



Tape/paste large photo
of your child or family here.
You want your child to be
the focus of the meeting
for everyone attending!

Write the child's name in
big letters on the line at the top.



Parent Advocacy Resource



My school doesn't say dyslexia.

- In 2015, the definition of dyslexia was passed into MN Statute [125A.01](#), Subd 2. The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) also says dyslexia.

Our school doesn't have any resources on dyslexia.

- A comprehensive guide was developed by MDE and Decoding Dyslexia MN called "Navigating the School System when a Child is Struggling with Reading or Dyslexia" and is on the Decoding Dyslexia MN website under [Parent Resources](#).
- In 2017, funds were appropriated for MDE to hire a Dyslexia Specialist to provide technical assistance for dyslexia, to serve as the primary source of information, to support schools in addressing the needs of students with dyslexia, and to increase professional awareness and instructional competencies to meet the needs of these students (MN Statute [120B.122](#)).

How are schools identifying and serving students that have characteristics of dyslexia?

- MN Statute [120B.12](#), Subd 2, states that each school district must report to MDE their "efforts to screen and identify students with dyslexia to the commissioner by July 1st of each year." And, a student identified must be provided with alternate instruction under MN Statute [125A.56](#) Subd 1c, that is multisensory, systematic, sequential, cumulative, and explicit.
- In 2017, MN Statute [120B.12](#), Subd 3b, was changed to state that a "school district is strongly encouraged to provide a *Personal Learning Plan* for a student who is unable to demonstrate grade-level proficiency, and should be developed in consultation with the student's parent or guardian. The personal learning plan must address knowledge gaps and skill deficiencies".

My school wants to stop reading intervention since my child is past 3rd grade.

- In 2017, an amendment was added to MN Statute [120B.12](#), Subd 3, stating that the district must continue to provide reading intervention past 3rd grade until the child is reading at grade level.

How do I know what assessments our elementary school provides to track reading progress?

- Each school district is required to have a Local Literacy Plan posted on its website per MN Statute
- [120B.12](#), Subd 4a, that explains the school's "plan to have every child reading at or above grade level no later than the end of grade 3". If you can't find it on your district's web site, ASK FOR IT.

Kindly provided as a resource by Decoding Dyslexia Minnesota, where we strive to build dyslexia awareness, empower parents to advocate for their students, and inform policy makers on best practices to ensure all students reach their full potential.

For more resources, visit our website: <http://www.decodingdyslexiamn.org/resources>

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For more information visit <https://www.decodingdyslexiamn.org/>

The information provided does not, and is not intended to, constitute legal advice. All information, content, and materials, including third-party, are for general informational purposes only. You should contact your attorney to obtain advice with respect to any particular legal matter.



Verbal/Phone Conversation Notes

Student: _____ Date: _____

Participants: _____ Annual Meeting: Yes No

_____ Concern Resolved: Yes No

Follow-up Needed: Yes No Date of Follow-up: _____

Concern: _____

Area of Service: (ex. Speech or Reading)	Goal being Addressed: (ex. Reads fluently with 90% accuracy)	Concerns:	Resolution:

Reminder: All phone conversations should be documented with a follow up email!

An email to participants restating the purpose of the call and any decisions should be sent to document that the conversation took place and that there was a clear understanding between both parties. Keep all emails in a folder for reference or print them and add to binder. Sample wording could include:

Mr./Ms. _____,
 Thank you for your time today. I wanted to make sure I understood what we discussed today. You were concerned (I was concerned) about _____. We decided that _____ was how we could resolve the situation. We are following up on _____ to make sure things are working. (If no follow update is picked, you can write "Please let me know if we need to meet again"). Could you please confirm that I am correct in my understanding and clear up any misunderstandings? Thank you.

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IEP/504 Meeting Notes

Student: _____

Meeting Date: _____

Participants: _____

Annual Meeting: Yes No

Renewal Meeting: Yes No

Excused: _____

Concern Resolved: Yes No

Follow-up Needed: Yes No

Purpose: _____

Date of Follow-up: _____

Area of Service: (ex. Speech or Reading)	Goal being Addressed: (ex. Reads fluently with 90% accuracy)	Concerns:	Resolution:

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IEP/504 Team Contact List

Name: _____
Role: _____ Active from Date: _____ to _____
Email: _____
Phone: _____

Name: _____
Role: _____ Active from Date: _____ to _____
Email: _____
Phone: _____

Name: _____
Role: _____ Active from Date: _____ to _____
Email: _____
Phone: _____

Name: _____
Role: _____ Active from Date: _____ to _____
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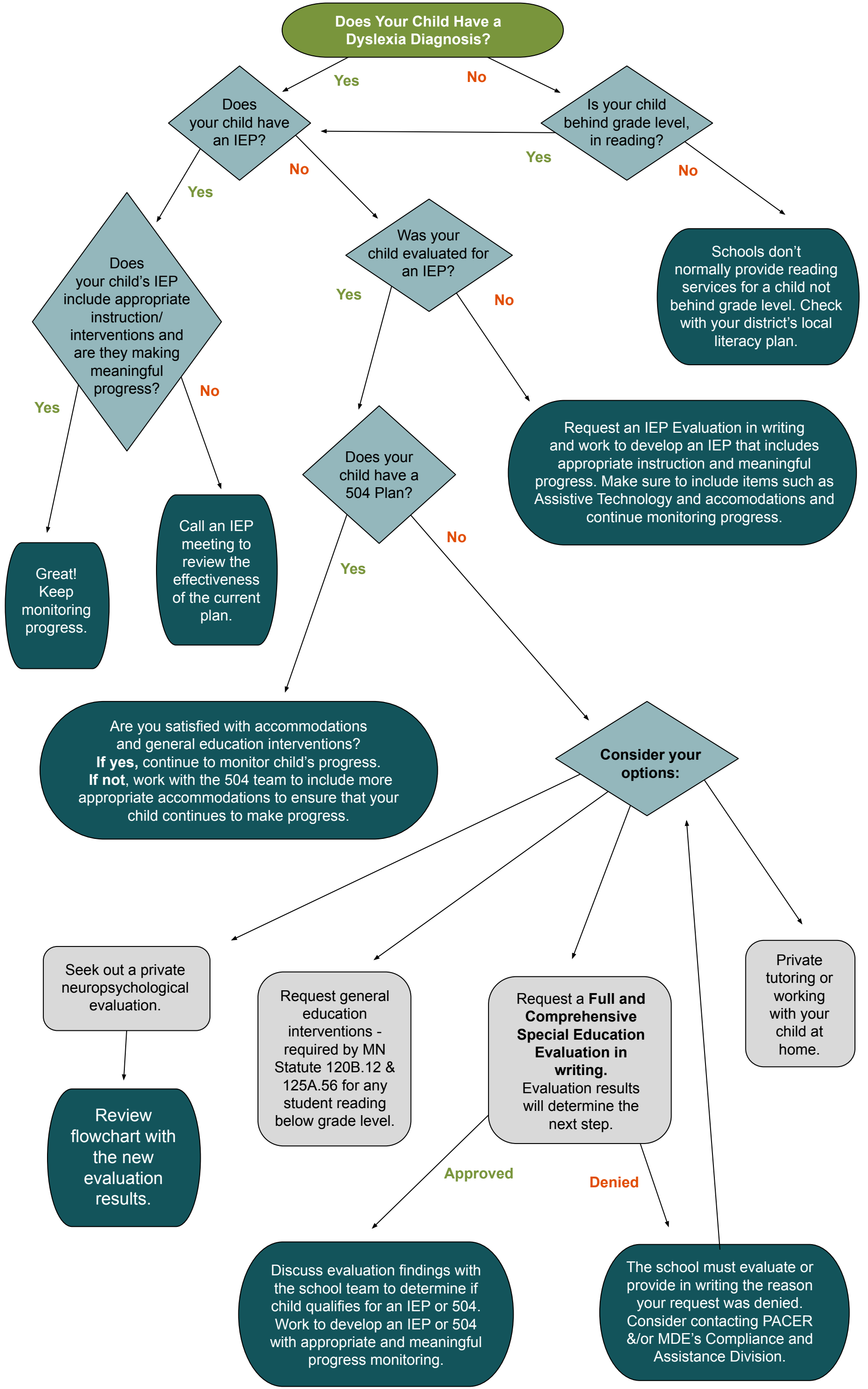
Name: _____
Role: _____ Active from Date: _____ to _____
Email: _____
Phone: _____

Name: _____
Role: _____ Active from Date: _____ to _____
Email: _____
Phone: _____

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Does Your Child Have a Dyslexia Diagnosis?

