains to Assess

1. Austin Can! Academy administers measures that are related to the student's educational needs. Depending upon the student's age and stage of reading development, the following are the areas related to reading that should be assessed.

- a) Reading single words in isolation;
- b) Word decoding (real and nonwords);
- c) Phonological awareness;
- d) Letter knowledge (name and associated sound);
- e) Rapid naming;
- f) Fluency/rate and accuracy;
- g) Reading comprehension; and/or
- h) Spelling.

2. Based on the student's academic difficulties and characteristics, additional areas that can be assessed include vocabulary, written expression, handwriting, and mathematics. This may require that dyslexia personnel work with the bilingual staff to administer the measures and determine if student performance is lower than what would be expected for the student's age/grade.

F. Identification of Students with Dyslexia

1. A team or committee of knowledgeable persons determines if the student has dyslexia. The team must be knowledgeable about:

- a) The student being assessed;
- b) The reading process;
- c) Dyslexia and related disorders;
- d) Dyslexia instruction;
- e) District or charter school, state, and federal guidelines for assessment;
- f) Assessments used; and
- g) The meaning of the collected data.

2. A committee of knowledgeable persons determines the identification of dyslexia after reviewing all accumulated data including the following areas:

- a) The observations of the teacher, campus staff, and/or parent;
- b) Data gathered from the classroom (including student work and the results of classroom measures) and information found in the student's cumulative folder (including the developmental and academic history of the student);
- c) The results of administered assessments; and
- d) All other accumulated data regarding the development of the student's learning

and his/her educational needs.

3. The student's reading difficulties and characteristics of dyslexia will be reflected or supported by low performance for the student's age and educational level in some or all of the following areas:

- a) Reading single words in isolation;
- b) Word decoding (real and nonwords);
- c) Phonological awareness;
- d) Letter knowledge (name and associated sound);
- e) Rapid naming;
- f) Fluency/rate and accuracy;
- g) Reading comprehension; and
- h) Spelling.

4. A committee of knowledgeable persons will also incorporate the following guidelines from TEC §38.003 and 19 TAC §74.28:

- a) The student's unexpected lack of appropriate academic progress;
- b) The student's exhibiting characteristics associated with dyslexia;
- c) The student's having adequate intelligence, the ability to learn;
- d) The student's receiving conventional instruction; and
- e) The student's lack of progress not being due to sociocultural factors such as language differences, irregular attendance, and lack of experiential background.

5. Based on the above information and guidelines the committee of knowledgeable persons determines whether the student has dyslexia.

6. If the student has dyslexia, the committee of knowledgeable persons also determines whether the student has a disability under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, §504. A student is considered to have a disability under §504 if the condition substantially limits the student's learning. Students with additional factors that complicate their dyslexia may require additional support or referral to special education.

III. Instruction for Students with Dyslexia

1. Once it has been determined that a student has dyslexia, Austin Can! Academy shall provide an appropriate instructional program for the student. As stated in TEC §38.003:

a) In accordance with the program approved by the State Board of Education, Austin Can! Academy will provide for the treatment of any student determined to have dyslexia or a related disorder.

b) Austin Can! Academy will follow the following procedures:

(1) Instructional decisions for a student with dyslexia are made by a team that is knowledgeable about the student, the meaning of the evaluation information, and instructional components and approaches for students with dyslexia.

(2) Austin Can! Academy will provide each identified student access to the services of a teacher trained in dyslexia and related disorders. (19 TAC §74.28).

(3) Parents/guardians of students eligible under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, §504, will be informed of all services and options available to the student under that federal statute.

(4) Parents/guardians of students eligible under IDEA, will be informed of all services and options available to the student under that federal statute.

(5) Teachers who provide the appropriate instruction for students with dyslexia must be trained in instructional strategies that utilize individualized, intensive, multisensory, phonetic methods and a variety of writing and spelling components specified (19 TAC §74.28).

