

What is the Purpose of this Guide?

The purpose of this resource is to provide basic guidelines on the identification and instruction of students with dyslexia in Louisiana. This information may serve as a guide for parents, teachers, and school districts. This resource summarizes large sections from policy and state law.

How does Louisiana have to address the needs of students with dyslexia?

The following protections and laws are in place in Louisiana to meet the needs of students with dyslexia:

- A. The [Individuals with Disabilities Act \(IDEA\)](#) and [Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#) are two fundamental federal guides for identification and intervention of K-12 public school students with disabilities. These laws require school districts to provide a free, appropriate public education to each qualified child with a disability regardless of the nature or severity of the child's disability.
- B. The state dyslexia law (RS 17:7(11)) and regulatory policy, [Bulletin 1903: Regulations and Guidelines for Implementation of the Louisiana Law for the Education of Dyslexic Students](#), provide specific guidance on how students with dyslexia should be identified, evaluated, and educationally supported.
 - Bulletin 1903 is the state dyslexia policy approved by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) to provide guidance on regulations and implementation of the Louisiana Dyslexia Law.
 - Bulletin 1903 was developed by a group of parents and educators as a reference to improve understanding of regulations and guidelines that support students with characteristics of dyslexia in Louisiana.
- C. Several other IDEA-related policies include [Bulletin 1706 – Regulations for Implementation of the Children with Exceptionalities Act](#), [Bulletin 1508 – Pupil Appraisal Handbook](#), and [Bulletin 1530 – IEP Handbook](#).

What is Dyslexia?

Louisiana state law defines *dyslexia* as a "language processing disorder which may be manifested by difficulty processing expressive or receptive, oral or written language despite adequate intelligence, educational exposure, and cultural opportunity." Specific manifestations may occur in one or more areas, including difficulty with the alphabet, reading, comprehension, writing, and spelling.

What are the Characteristics of Dyslexia?

Characteristics of dyslexia include:

- A. Lack of or limited phonological awareness
- B. Common error patterns in reading and learning behaviors, such as:
 1. reading decoding inaccuracies in single words and nonsense words (e.g., detached syllables)
 2. slow reading rate
 3. omissions of, or substitutions of, small words (e.g., a/the, of/for/from, three/there)
 4. reduced awareness of patterns in words
 5. difficulties generalizing word and language patterns
- C. Language (oral or written, receptive or expressive) is simplistic or poor in relation to other abilities
- D. Errors in spontaneous spelling
- E. Spontaneous written language is very simple or poor in comparison to spoken language
- F. Spontaneous written language shows poor organization and mechanics

What is the referral process for a student suspected of having dyslexia?

Each school should establish a committee that can oversee the referral, assessment, and education of students who may have dyslexia. This committee should be led by a chairperson responsible for gathering information, maintaining records, scheduling meetings, monitoring progress, distributing relevant information and overseeing implementation of state dyslexia regulations. The school should also ensure that teachers and screening specialists are well trained in dyslexia and related dyslexia policies.

- **Step 1:** A student is identified as showing possible signs of dyslexia or as being at risk for dyslexia by a concerned parent, educator, or advocate. Some students may be identified as “at risk” for dyslexia as a result of the required grade-level dyslexia screening that is administered at least once in kindergarten through third grade.
- **Step 2:** The concerned individual refers the student to school building level committee (SBLC). The SBLC may also be called the Section 504 Committee, Dyslexia Committee, or other name for the student assistance team. This committee consists of persons knowledgeable about the referred student, dyslexia and other disabilities, assessment options, and educational programming options. This written or verbal report initiates the referral process.
- **Step 3:** SBLC committee members collect and review available student data. Screenings are conducted and interventions may be implemented and/or reviewed as a part of the screening process. However, such screening should not unnecessarily delay the evaluation and eligibility determination process.

- **Step 4:** Students suspected of possible dyslexia may be referred to either the Dyslexia/Section 504 committee for an evaluation or to the Pupil Appraisal Team for a special education evaluation. The SBLC and the parents determine which evaluation referral is most appropriate.

Note: Based on a review of information, including grades, screening results, interventions, observational records, and other forms of data, the committee may determine that an evaluation is not warranted at the current time. In such cases, interventions and strategies may be implemented or continued and/or the SBLC may make other recommendations as appropriate. The SBLC may determine that the child’s needs may be met without further strategies or interventions for the present time.

How are students suspected of having dyslexia evaluated and determined eligible for educational services?