Does your child have an IEP?

Is your child behind grade level, in reading?

Does your child's IEP include appropriate instruction/interventions and are they making meaningful progress?

Was your child evaluated for an IEP?

Schools don't normally provide reading services for a child not behind grade level. Check with your district's local literacy plan.

Request an IEP Evaluation in writing and work to develop an IEP that includes appropriate instruction and meaningful progress. Make sure to include items such as Assistive Technology and accommodations and continue monitoring progress.

Does your child have a 504 Plan?

Great! Keep monitoring progress.

Call an IEP meeting to review the effectiveness of the current plan.

Are you satisfied with accommodations and general education interventions? If yes, continue to monitor child's progress. If not, work with the 504 team to include more appropriate accommodations to ensure that your child continues to make progress.

Consider your options:

Seek out a private neuropsychological evaluation.

Review flowchart with the new evaluation results.

Request general education interventions - required by MN Statute 120B.12 & 125A.56 for any student reading below grade level.

Request a **Full and Comprehensive Special Education Evaluation in writing.** Evaluation results will determine the next step.

Private tutoring or working with your child at home.

Discuss evaluation findings with the school team to determine if child qualifies for an IEP or 504. Work to develop an IEP or 504 with appropriate and meaningful progress monitoring.

The school must evaluate or provide in writing the reason your request was denied. Consider contacting PACER &/or MDE's Compliance and Assistance Division.

The difference: IEPs vs. 504 plans

Is a 504 Plan and an IEP the same thing? No, they are not the same and knowing the difference is important when determining the type of services and interventions your child needs to help them be successful in school.

	Individualized Education Plan (IEP) <i>(Italicized sections are direct quotes from the US Dept. of Education IDEA website)</i>	Section 504 Plan <i>(Italicized sections are direct quotes from the Office of Civil Rights Section 504 webpage)</i>
The Basics	To receive an IEP, your child will have to qualify through a special education evaluation at school. This is the first step in the process. When your child has an IEP, this means they are working within the Special Education Department at your school. IEP's fall under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which are federal laws for educating students with disabilities.	A 504 plan is a list of accommodations that a child receives at school to help them achieve the best educational outcome possible. A 504 plan does not require a formal evaluation or a diagnosis. Children who are not able to qualify for an IEP may qualify for a 504 plan. Although 504 accommodations are not part of the Individuals with Disabilities Act, they are covered under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
Who Qualifies?	Students with a disability as defined by the IDEA, provided that the disability limits the child's ability to learn in a general education classroom. The child must demonstrate a need for specialized instruction through a formal evaluation process and by meeting criteria.	<i>To Qualify for a 504 the student must (i) have a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities (learning for dyslexic children), (ii) has a record of such an impairment, or (iii) is regarded as having such an impairment.</i> <i>Section 504 requires that school districts provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to qualified students in their jurisdictions.</i>
Who must follow an IEP?	Teachers and school staff are bound by the terms of the IEP. § 300.350 IEP-accountability. <i>Each public agency must -</i> <i>(1) Provide special education and related services to a child with a disability in accordance with the child's IEP; and</i> <i>(2) Make a good faith effort to assist the child to achieve the goals and objectives or benchmarks listed in the IEP.</i>	<i>Regular education teachers must implement the provisions of Section 504 plans when those plans govern the teachers' treatment of students for whom they are responsible. If the teachers fail to implement the plans, such failure can cause the school district to be in noncompliance with Section 504.</i>

Changes and Consent	Parents of a child with an IEP must be given written notice and agree to changes made to their child’s IEP. Parents must consent to their child having the initial evaluation for the IEP and the implementation of services. An IEP must be reviewed yearly.	Section 504 requires that parents of a child with a 504 plan are given notice (does not have to be in writing but it often is) of any significant changes to their child’s 504 plan. As with an IEP, parents must give consent for the initial evaluation and implementation of a 504 plan.
Once the student is eligible for services, is he/she always eligible for services?	<i>At least every three years the child must be reevaluated. This evaluation is often called a "triennial." Its purpose is to find out if the child continues to be a "child with a disability," as defined by IDEA, and what the child's educational needs are. However, the child must be reevaluated more often if conditions warrant or if the child's parent or teacher asks for a new evaluation.</i>	<i>Yes, as long as the student remains eligible. The protections of Section 504 extend only to individuals who meet the regulatory definition of a person with a disability. If a recipient school district re-evaluates a student in accordance with the Section 504 regulatory provision at 34 C.F.R. 104.35 and determines that the student's mental or physical impairment no longer substantially limits his/her ability to learn or any other major life activity, the student is no longer eligible for services under Section 504.</i>
Other	<p><i>As of January 1, 2009, school districts, in determining whether a student has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits that student in a major life activity, must not consider the ameliorating effects of any mitigating measures that student is using. This is a change from prior law. In the Amendments Act, however, Congress specified that the ameliorative effects of mitigating measures must not be considered in determining if a person is an individual with a disability. Congress did not define the term “mitigating measures” but rather provided a non-exhaustive list of “mitigating measures.” Among them are the “use of assistive technology; reasonable accommodations or auxiliary aids or services; and learned behavioral or adaptive neurological modifications.”</i></p> <p><i>Congress created one exception to the mitigating measures analysis. The ameliorative effects of the mitigating measures of ordinary eyeglasses or contact lenses shall be considered in determining if an impairment substantially limits a major life activity.</i></p>	

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504 Plan Information

What is a 504 Plan?

"504" references Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973. According to the Office of Civil Rights, Section 504 requires "a school district provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to qualified students with a disability who is in the school district's jurisdiction, regardless of the nature or severity of the disability." It further states that no one with a disability can be excluded from federally funded programs or activities, including education. Under this law, disability is defined as a real or **perceived** "physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities." It is important for parents to understand that this includes students diagnosed with a disability, having a record of an impairment, or regarded as having an impairment. Section 504 does not require a diagnosis if a parent can show that the child has a record of an impairment or has been regarded as having an impairment.

Sometimes, "Specific Learning Disability" is the label schools give children with Dyslexia. As a parent in Minnesota, you have the right to have the word dyslexia included in your 504 plan. Specific Learning Disability (SLD) is listed as an example of an impairment that limits one or more major life functions, and learning is listed as an example of a major life activity. Since dyslexia affects learning, students should be eligible based on these definitions.

It is also important for parents to know that "The Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008" states that "the ameliorating effects of mitigating measures (other than ordinary eyeglasses or contact lenses) NOT be considered in determining whether an individual has a disability." This means that a child who has received remediation must still be regarded as having the impairment. The 504 plan contains accommodations that remove barriers from learning. Accommodations are changes and adjustments made to give students with disabilities equal access to the curriculum.

Parents who want a 504 Plan for their child should do the following:

1. Review the Resource Guide to Section 504 from the US Department of Education.
2. Review MDE's Compliance Manual for Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
3. Read your school district's 504 plan procedures.
4. Send school a request for a 504 Plan in writing, sample letters are available online.
5. Go to the meeting with documentation of your child's diagnosis or showing a perceived impairment and a list of requested accommodations.

Parents frequently report their child could not get a 504 Plan because he or she was not academically behind, or not discrepant enough from their peers. Being academically behind is NOT required to get a 504 Plan! The U.S. Office of Civil Rights which governs Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act has issued several documents which explain this. These documents explain that parents do not have to go to extensive means to prove their child has a disability that is substantially limiting.

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) has no enforcement authority for this law. The U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) takes complaints regarding Section 504.

For more information visit https://www.decodingdyslexiamn.org/504_plan

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504 plan template

School information

School name: Hartleyville Middle School

Student name: Kevin Rodríguez Date plan written: 9/3/19

Date of birth: 5/26/2007 Grade: 7 Date plan goes into effect: 9/10/19

Qualifying disability: ADHD Date plan to be reviewed: 9/3/20

Documentation of disability (see attached): Report from Developmental Pediatrics (dated 6/28/19); Child Behavior Checklist & Rating Scales (from school evaluation dated 5/16/19)

504 team members

Role	Name	Contact information	Attendance signature
504 plan coordinator	Mr. Tallison	atallison@hms.edu	Andrew Tallison
General education teacher	Ms. Anderson	banderson@hms.edu	Bree Anderson
Parent or guardian	Mrs. Rodríguez	rodriguez@me.com	Elsa Rodríguez
Other: Behavior specialist	Ms. Zicotti	czicotti@hms.edu	Celina Zicotti
Other:			

Teacher education and support

Teachers who work with Kevin will be provided consultation time with the school behavior specialist, Ms. Zicotti. She will help them implement accommodations and behavior management strategies in the classroom. Any teacher who works with Kevin, and who isn't trained as a special educator or behavior specialist, must watch this 3-minute video, *What Is ADHD?*, available at u.org/whatisADHD. Teachers who work with Kevin must also review the attached articles on (1) signs of ADHD they may see in the classroom and (2) self-advocacy phrases for middle school students.