(6) Teachers who provide the appropriate instruction for students with dyslexia will be trained in the professional development activities specified by the campus planning and decision making committee (19 TAC §74.28).

c) Parent Training

(1) Upon request, Austin Can! Academy will provide parent education for the parents/guardians of students with dyslexia and related disorders. The program may include:

(a) Characteristics of dyslexia and related disorders;

(b) Information on assessment and diagnosis of dyslexia;

(c) Information on effective strategies for teaching dyslexia; and

(d) Awareness of information on classroom modifications and especially of modifications allowed on standardized testing (19 TAC §74.28).

B. Components of Instruction

1. The instructional program should be offered in a small class setting and include reading, writing, and spelling as appropriate. The major instructional strategies should utilize individualized, intensive, and multisensory methods as appropriate.
2. Components of instruction, as appropriate for the reading needs of the student, include:
 - a) Phonemic awareness instruction that enables students to detect, segment, blend, and manipulate sounds in spoken language;
 - b) Graphophonemic knowledge (phonics) instruction that takes advantage of the letter-sound plan in which words that carry meaning are made of sounds and sounds are written with letters in the right order. Students with this understanding can blend sounds associated with letters into words and can separate words into component sounds for spelling and writing;
 - c) Language structure instruction that encompasses morphology (the study of meaningful units of language such as prefixes, suffixes, and roots), semantics (ways that language conveys meaning), syntax (sentence structure), and pragmatics (how to use language in a particular context);
 - d) Linguistic instruction directed toward proficiency and fluency with the patterns of language so that words and sentences are the carriers of meaning; and
 - e) Process-oriented instruction in the processes or strategies students use for decoding, encoding, word recognition, fluency, and comprehension that students need to become independent readers.
3. Instructional approaches, as appropriate to meet the instructional needs of the student, include:
 - a) Explicit, direct instruction that is systematic (structured), sequential, and cumulative. Instruction is organized and presented in a way that follows a logical sequential plan, fits the nature of language (alphabetic principle) with no assumption of prior skills or language knowledge, and maximizes student engagement. This instruction proceeds at a rate commensurate with students' needs, ability levels, and demonstration of progress;
 - b) Individualized instruction that meets the specific learning needs of each individual student in a small group setting; a reading curriculum that matches each student's individual ability level and contains all of the Components of Instruction mandated in 19 TAC §74.28;
 - c) Intensive, highly concentrated instruction that maximizes student engagement, uses specialized methods and materials, produces results, and contains all the Components of Instruction mandated in 19 TAC §74.28;
 - d) Meaning-based instruction that is directed toward purposeful reading and writing, with an emphasis on comprehension and composition; and
 - e) Multisensory instruction that incorporates the simultaneous use of two or more sensory pathways (auditory, visual, kinesthetic, tactile) during teacher presentations and student practice.
4. Teachers of students with dyslexia shall be prepared to utilize these techniques and strategies. They may also serve as trainers and consultants in the area of dyslexia and related disorders to regular, remedial, and special education teachers.

C. Professional Development for Teachers of Student with Dyslexia

1. As stated in 19 TAC, §74.28, the teachers who provide appropriate instruction for students with dyslexia must be trained and be prepared to implement instructional

strategies that utilize individualized, intensive, multisensory, phonetic methods and a variety of writing and spelling components.

2. Teachers trained in the appropriate instruction for dyslexia may serve as consultants in the area of dyslexia and related disorders to regular, remedial, and special education teachers.

IV. Referral to Special Education/504

A. Special Education

1. At any time during the assessment for dyslexia, identification process, or instruction related to dyslexia, students may be referred for evaluation for special education. At times, students will display additional factors/areas complicating their dyslexia and requiring more support than what is available through dyslexia instruction. At other times, there will be students with severe dyslexia or related disorders who will be unable to make adequate academic progress within any of the programs described in the procedures related to dyslexia. In such cases, a referral to special education for evaluation and possible identification as disabled within the meaning of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (20 U.S.C. section 1400 et seq.) should be made as needed.