The Louisiana Dyslexia law requires screening of certain students for characteristics of dyslexia and related disorders and evaluation of any student suspected of having a disability as described in the previous section. Such evaluations help to determine the child’s need for specialized instruction and related services.

- **Step 1: Screening**

Every public school student in grades kindergarten through third should be screened at least once for the existence of impediments to a successful school experience, unless objected to by his or her parents. Such impairments include:

- A. dyslexia and related disorders;
- B. attention deficit disorder;
- C. social and environmental factors that may put a child “at risk”.

At any time outside of grade level screenings, students may also be screened if referred to the SBLC and the committee deems such screening to be appropriate.

- **Step 2: Evaluation**

The SBLC and parents determine whether an evaluation through the **Dyslexia/Section 504 Committee** or the **Pupil Appraisal Committee** is most appropriate to address the child’s educational needs. The most common way to evaluate is described below.

- A. Special Education Evaluations

1. If a student is referred for a special education evaluation, parental consent for the evaluation is requested.
2. If parents grant permission, the committee conducts an evaluation and determines whether the student is eligible for special education services. Specific evaluation procedures are described in [Bulletin 1508](#) – Pupil Appraisal Handbook.
3. Students with dyslexia who qualify for special education services are typically identified as a student with a *Specific Learning Disability* and educational needs are addressed through an Individualized Education Program (IEP).
4. Some students identified with other primary impairments such as *Speech-Language Impairment* or *Other Health Impairment* may receive specialized instructional services and/or accommodations to address characteristics of dyslexia if deemed appropriate by their IEP placement committee.

B. Dyslexia/Section 504 Committee Evaluations

1. Students who are not referred for a special education evaluation are evaluated in accordance with guidelines described in [Bulletin 1903](#).
2. Informed parental consent for a Bulletin 1903 evaluation is required and all rights must be explained to parents.
3. The school district must complete the evaluation within 60 operational days from the time parental consent is obtained.
4. Upon completion of a dyslexia evaluation, a written notice of findings shall be provided to the parents. All parental rights and procedural safeguards should be followed as described in the bulletin.

How can the student qualify or become eligible for dyslexia services?

A student is determined to have *characteristics of dyslexia* if the evaluation committee agrees the following criteria are met:

- A. The student has adequate intelligence as demonstrated through performance in the classroom appropriate for the student's age, or on standardized measures of cognitive ability.
- B. The student demonstrates difficulties in areas which are often unexpected in relation to age, previous instruction, and other cognitive and academic disabilities. The student has had extensive remediation and assistance but deficits were evident prior to remediation.
- C. The student must demonstrate five out of six of the characteristics described in the definitions section of this resource.

What educational services are available if a student has dyslexia and has been identified IDEA eligible?

Students identified with a disability under IDEA are entitled to special education and related services through an Individual Education Program (IEP) as described in [Bulletin 1530 – IEP Handbook](#).

What educational services are available if a student has dyslexia and is not an IDEA eligible student?

Students identified as having *characteristics of dyslexia* but not characteristics of an IDEA disability are entitled to remediation in an educational program that meets requirements of the Louisiana Dyslexia Law. [Bulletin 1903](#) requires school districts to:

- A. Routinely provide remediation in a Multisensory Structured Language (MSL) Program for a minimum of 150 minutes per week
- B. MSL programs may be administered during regular class placement, out-of-class placement, individual or small group instruction, or a combination of these options as long as all components content and delivery methods are followed
- C. The MSL program should consist of specific content components and instructional methods as described in [Bulletin 1903](#)
- D. MSL Programs should do the following:
 1. Integrate all aspects of receptive, expressive, and written language;
 2. Contain instruction in phonological awareness, phonetics, syllables, linguistics, meaning, reading fluency, and phonics;
 3. Use instructional methods that include direct, multisensory instruction that is systematic, sequential, cumulative, and individualized;
 4. Allow for adequate practice opportunities to develop automaticity of performance.
- E. Students' participation in MSL programming should be periodically reviewed to determine appropriateness for the student.

What are Section 504 Accommodations?

Children with disabilities such as dyslexia may also qualify for services under Section 504. This law is intended to provide services designed to meet the individual educational needs of students with disabilities as adequately as those without disabilities.

Students are determined to be eligible for Section 504 if they have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. Eligibility is determined by an individual 504 evaluation team that includes the 504 coordinator, teachers of the student, and the students' parent or guardian. These services are typically documented on an Individual Accommodation Plan (IAP). Each school has a Section 504 Chairperson who can assist and oversee this process.