504 plan template

Accommodations and/or services

Area of educational need	Accommodation or service	Person(s) responsible for implementing	Frequency of accommodation or service
Organization	Write homework assignments in planner and have teachers initial it.	Student, all teachers	Daily: At the end of each class
Organization	Provide an extra set of books to keep at home.	All teachers	Annually
Distractibility	Provide student with a quiet area for test-taking & in-class individual work.	All teachers	As needed, including during state standardized assessments
Impulsivity	Give agreed-on signals reminding student to raise hand before answering.	All teachers	As needed

Notes: _____

Plan approved by: Andrew Tallison

Date approved: 9/3/2019

IEP Information

What is an IEP?

IEP stands for ***Individualized Education Plan***. It is a written document describing the educational services that a child will receive when eligible for special education services. The purpose of an IEP is to set reasonable learning goals for the child, list accommodations, and specifically state the services that the school district will provide. IEPs should be personalized to meet the child's unique needs. IEPs are governed by the Federal Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA), and the IEP document is legally binding - meaning the school district must provide the services written by the IEP team.

How do I ask the school to evaluate my child for an IEP?

Ask in writing for a full, comprehensive evaluation. Examples are available online.

Q: "I am concerned about my child's reading, but when I ask the schools if it could be dyslexia, the school says, 'We don't test for dyslexia'. Is this correct?"

A: Yes and No.

- Schools do not typically directly diagnose students with dyslexia, but they have an obligation under "Child Find" to identify students with disabilities.
- Schools should be **screening** all students not reading at grade level for dyslexia (not diagnosing) under MN Statute 120B.12. This screening is different than a special education evaluation.

How does a child qualify in MN?

In IDEA, dyslexia falls under the category of Specific Learning Disability (SLD). Minnesota Administrative Rule 3525.1341 follows the Federal IDEA law and outlines the qualifying criteria for eligibility. A child can qualify in two ways; by being 1.75 standard deviations below the mean (see Subp. 2. C) or from an inadequate rate of progress (see Subp. 2. D). A child must meet the criteria in Subp. 2. A, B, and C **or** A, B, and D. A team override decision could also be made per Minnesota Administrative Rule 3525.1354 "Team Override on Eligibility Decisions". There is also information in MDE (MN Department of Education)'s SLD Manual, in particular, Chapter 10 - Deciding Eligibility.

My child qualifies - now what?

The IEP is developed by a team of school personnel and the child's parents. The IEP team meets, reviews assessment information about the child, and develops an educational program for the individual needs of the child. The initial IEP meeting must be held within 30 calendar days of determining the child is eligible for special education. A child's IEP must also be reviewed at least annually to determine if the child's goals were met and if any changes are needed. A parent can ask for an IEP meeting at any time. The United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit released an opinion that an IEP can specify a specific methodology: "When a particular methodology plays a critical role in the student's educational plan, it must be specified in the IEP rather than left up to individual teachers' discretion."

What does MDE (Minnesota Department of Education) say?

There are lots of Q&A resources on MDE's website under "IEP, Evaluations, and Eligibility". NOTE: IEPs should be based on the educational needs of the student. See their Q&A for Needs-Based Goals. Do you still have questions? Contact MDE's Compliance and Assistance Division.

What if there is a disagreement?

MDE has a page dedicated to "Conflicts in Special Education".

For more information visit <https://www.decodingdyslexiamn.org/iep>

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Anatomy of an IEP

An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a blueprint for a child's special education experience at school. The plan describes what services and supports the child gets. IEPs tend to have many common elements. Below are some of the important parts of an IEP.



Individualized Education Program

Student information

Student Name: Karen Lee	Date of IEP: 9/5/2019
Date of Birth: 5/22/2011	Grade: Rising 3rd

IEP team

IEP Case Manager: John Santos
General Education Teacher: Janie Doe
District Representative: Pedro Ramirez
Parent: Frank Lee
Special Education Resource Teacher: Ellen Wong

Student information

The first page lists the child's name, age, date of birth, grade, and other details. It also includes a rundown of the IEP team.

Present level of educational performance

Academic performance

Karen is a kind, helpful third grader who is always willing to work hard, even on tasks that are difficult for her. She has a strong love of learning and will seek out books relevant to her interests of the outdoors and animals. She is also quite articulate in classroom discussion.

However, while Karen is presently meeting grade-level expectations in math, she continues to show significant difficulty in the area of reading fluency and comprehension compared to her classroom peers. Karen is able to decode single letters, vowel combinations, and digraphs (like “ch” or “sh”) in short, consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words, where she is 80% accurate, on average. She has difficulty applying these skills when reading multi-syllable words, where she is 35% accurate, on average, or when reading words in actual passages of text. Recent measures show that Karen is able to read third-grade passages at a rate of 40 words per minute, with 85% accuracy and less than 65% text comprehension.

Students in third grade are expected to read 100-140 words per minute, and answer comprehension questions with 90-100% accuracy. Karen is able to read late first-grade passages at 90 words per minute, with 95% accuracy, and comprehension at 90% accuracy on average. This is Karen’s independent reading level. Karen’s reading difficulties affect her participation in the general education curriculum by making it impossible for her to read grade-level text independently and learn grade-level content effectively.

Present level of educational performance (PLOP, PLAAFP, or PLP)

This describes the child’s current abilities, skills, challenges, and strengths. It may also discuss social skills and behavior.

Annual goals

Goal 1

Karen will increase her reading fluency from 90 words per minute in late first-grade passages to 90 words per minute in late second-grade passages.

Objectives:

1. Given phonological awareness instruction, Karen will read unfamiliar 2- and 3-syllable words with at least 85% accuracy over two consecutive trials as measured on reading post-tests administered by the special education resource teacher.
2. Given instruction in a sight-word reading program, Karen will read 180 high-frequency words with 85% accuracy over two consecutive trials as measured by the special education resource teacher.

Goal 2

Karen will increase her reading comprehension from 90% accuracy at the late first-grade level to 90% accuracy at the late second-grade level.

Objectives:

1. Given pre-teaching of new vocabulary, picture supports, and up to three adult prompts, Karen will correctly answer comprehension questions about events in a late second-grade text with 90% accuracy over two consecutive trials as measured by the special education resource teacher.
2. Given pre-teaching of new vocabulary and up to three adult prompts, Karen will correctly answer comprehension questions about short, late second-grade passages.

Annual goals

These should consist of academic and functional skills that the child can reasonably accomplish during the school year. Each is broken down into shorter-term objectives.

Progress reporting

Progress toward annual goals will be measured through classwork, observation, tests and quizzes, and written reports. Karen's parents will receive a quarterly written report on her progress.

Progress reporting

The IEP states how the IEP team will keep track of the child's progress toward annual goals.

Services

Service: Reading Instruction	Frequency: Once daily for 60 minutes per session
Location: ABC Elementary School	Instructional Setting: Special Education Small Group
Duration: 9/15/2019 - 6/1/2020	

Services

Here, the IEP details:

1. What special education services the child will get and for how long
2. Any services outside the school year (like summer services)
3. Any “transition planning” to get the child ready for life after high school

Supplementary aids and services

The student will be provided with the following accommodations/modifications:

Accommodation/Modification: Textbooks on CD/tape	
Frequency: Daily	Location: ABC Elementary School and at home
Instructional Setting: All classes and at home	
Duration: 9/15/2019 - 6/1/2020	

Supplementary aids and services

The IEP specifies what accommodations the child will get in school – like a seat at the front of the class. It also details any modifications. These are changes to what’s expected of the child – like less homework. This section will also include information about any assistive technology the child needs.

Participation

Although Karen has been responsive to adaptations and modifications in her regular education classroom, she continues to progress slowly on her IEP reading goals. Small group pull-out instruction for an hour a day allows for intensive, individualized instruction in Karen's identified area of need, while allowing her to spend most of the day in her general education classroom.

Participation

This section explains how and to what extent the child will be included in general education classes and other activities, including state tests.

Parent/Guardian Consent

Indicate your response by checking the appropriate space and sign below.

I **give** permission to implement this IEP.

I **do not give** permission to implement this IEP.

Signature

Consent

Many IEPs have a signature line where a parent or guardian officially agrees to the plan. Keep in mind that an IEP isn't all-or-nothing. Families can attach an addendum, agreeing to only parts of the IEP.