2. If the student with dyslexia is found eligible for special education, the admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee must include appropriate reading instruction on the student's individualized education program (IEP).

B. Section 504

1. At any time during the assessment for dyslexia, identification process, or instruction related to dyslexia, students may be referred for evaluation for Section 504 placement. At times, students will display additional factors/areas complicating their dyslexia and requiring more support than what is available through dyslexia instruction. At other times, there will be students with severe dyslexia or related disorders who will be unable to make adequate academic progress within any of the programs described in the procedures related to dyslexia. In such cases, a referral to Section 504 for evaluation and possible identification as disabled within the meaning of Section 504 should be made as needed.

2. If the student with dyslexia is found eligible for placement in Section 504, the Student Support Team will determine placement. Placement must include appropriate reading instruction on the student's individualized plan.

V. Child Find

A. Austin Can! Academy is responsible for providing a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to all individuals with disabilities age birth through 21 who live within our jurisdiction and meet the qualifications of our Charter filed with the Texas Education Agency. These eligible students are served by the school Austin Can! Academy with the assistance of the Texas Education Agency, the local Regional Education Service Center and the Early Childhood Intervention program. Regardless of the severity of the disability, Austin Can! Academy will make every effort to locate, identify, and evaluate these individuals. Dissemination of information to the public concerning services offered to all individuals with disabilities includes:

1. participating in a network of public information dissemination which includes the Education Service Center, other agencies, communities, and facilities providing services to students with disabilities;
2. providing information regarding availability of services;
3. determining which individuals are currently receiving needed Section 504 services and which individuals are not currently receiving needed Section 504 services;
4. identifying and referring individuals with disabilities who may or may not be in school and who may need Section 504 services;
5. provide referrals to the appropriate local LEA for those students that require identification, evaluation, and/or service that are not within our Charter filed with Texas Education Agency;
6. reviewing this process on a yearly basis, updating staff about on-going "Child Find" activities implemented in the community; and
7. maintaining confidentiality of all personally identifiable information used and collected in this system in the same manner that Section 504 records are maintained.

The 504 District Coordinators and Director of Special Education are responsible for implementation and direction of the "Child Find" program, as well as annually identifying any other staff members who will participate in the organization and implementation of this program.

Any students of an age addressed by the school program who are suspected of having a disability and in need of Special Education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) are referred for possible Special Education or early childhood intervention services within the school using the Student Support Team procedures as outlined in the Special Education Policies and Procedures and Operating Guidelines. Any students of an age addressed by the school program who are suspected of having a disability and in need of Section 504 or Special Education services under Section 504 or IDEA are referred for possible Section 504 intervention services or Special Education services within the school using the Student Support Team procedures as outlined in the Special Education Policies and Procedures and Operating Guidelines and the Section 504 Policies and Procedures.

VI. **Procedural Safeguards**

Provide parents or guardians with procedural safeguards whenever Section 504 or Special Education is considered or determined appropriate. Procedural safeguards given will correspond with whichever program the student is being considered or determined to meet eligibility for.

VII. Pre-referral Process

A student experiencing difficulties in the general education program will be referred through the Austin Can! Academy pre-referral committee, the Student Support Team. Adaptations in the general education program are attempted, if appropriate. If these adaptations are unsuccessful and the student is suspected of having a disability Section 504 or Special Education will be considered.