Process Tips and Intervention Red Flags

Tips

- 504/IEP documents do not have to be signed at the meeting, don't sign them until you are satisfied with the document.
- Put everything in writing.
- All meetings should be followed up with an email to all involved, summarizing key information and important details.
- Ask all team members how long and in what capacity they work with your child.
- Consider the future needs of your student, not just the current needs when developing accommodations.

Program content is the first essential that makes up a successful reading intervention, but issues of implementation – when, how, by whom, and for how long the intervention is presented to the student – are factors that determine the ultimate success or failure of even the very best interventions. Shaywitz, 2005

Red Flags

- Curriculum that is not appropriate for students with dyslexia:
 - Anything written by Fountas & Pinnell, including Leveled Literacy Intervention, and Lucy Calkins.
 - Reading Recovery
- Program content that is not appropriate for students with dyslexia:
 - Guided reading
 - Leveled text
 - Balanced literacy
- Provider “has worked with dyslexic students”
 - What are their qualifications? (MN Master of Arts in Literacy and/or MN Reading License are not substantial!)
 - What level of training have they completed?
- Suggestions provided that puts the responsibility on the student:
 - Give it more time; Wait and see
 - Read more, Slow down reading
 - Try harder
- Anything that does not TARGET your child's most pressing needs (e.g., If a child could comprehend the text were it not for an underlying deficit, there should be no intervention in comprehension; instruction should focus on the weaknesses in foundational skills.).

For more information visit <https://www.decodingdyslexiamn.org/binders>

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Screening and Evaluations

Screening vs. Evaluation

Minnesota statute requires that public schools screen all children not reading at grade level for characteristics of dyslexia. This is not a diagnosis. Screening for characteristics of dyslexia is designed to identify students who may have dyslexia. This can be done by staff or teachers in your school district. A more thorough examination (evaluation) is necessary to then determine the extent and severity of the child's dyslexia. School evaluations often do not say dyslexia because that is a medical diagnosis. Schools will place the child into a disability category such as Specific Learning Disability (SLD). This includes children with dyslexia provided they meet the Specific Learning Disability criteria.

School Evaluation vs. Private Evaluation

A school evaluation focuses on determining if a child qualifies for an IEP under an IDEA disability category. The school typically does not have staff to diagnosis dyslexia. A private neuropsychological evaluation can be sought to provide a diagnosis which is different from the IDEA disability categories. A dyslexia diagnosis is different than qualifying for an IEP. Schools can (but do not have to) take into consideration a private evaluation. Understood.org offers a variety of evaluation basics.

Dyslexia Diagnosis Assessments in an Evaluation

ALL the following areas should be tested:

- Phonological Processing
- Rapid Automatic Naming
- Oral Reading
- Reading Comprehension
- Single word reading
- Nonsense word reading
- Processing speed history
- Spelling
- Vocabulary
- Writing sample
- Math skills
- Intelligence
- Review of school records
- Thorough review of family and school history

What if my child doesn't qualify for an IEP or 504?

For children not meeting criteria for special education or 504 accommodations, Minnesota statute 120B.12, sub. 3 states that "the district shall provide reading intervention to accelerate student growth and reach the goal of reading at or above grade level by the end of the current grade and school year. If a student does not read at or above grade level by the end of grade 3, the district must continue to provide reading intervention until the student reads at grade level." Minnesota statute 125A.56 goes further and describes the type of instruction required, "a student identified as being unable to read at grade level under section [120B.12](#), sub. 2, paragraph (a), must be provided with alternate instruction under this subdivision that is multisensory, systematic, sequential, cumulative, and explicit."

For more information visit <https://www.decodingdyslexiamn.org/diagnosis>

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Bell Curves and Scores

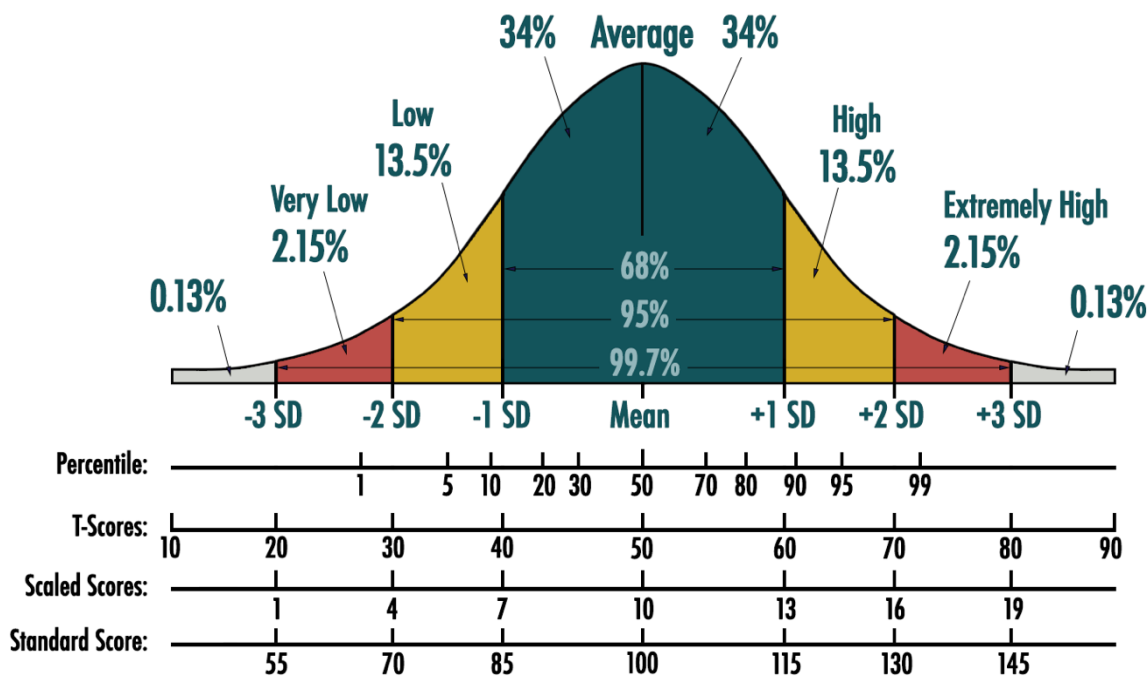
Understanding Bell Curves

A bell curve is a visual representation of where your child's performances fall in comparison to those of their age matched peers. Understanding how to read a bell curve allows you to better understand your child's scores. When looking at the bell curve the center of the curve is the average or mean. The scores that fall to the left and right of the curve determine whether the score is above or below average. Scores to the far right would be the highest scores. The scores to the farthest left are the lowest scores.

The curve is typically broken down into sections. The descriptors (average, high average, etc.) and their percentile ranges could vary by test. Each section represents one standard deviation from the majority score. The largest section in the middle is immediately to the left and right of the center of the curve and represents +/- 1 standard deviation. This is where the largest portion of scores will fall (68%) and is typically considered the average range. All the sections added together will equal 100%. Each side of the curve will have 50% of the scores. Once you know your child's scores you will be able to determine percentile and compare to their peers.

Understanding Evaluation Scores

Scores may be presented in a variety of ways including percentiles, t-scores, scaled scores, and standard scores. **T-scores** are often used in behavior rating scales, they have standard deviations of 10 and the mean is 50. A child with a t-score of 40 is 1 standard deviation below the mean and a student with a t-score of 60 is one standard deviation above. Similarly, scaled scores have a mean of 10 and a standard deviation of 3 and standard scores have a mean of 100 and standard deviation of 15. **Scaled Scores** typically tells us how well a child did on a sub-test, and a **standard score** typically tells us how well a child did on a broad domain (which can often be made of sub-tests). Scaled scores are used to account for differences in difficulty across different test sections. The image below will help to show how scores compare to one another. It depends on the individual tests as to what's considered average, low, or high, etc.



For more information visit <https://www.decodingdyslexiamn.org/binders>

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Deciding Services (IEP) and Accommodations (IEP/504) from the Evaluation for Initial IEP or 504 Plan

Student: _____ Evaluation Date: _____

Area of Concern: (ex. Anxiety around timed test taking)	How is the need being addressed - accommodation and/or service: (ex. Accommodation)	Accommodation or Service: (ex. Student will be allowed extra time to complete classroom assignments, quizzes, or tests (double-time).)	Goals for services:

For more information visit <https://www.decodingdyslexiamn.org/binders>

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Potential Accommodations

Students can receive accommodations under a 504 plan or an IEP. There are many resources online with sample accommodations. Bright Solutions for Dyslexia has an excellent video and handout about accommodations for a student with dyslexia.

We suggest looking at the IEP or 504 evaluation for areas of weakness. Try to address all areas of concern with services (IEP only), assistive technology, and/or accommodations. Also ask your student what their day looks like and what is a struggle. Consider your child's mental health as well.

These are potential accommodations. Needs will differ as a child ages and every child is different. There are some redundant suggestions to provides examples of different wording.

General:

- Student will / will not work with parent volunteers.
- Student will not trade assignments, quizzes, or tests with other students for grading.
- Teacher will not display grades or progress, even without a name.
- Student will have the opportunity to participate in a weekly social skills group with peers.
- Student will be provided preferential seating in the front of the class next to a quiet student. (This could also be away from any other distractions.)
- Student will be able to clearly see and hear the teacher during all instructional time.
- Teacher will work to minimize auditory and visual distractions.
- Student will be allowed to "take a break" when a break from the classroom is needed.

Wording options for not withholding activities:

- Student will not be held from assemblies, pep fest, and other such school events during the school day to complete work.
- Recess, special events, or rewards cannot be withheld for academic, punitive, or discipline reasons including missed work or goals unless it is withheld for the entire class.
- Student will not be held in from lunch, gym, or specials to complete an incomplete task unless it is student or parent requested.
- Student will not be held in from recess to complete work.
- Teacher will communicate with parents about items student needs to complete if it cannot be fit in during the regular class time.
- Any communication from teachers that indicates a need to retake a test, quiz, or assignment or concerns regarding performance should be done via email to the parent/guardian and not through the student.
- Assignments, quizzes, or tests with a grade of ____% or less will not be returned. Assignments, quizzes, or tests with a grade of ____% or better may be returned.
- Student will not be called on unless hand is raised or student volunteers.
- Student will not be asked to cold read or provide written answers in front of the class unless student volunteers.
- For any absences, student will be given ___ additional days (beyond time normally given to complete work from an absence) to submit work for full credit.
- When learning a second language consider other options such as American Sign Language, grading a second language class as Pass/Fail, or waive the requirement of a second language.

Auditory Processing:

Wording options for reducing verbal instruction:

- ❑ Teacher will slow down and reduce verbal communication when necessary. Teacher will repeat verbatim when asked.
- ❑ Teacher will reduce verbal instruction by keeping directions brief and use visual modeling and reinforcement. It is also helpful to pause when speaking to allow student to process information provided. Student may miss entire words or merge words together when listening to ongoing speech, especially with fast-paced talkers.
- ❑ Student will be provided (by school's speech pathologist) with auditory memory strategies (using both words and pictures) as a reference to use in the classroom. This will be kept at his/her desk.
- ❑ Teacher will not solely give directions for homework assignments orally. Directions will be communicated to parents (and student) in writing.
- ❑ Student will be given preferential seating in the classroom, away from auditory distractions. If the assigned seat in the classroom is not optimal, child will notify the teacher and request a change.

Wording options for step-by-step instructions:

- ❑ The teacher is responsible for providing step by step visual instructions and student will not be penalized for failure to remember auditory instructions.
- ❑ Teacher will provide step by step instructions. Student does not follow multi-step instruction well, which is very normal for dyslexics. Student does well with 1-2 step directions.

Classroom Instructions:

- ❑ When necessary, student's teacher will break down multi-step activities into one-step directions including for individual and small group activities.
- ❑ Teacher will provide small group teaching, when necessary, for reading.
- ❑ Instructions for assignments, quizzes, and tests will be given orally to student with confirmation that student understands the directions. Student will verify his/her understanding with an oral or visual signal.
- ❑ Allow student to verbalize answers, when necessary, i.e., spelling tests or testing that is taking too long.
- ❑ Student will be able to take a 2-3 minute break from activities where his/her dyslexia is an obstacle.

Assignments:

- ❑ On any assignments, quizzes, or tests on which student is given feedback or asked to make corrections, student will receive a blank copy of the assignment on which to learn from or to make corrections. Student will not be asked to correct or learn from a marked or corrected test, quiz, or assignment.
- ❑ Student may request to have directions on assignments read aloud to him/her.
- ❑ On assignments where spelling is not the primary goal, student's writing should be assessed based on content and not on spelling or penmanship.

Wording options for additional time to complete assignments:

- Student may ask for 1 additional day for assignments. Additional time can be granted with teacher permission.
- For any missing assignments, the teacher will check-in with student and provide 2 days from that time to turn in the assignments without penalty.
- Parents and staff will communicate if work completion becomes an issue to determine an appropriate plan and implementation of strategies.
- Student will not trade assignments, quizzes, or tests with other students for grading. Do not display grades or progress, even without a name.

Wording options for shortening assignments:

- Shortened assignments as needed.
- When necessary, the number of questions/problems on assignments will be reduced.
- Parents may shorten homework assignments when necessary and will communicate to the teacher when and why assignments were shortened.
- In consultation with the teacher, the child or the parent may request extended time to complete an assignment or task or request a homework modification or reduction.

Testing Accommodations:

- Regarding timed tasks related to direct instruction reading or math, student will participate in the task, but will not be graded on these tasks.
- Student will only participate in timed testing when it is being conducted for the progress monitoring purposes. Otherwise, student will not be timed for in-class assignments, quizzes, or tests.
- Students will have extended time on all assessments (such as standardized testing and state assessments).
- Student will be allowed extra time to complete classroom assessments, quizzes, or tests (example: double time).
- When test corrections are assigned to the class, no explanation of what/why/how the student got the problem wrong will be required.
- Student will be allowed to take routine tests and quizzes outside of the classroom setting with extended time - student will ask the teacher if student wants to utilize this accommodation.
- Student will be allowed to take standardized assessments such as the MCA and MAP in a small group setting with extended time.
- Student may request that the teacher reads test directions or questions to him/her (except when prohibited, such as during MCA or MAP testing).

Homework:

- Student is allowed a limit of _____ minutes maximum time to be spent on homework without penalty. Parents can use discretion to determine if student can do more or less of his/her homework on a given night without penalty and will communicate with the classroom teacher related to the amount of homework completed.
- Student is allowed to dictate to an adult, who will write for him/her, to complete homework assignments - unless the goal of the homework assignment is handwriting. In which case, student can dictate the handwriting sentence to an adult and the adult can write down a model for student to copy in his/her own handwriting.

Handwriting:

- ❑ Student's handwriting will be graded only on assignments, quizzes, and tests specifically targeting handwriting and not on assignments, quizzes, and tests for other subjects.
- ❑ Due to writing challenges, child will be able to type rather than write.
- ❑ Student will be graded on the content of his/her writing, not his/her spelling or handwriting (exception: spelling may be considered in classes such as Spanish where spelling can change the meaning of a word or in Language Arts when completing a long-term project or writing task where multiple edits are expected).
- ❑ Student will be allowed to use apps such as Dragon Dictation, Popplet, Padlet, iCard Sort, Co- Writer Universal, or other technology supported by the school district to assist with writing tasks and organization.

Spelling:

- ❑ Three consecutive spelling tests on which student receives a score of 70% or below will trigger a team meeting to discuss alternative spelling tests.
- ❑ Teacher will not write a grade on the spelling test or mark words with an X. The correct spelling should be written next to an incorrect word.
- ❑ Student's spelling will only be graded on spelling tests. Points will not be taken off for misspellings or reversals in assignments other than spelling quizzes or tests.
- ❑ Student will not be penalized for reversals on spelling assignments, quizzes, and/or tests.
- ❑ Student will not be graded for spelling.

Reading:

- ❑ Student will not be required to read in front of the class. Student will only be called on to read aloud if he/she volunteers. Exceptions will be made for reading class when with his/her readiness group during which student can be called on to read.
- ❑ Student will be allowed to use audiobooks including Learning Ally or Bookshare for reading assignments, including during silent reading.

Memorization/Reciting:

- ❑ Student will be given the option to choose shortened or alternate memory assignments.
- ❑ Student will be allowed to recite any shortened or alternate options away from peers and will not be penalized for mispronouncing words.
- ❑ Student will not have to memorize in a language other than English except in his/her other language class.

Math:

- ❑ Student will be allowed a multiplication chart and other relevant visual aids for math tests, quizzes, and assignments.
- ❑ Teacher will provide enough space on worksheets, quizzes, and tests for student to line up his/her problems and solve them.
- ❑ Student will be allowed to use a calculator.

Instructional Material, Aids, and Supports:

- ❑ Student will be able to access and utilize google read/write.
- ❑ As needed, student will be given a visual schedule/task list.
- ❑ Student will be provided with structured or skeleton notes, to reduce the volume of writing.
- ❑ Reduce/eliminate copying tasks.