- A. Pre-Referral – pre-referral activities are general education initiatives to address the problems the student is experiencing in the general education program. This process is designed for students who are not eligible for Section 504 or Special Education services or for whom the Section 504 program is no longer effective.
- a. A referral may be made by any campus or Austin Can! Academy employee, adult student and/or the student's parent/guardian who has a suspicion that a disability exists and there is an educational need for Section 504 or Special Education services. This referral will be forwarded to the campus SST team.
 - b. Referral packets include both formal and informal evaluation through the gathering of information from multiple sources including but are not limited to:
 - i. parent/guardian
 - ii. teachers
 - iii. academic and behavioral records
 - iv. Standardized, Austin Can! Academy, and state wide testing
 - v. attendance
 - vi. language proficiency
 - vii. previous modifications and accommodations attempted to assist student
 - viii. observations
 - c. Student Support Team
 - i. A team consisting of teachers, administrators, school counselors, and/or the parent(s)
 - ii. The SST will have at least three members present at each meeting
 - iii. The SST team will meet at least monthly
 - iv. It will review the performance of a student who is experiencing difficulties in the general education program either with academics or behavior.
 - v. Student work samples, grades, standardized test results, state competency testing, anecdotal records, and discipline records may be included in this review.
 - vi. All campus staff hold a place on the SST team and are called in to participate as necessary based on the student and issue being discussed.
 - d. If any member of the Student Support Team determines that student may require services under Section 504 or Special Education, they will notify the campus Student Support Team Coordinator. The SST Coordinator will provide notice to parents of due process rights and of identification, evaluation, and placement.
 - e. As a result of the Student Support Team's review of student progress and records, adaptations within the general education program are documented that may include any methods the SST recommends to resolve the student's academic or behavioral difficulties including but not limited to tutorials, remedial

services and compensatory services. The team may choose to reconvene to review the student's progress following implementation of the adaptations or the SST committee may determine that a Section 504 placement or a referral for Special Education services is appropriate. (Section 104.36)

- f. If the SST feels a Section 504 placement may be necessary but does not have enough data to make a decision, they will then determine what additional data is necessary in the evaluation process and content to make a data driven decision regarding placement. (Section 104.35(a))
- g. If the SST feels a Special Education referral may be necessary, they will then forward the referral to the Assessment Specialist.

VIII. Access to Records

- a. Austin Can! Academy maintains the confidentiality of all Dyslexia records and has developed procedures to implement confidentiality requirements consistent with federal regulations. Parents or adult students are advised of their rights pertaining to student records at least once annually.
 - i. Parent access –The parent (or adult student) may inspect and review educational records during school business hours.
 - ii. Availability – Records will be made available to the parent (or adult student) without any unnecessary delay or any hearing related to the placement of the student in the Dyslexia program in no more than 45 days after a request has been made.
 - iii. Copies – Parent(s) (or adult students) may request copies of any documents in the student's records but the school is generally required to give copies only if failure to do so would effectively deny access.
 - iv. Cost of copies – The Austin Can! Academy maintains the right to charge a fee for copies of records but not if a fee will prevent parent access to the copies. No fee will be charged to search or retrieve any information to which the parent (or adult student) has a right.
 - v. Consent – Except for specific exceptions, a parent shall provide a signed and dated written consent before a school may disclose education records. The consent must specify records that may be disclosed, purpose of disclosure and parties to whom disclosure may be made. Exceptions to prior consent as outlined in FERPA, Section 99.31, are:
 - to school officials with legitimate educational interests
 - to schools in which a student seeks or intends to enroll
 - to Federal, State, and local authorities conducting an audit, evaluation, or enforcement of education programs
 - in connection with financial aid, such as a college loan
 - to organizations conducting studies on behalf of educational institutions
 - to parents of a dependent student
 - to comply with a judicial order or subpoena
 - in a health or safety emergency
 - directory information
 - to state and local officials in connection with serving the student under juvenile justice system
 - vi. Amendment –The parent (or adult student) may request an amendment to any information in the education record. Austin Can! Academy will reply in a reasonable time period with a refusal or amendment. If the parent (or adult student) still disagrees, a hearing may be requested and will be carried out in accordance with all state and federal regulations.
 - vii. Destruction of records – Schools may not destroy records if request for access is pending.

IX. **Grievance/Hearings Procedures**

- Students, parents, and employees are entitled to file grievances/hearings.
- Grievances/Hearings will follow the outline of Grievances/Hearings found in the Section 504 Policies and Procedures unless the student is served or has been referred to Special Education.
- Grievances/Hearings will follow the outline of Grievances/Hearings found in the Special Education Policies and Procedures unless the student is served or has been referred to Section 504.