Wording options for class notes and study guides:

- ❑ Student will be provided a complete copy of any class notes at the beginning of class.
- ❑ Student will not be required to copy down the notes and if notes are graded student will be allowed to turn in the provided complete notes for his/her grade.
- ❑ Student will be provided with a completed study guide or be given guidance in filling out any student guide. If the study guide is graded, student will be allowed to turn in the provided or guided copy for the grade.
- ❑ Student will be provided access to a letter chart for assignments/tests, such as spelling tests, where letter formation may impact grade.
- ❑ Student will be allowed to listen to books on their iPad during free reading time (but will also have the option to read a physical book).
- ❑ Student will be provided access to assistive technology for organization, reading and writing assignments.

For more information visit <https://www.decodingdyslexiamn.org/accommodations>

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SMART Goals

When developing an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) it is important to insist that your district use SMART goals. SMART goals are goals that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-orientated, and Time-bound. SMART goals allow for both the parents and teachers to clearly know what the child’s educational expectations are for the current year and they allow for accurate progress monitoring. SMART goals should be realistic goals that your child will be able to achieve and help narrow the gap between your child and their same age peers. These goals may also be called annual goals. Regardless of the name, all goals should be SMART goals. Below is a chart with examples of smart goals and goals that do not meet this standard.

SMART STANDARD	Definition	Example of non-Smart	Example of SMART Goal
Specific	The goal specifically names the targeted skill or area of concern and what the expected results will be. This is very detailed.	Sam will read faster by the end of second grade than he did in the fall.	Sam's reading rate will improve from 35 wpm in the fall of 2nd grade to 55 wpm by the spring of 2nd grade.
Measurable	The goal will give specific standards that can be measured. This could be done through standardized tests, screenings, or curriculum measurements.	Sam will write at grade level.	Sam will be able to write 3 paragraphs, using proper punctuation, with less than 5 errors by spring of 2021.
Attainable	The goals set by the IEP team are attainable and realistic for your child while still making adequate progress.	Sam will master his addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division facts.	Sam will be able to multiply digits 1 through 10, with 90% accuracy, by spring of 2022.
Results Orientated	The goal gives clear expectations of what your child is expected to accomplish during the school year.	Sam will engage in conversation with peers.	Sam will engage in 3 minutes of dialogue with his peers, 4 times a week by March of 2021.
Time-bound	There are specific time requirements for each goal to be met. The goal will also list when and how often progress monitoring is to be done.	Sam will be able to read his sight words with 85% accuracy on 9 of 10 assessments.	Sam will be able to read grade level sight words, with 85% accuracy, on 9 of 10 literacy assessments, by May of 2023.

For more information visit <https://www.decodingdyslexiamn.org/binders>

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Current Minnesota Administrative Rules and Statutes

MN Administrative Rules for qualifying for an IEP:

- Minnesota Administrative Rule 3525.1341: This rule follows the Federal IDEA law and outlines the qualifying criteria for eligibility under Specific Learning Disability. Note that a child can qualify in two ways. 1) The child is 1.75 standard deviation below the mean (see Subp. 2. C). 2) The child has had an inadequate rate of progress (see Subp. 2. D). A child must meet criteria in Subp. 2. A, B, and C **or** A, B, and D.
- Minnesota Administrative Rule 3525.1354: "Team Override on Eligibility Decisions". "The team may determine that a pupil is eligible for special instruction and related services because the pupil has a disability and needs special instruction even though the pupil does not meet the specific requirement in parts 3525.1325 to 3525.1345 and 3525.2335."
- Chapter 3525 outlines rules for Children with a Disability. "'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."

Minnesota Statutes:

- 125A.01 defines dyslexia.
- 120B.12 outlines Read Well by Third Grade. This includes the Local Literacy Plan that every school district must develop and post on its website. Also, it includes mandatory screening dyslexia requirements for students not reading at grade level (effective July 2020).
- 125A.56, subdivision 1 describes alternate instruction to be provided to a child not reading at grade level. If a child does not respond well to intervention, see MN Rule 3525.1341 listed in the section below for IEP qualification guidelines.
- 122A.06 subdivision 4 defines terms for phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension.
- 122A.092 Teacher preparation programs must include instruction on dyslexia.
- 120B.122 Dyslexia Specialist
- 120A Minnesota's Education Code
- 120A.03 The MN Department of Education's Mission Statement

For more information visit https://www.decodingdyslexiamn.org/mn_legislation

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

October 23, 2015

Dear Colleague:

Ensuring a high-quality education for children with specific learning disabilities is a critical responsibility for all of us. I write today to focus particularly on the unique educational needs of children with dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia, which are conditions that could qualify a child as a child with a specific learning disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS) has received communications from stakeholders, including parents, advocacy groups, and national disability organizations, who believe that State and local educational agencies (SEAs and LEAs) are reluctant to reference or use dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia in evaluations, eligibility determinations, or in developing the individualized education program (IEP) under the IDEA. **The purpose of this letter is to clarify that there is nothing in the IDEA that would prohibit the use of the terms dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia in IDEA evaluation, eligibility determinations, or IEP documents.**

Under the IDEA and its implementing regulations “specific learning disability” is defined, in part, as “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.” See 20 U.S.C. §1401(30) and 34 CFR §300.8(c)(10) (emphasis added). While our implementing regulations contain a list of conditions under the definition “specific learning disability,” which includes dyslexia, the list is not exhaustive. However, regardless of whether a child has dyslexia or any other condition explicitly included in this definition of “specific learning disability,” or has a condition such as dyscalculia or dysgraphia not listed expressly in the definition, the LEA must conduct an evaluation in accordance with 34 CFR §§300.304-300.311 to determine whether that child meets the criteria for specific learning disability or any of the other disabilities listed in 34 CFR §300.8, which implements IDEA’s definition of “child with a disability.”

For those students who may need additional academic and behavioral supports to succeed in a general education environment, schools may choose to implement a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS), such as response to intervention (RTI) or positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS). MTSS is a schoolwide approach that addresses the needs of all students, including struggling learners and students with disabilities, and integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level instructional and behavioral system to maximize student achievement and reduce problem behaviors.

MTSS, which includes scientific, research-based interventions, also may be used to identify children suspected of having a specific learning disability. With a multi-tiered instructional

framework, schools identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, including those who may have dyslexia, dyscalculia, or dysgraphia; monitor their progress; provide evidence-based interventions; and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student's responsiveness. Children who do not, or minimally, respond to interventions must be referred for an evaluation to determine if they are eligible for special education and related services (34 CFR §300.309(c)(1)); and those children who simply need intense short-term interventions may continue to receive those interventions. OSERS reminds SEAs and LEAs about previous guidance regarding the use of MTSS, including RTI, and timely evaluations,¹ specifically that a parent may request an initial evaluation at any time to determine if a child is a child with a disability under IDEA (34 CFR §300.301(b)), and the use of MTSS, such as RTI, may not be used to delay or deny a full and individual evaluation under 34 CFR §§300.304-300.311 of a child suspected of having a disability.

In determining whether a child has a disability under the IDEA, including a specific learning disability, and is eligible to receive special education and related services because of that disability, the LEA must conduct a comprehensive evaluation under §300.304, which requires the use of a variety of assessment tools and strategies to gather relevant functional, developmental, and academic information about the child. This information, which includes information provided by the parent, may assist in determining: 1) whether the child is a child with a disability; and 2) the content of the child's IEP to enable the child to be involved in, and make progress in, the general education curriculum. 34 CFR §300.304(b)(1). Therefore, information about the child's learning difficulties, including the presenting difficulties related to reading, mathematics, or writing, is important in determining the nature and extent of the child's disability and educational needs. In addition, other criteria are applicable in determining whether a child has a specific learning disability. For example, the team determining eligibility considers whether the child is not achieving adequately for the child's age or to meet State-approved grade-level standards when provided with learning experiences and instruction appropriate for the child's age or the relevant State standards in areas related to reading, mathematics, and written expression. The team also must determine that the child's underachievement is not due to lack of appropriate instruction in reading or mathematics. 34 CFR §300.309(a)(1) and (b). Section 300.311 contains requirements for specific documentation of the child's eligibility determination as a child with a specific learning disability, and includes documentation of the information described above. Therefore, there could be situations where the child's parents and the team of qualified professionals responsible for determining whether the child has a specific learning disability would find it helpful to include information about the specific condition (e.g., dyslexia, dyscalculia, or dysgraphia) in documenting how that condition relates to the child's eligibility determination. 34 CFR §§300.306(a)(1), (c)(1) and 300.308.

¹ See OSEP Memo 11-07 (January 21, 2011) available at: www.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdelttrs/osep11-07rtimemo.pdf Under 34 CFR §300.307(a)(2)-(3), as part of their criteria for determining whether a child has a specific learning disability, States must permit the use of a process based on the child's response to scientific, research-based intervention, and may permit the use of other alternative research-based procedures in making this determination.

Stakeholders also requested that SEAs and LEAs have policies in place that allow for the use of the terms dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia on a child’s IEP, if a child’s comprehensive evaluation supports use of these terms. There is nothing in the IDEA or our implementing regulations that prohibits the inclusion of the condition that is the basis for the child’s disability determination in the child’s IEP. In addition, the IEP must address the child’s needs resulting from the child’s disability to enable the child to advance appropriately towards attaining his or her annual IEP goals and to enable the child to be involved in, and make progress in, the general education curriculum. 34 CFR §§300.320(a)(1), (2), and (4). Therefore, if a child’s dyslexia, dyscalculia, or dysgraphia is the condition that forms the basis for the determination that a child has a specific learning disability, OSERS believes that there could be situations where an IEP Team could determine that personnel responsible for IEP implementation would need to know about the condition underlying the child’s disability (e.g., that a child has a weakness in decoding skills as a result of the child’s dyslexia). Under 34 CFR §300.323(d), a child’s IEP must be accessible to the regular education teacher and any other school personnel responsible for its implementation, and these personnel must be informed of their specific responsibilities related to implementing the IEP and the specific accommodations, modifications, and supports that must be provided for the child in accordance with the IEP. Therefore, OSERS reiterates that there is nothing in the IDEA or our implementing regulations that would prohibit IEP Teams from referencing or using dyslexia, dyscalculia, or dysgraphia in a child’s IEP.

Stakeholders requested that OSERS provide SEAs and LEAs with a comprehensive guide to commonly used accommodations² in the classroom for students with specific learning disabilities, including dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia. The IDEA does not dictate the services or accommodations to be provided to individual children based solely on the disability category in which the child has been classified, or the specific condition underlying the child’s disability classification. The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) funds a large network of technical assistance centers that develop materials and resources to support States, school districts, schools, and teachers to improve the provision of services to children with disabilities, including materials on the use of accommodations. The U.S. Department of Education does not mandate the use of, or endorse the content of, these products, services, materials, and/or resources; however, States and LEAs may wish to seek assistance from entities such as the National Center on Intensive Intervention at: <http://www.intensiveintervention.org>, the Center for Parent Information and Resources available at: <http://www.parentcenterhub.org>, and the National Center on Accessible Educational Materials available at: <http://aem.cast.org/>. For a complete list of OSEP-funded technical assistance centers please see: <http://ccrs.osepideasthatwork.org/>.

In implementing the IDEA requirements discussed above, OSERS encourages SEAs and LEAs to consider situations where it would be appropriate to use the terms dyslexia, dyscalculia, or dysgraphia to describe and address the child’s unique, identified needs through evaluation, eligibility, and IEP documents. OSERS further encourages States to review their policies,

² Although the IDEA uses the term “accommodations” primarily in the assessment context, OSERS understands the request to refer to the various components of a free appropriate public education, including special education, related services, supplementary aids and services, and program modifications or supports for school personnel, as well as accommodations for students taking assessments.

procedures, and practices to ensure that they do not prohibit the use of the terms dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia in evaluations, eligibility, and IEP documents. Finally, in ensuring the provision of free appropriate public education, OSERS encourages SEAs to remind their LEAs of the importance of addressing the unique educational needs of children with specific learning disabilities resulting from dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia during IEP Team meetings and other meetings with parents under IDEA.

I hope this clarification is helpful to both parents and practitioners in ensuring a high-quality education for children with specific learning disabilities, including children with dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia. If you have additional questions or comments, please email them to sld@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

/s/

Michael K. Yudin



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

November 16, 2015

Dear Colleague:

Ensuring that all children, including children with disabilities, are held to rigorous academic standards and high expectations is a shared responsibility for all of us. To help make certain that children with disabilities are held to high expectations and have meaningful access to a State's academic content standards, we write to clarify that **an individualized education program (IEP) for an eligible child with a disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) must be aligned with the State's academic content standards for the grade in which the child is enrolled.**¹ **Research has demonstrated that children with disabilities who struggle in reading and mathematics can successfully learn grade-level content and make significant academic progress when appropriate instruction, services, and supports are provided.**² Conversely, low expectations can lead to children with disabilities receiving less challenging instruction that reflects below grade-level content standards, and thereby not learning what they need to succeed at the grade in which they are enrolled.

The cornerstone of the IDEA is the entitlement of each eligible child with a disability to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet the child's unique needs and that prepare the child for further education, employment, and independent living. 20 U.S.C. §1400(d)(1)(A). Under the IDEA, the primary vehicle for providing FAPE is through an appropriately developed IEP that is based on the individual needs of the child. An IEP must take into account a child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, and the impact of that child's disability on his or her involvement and progress in the general education curriculum. IEP goals must be aligned with grade-level content standards for all children with disabilities. The State, however, as discussed

¹ The Department has determined that this document is a "significant guidance document" under the Office of Management and Budget's Final Bulletin for Agency Good Guidance Practices, 72 Fed. Reg. 3432 (Jan. 25, 2007), available at www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/fedreg/2007/012507_good_guidance.pdf. The purpose of this guidance is to provide State and local educational agencies (LEAs) with information to assist them in meeting their obligations under the IDEA and its implementing regulations in developing IEPs for children with disabilities. This guidance does not impose any requirements beyond those required under applicable law and regulations. It does not create or confer any rights for or on any person. If you are interested in commenting on this guidance or if you have further questions that are not answered here, please e-mail iepgoals@ed.gov or write to us at the following address: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 550 12th Street SW., PCP Room 5139, Washington, DC 20202-2600.

² For a discussion of this research see *Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged; Assistance to States for the Education of Children With Disabilities*, Final Rule, 80 Fed. Reg. 50773, 50776 (Aug. 21, 2015).

on page five, is permitted to define alternate academic achievement standards for children with the most significant cognitive disabilities.³

Application of Provisions in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to Children with Disabilities

Since 2001, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), has required each State to apply the same challenging academic content and achievement standards to all schools and all children in the State, which includes children with disabilities. 20 U.S.C. §6311(b)(1)(B). The U.S. Department of Education (Department), in its regulations implementing Title I of the ESEA, has clarified that these standards are grade-level standards. 34 CFR §200.1(a)-(c). To assist children with disabilities in meeting these grade-level academic content standards, many States have adopted and implemented procedures for developing standards-based IEPs that include IEP goals that reflect the State’s challenging academic content standards that apply to all children in the State.

Interpretation of “General Education Curriculum”

Under the IDEA, in order to make FAPE available to each eligible child with a disability, the child’s IEP must be designed to enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum. 20 U.S.C. §1414(d)(1)(A). The term “general education curriculum” is not specifically defined in the IDEA. The Department’s regulations implementing Part B of the IDEA, however, state that the general education curriculum is “the same curriculum as for nondisabled children.” 34 CFR §300.320(a)(1)(i). In addition, the IDEA Part B regulations define the term “specially designed instruction,” the critical element in the definition of “special education,” as “adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs of the child that result from the child’s disability and to ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, *so that the child can meet the educational standards within the jurisdiction of the public agency that apply to all children.*” 34 CFR §300.39(b)(3) (emphasis added). Otherwise, the IDEA regulations do not specifically address the connection between the general education curriculum and a State’s academic content standards.

³ In accordance with 34 CFR §200.1(d), for children with the most significant cognitive disabilities who take an alternate assessment, a State may define alternate academic achievement standards provided those standards are aligned with the State’s academic content standards; promote access to the general curriculum; and reflect professional judgment of the highest achievement standards possible. See also 34 CFR §300.160(c)(2)(i).

Analysis

The Department interprets “the same curriculum as for nondisabled children” to be the curriculum that is based on a State’s academic content standards for the grade in which a child is enrolled. This interpretation, which we think is the most appropriate reading of the applicable regulatory language, will help to ensure that an IEP for a child with a disability, regardless of the nature or severity of the disability, is designed to give the child access to the general education curriculum based on a State’s academic content standards for the grade in which the child is enrolled, and includes instruction and supports that will prepare the child for success in college and careers. This interpretation also appropriately harmonizes the concept in the IDEA regulations of “general education curriculum (i.e., the same curriculum as for nondisabled children),” with the ESEA statutory and regulatory requirement that the same academic content standards must apply to all public schools and children in the State, which includes children with disabilities.

The IDEA statutory and regulatory provisions discussed above, the legislative history of the IDEA, and clarification the Department has provided on the alignment of the IEP with a State’s content standards in the Analysis of Comments and Changes to the 2006 IDEA Part B regulations also support this interpretation. When it last reauthorized the IDEA in 2004, Congress continued to emphasize, consistent with the provisions in the ESEA, the importance of “having high expectations for [children with disabilities] and ensuring their access to the general education curriculum in the regular classroom, to the maximum extent possible.” 20 U.S.C. §1400(c)(5)(A). The Senate Report accompanying the 2004 reauthorization of the IDEA also explained that “[f]or most children with disabilities, many of their IEP goals would likely conform to State and district wide academic content standards and progress indicators consistent with standards based reform within education and the new requirements of NCLB.” S. Rep. No. 108-185, 105th Cong., 1st Sess. 29 (Nov. 3, 2003).

The Analysis of Comments and Changes accompanying the 2006 IDEA Part B regulations also included important discussion that further clarifies the alignment of an IEP with a State’s academic content standards under the ESEA, explaining: “section 300.320(a)(1)(i) clarifies that the general education curriculum means the same curriculum as all other children. Therefore, an IEP that focuses on ensuring that the child is involved in the general education curriculum will necessarily be aligned with the State’s content standards.”⁴

⁴ See Assistance to States for the Education of Children with Disabilities and Preschool Grants for Children with Disabilities, Final Rule, 71 Fed. Reg. 46540, 46662 (Aug. 14, 2006); see also 71 Fed. Reg. 46579.

The Department’s interpretation of the regulatory language “general education curriculum (i.e., the same curriculum as for nondisabled children)” to mean the curriculum that is based on the State’s academic content standards for the grade in which a child is enrolled is reasonable. This interpretation is also necessary to enable IDEA and ESEA requirements to be read together so that children with disabilities receive high-quality instruction that will give them the opportunity to meet the State’s challenging academic achievement standards and prepare them for college, careers and independence. **Therefore, in order to make FAPE available to each eligible child with a disability, the special education and related services, supplementary aids and services, and other supports in the child’s IEP must be designed to enable the child to advance appropriately toward attaining his or her annual IEP goals and to be involved in, and make progress in, the general education curriculum based on the State’s academic content standards for the grade in which the child is enrolled.**

Implementation of the Interpretation

Based on the interpretation of “general education curriculum” set forth in this letter, we expect annual IEP goals to be aligned with State academic content standards for the grade in which a child is enrolled. This alignment, however, must guide but not replace the individualized decision-making required in the IEP process.⁵ In fact, the IDEA’s focus on the individual needs of each child with a disability is an essential consideration when IEP Teams are writing annual goals that are aligned with State academic content standards for the grade in which a child is enrolled so that the child can advance appropriately toward attaining those goals during the annual period covered by the IEP. In developing an IEP, the IEP Team must consider how a child’s specific disability impacts his or her ability to advance appropriately toward attaining his or her annual goals that are aligned with applicable State content standards during the period covered by the IEP. For example, the child’s IEP Team may consider the special education instruction that has been provided to the child, the child’s previous rate of academic growth, and whether the child is on track to achieve grade-level proficiency within the year.

⁵ The IEP must include, among other required content: (1) a statement of the child’s present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, including how the child’s disability affects the child’s involvement and progress in the general education curriculum; (2) a statement of measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals, designed to meet the child’s needs that result from the child’s disability to enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum; and (3) the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services, based on peer-reviewed research to the extent practicable, to be provided to the child, or on behalf of the child, and a statement of the program modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided to enable the child to advance appropriately toward attaining the annual goals, and to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum in accordance with the child’s present levels of performance. 34 CFR §300.320(a).

The Department recognizes that there is a very small number of children with the most significant cognitive disabilities whose performance must be measured against alternate academic achievement standards, as permitted in 34 CFR §200.1(d) and §300.160(c). As explained in prior guidance,⁶ alternate academic achievement standards must be aligned with the State’s grade-level content standards. The standards must be clearly related to grade-level content, although they may be restricted in scope or complexity or take the form of introductory or pre-requisite skills. This letter is not intended to limit a State’s ability to continue to measure the achievement of the small number of children with the most significant cognitive disabilities against alternate academic achievement standards, but rather to ensure that annual IEP goals for these children reflect high expectations and are based on the State’s content standards for the grade in which a child is enrolled.

In a case where a child’s present levels of academic performance are significantly below the grade in which the child is enrolled, in order to align the IEP with grade-level content standards, the IEP Team should estimate the growth toward the State academic content standards for the grade in which the child is enrolled that the child is expected to achieve in the year covered by the IEP. In a situation where a child is performing significantly below the level of the grade in which the child is enrolled, an IEP Team should determine annual goals that are ambitious but achievable. In other words, the annual goals need not necessarily result in the child’s reaching grade-level within the year covered by the IEP, but the goals should be sufficiently ambitious to help close the gap. The IEP must also include the specialized instruction to address the unique needs of the child that result from the child’s disability necessary to ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that the child can meet the State academic content standards that apply to all children in the State.

An Example of Implementation

We provide an example of how an IEP Team could apply the interpretation of “general education curriculum” set forth in this letter. For example, after reviewing recent evaluation data for a sixth grade child with a specific learning disability, the IEP Team determines that the child is reading four grade levels below his current grade; however, his listening comprehension is on grade level. The child’s general education teacher and special education teacher also note that when materials are read aloud to the child he is able to understand grade-level content. Based on these present levels of performance and the child’s individual strengths and weaknesses, the IEP

⁶ See U.S. Department of Education Non-regulatory guidance: Alternate achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities August 2005) available at: <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/altguidance.pdf>

Team determines he should receive specialized instruction to improve his reading fluency. Based on the child’s rate of growth during the previous school year, the IEP Team estimates that with appropriate specialized instruction the child could achieve an increase of at least 1.5 grade levels in reading fluency. To ensure the child can learn material based on sixth grade content standards (e.g., science and history content), the IEP Team determines the child should receive modifications for all grade-level reading assignments. His reading assignments would be based on sixth grade content but would be shortened to assist with reading fatigue resulting from his disability. In addition, he would be provided with audio text books and electronic versions of longer reading assignments that he can access through synthetic speech. With this specialized instruction and these support services, the IEP would be designed to enable the child to be involved and make progress in the general education curriculum based on the State’s sixth grade content standards, while still addressing the child’s needs based on the child’s present levels of performance.⁷ This example is provided to show one possible way that an IEP could be designed to enable a child with a disability who is performing significantly below grade level to receive the specialized instruction and support services the child needs to reach the content standards for the grade in which the child is enrolled during the period covered by the IEP.⁸ We caution, though that, because the ways in which a child’s disability affects his or her involvement and progress in the general education curriculum are highly individualized and fact-specific, the instruction and supports that might enable one child to achieve at grade-level may not necessarily be appropriate for another child with the same disability.

Summary

In sum, consistent with the interpretation of “general education curriculum (i.e., the same curriculum as for nondisabled children)” based on the State’s academic content standards for the

⁷ For information on developing, reviewing, or revising the IEP for a child with limited English proficiency, *see: Questions and Answers Regarding Inclusion of English Learners with Disabilities in English Language Proficiency Assessments and Title III Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives* <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/q-and-a-on-elp-swd.pdf>.

⁸ While the Department does not mandate or endorse specific products or services, we are aware that many States have issued guidance addressing standards-based IEPs. For example see Minnesota Department of Education, *Developing Standards-Based IEP Goals and Objectives A Discussion Guide* available at: https://education.state.mn.us/mdeprod/idcplg?IdcService=GET_FILE&dDocName=050483&RevisionSelectionMethod=latestReleased&Rendition=primary. States and LEAs also may consider reviewing the following examples from OSEP-funded projects regarding implementation of standards-based IEPs: *inForum: Standards-Based Individualized Education Program Examples* available at: www.nasdse.org/portals/0/standards-basediepexamples.pdf. For an example of annual goals aligned with State academic content standards for a child taking the alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards, *see: an issue brief provided by the OSEP-funded National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC), NCSC Brief 5: Standards-based Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for Children Who Participate in AA-AAS* available at: <http://www.ncscpartners.org/Media/Default/PDFs/Resources/NCSCBrief5.pdf>.

grade in which a child is enrolled set forth in this letter, an IEP Team must ensure that annual IEP goals are aligned with the State academic content standards for the grade in which a child is enrolled. The IEP must also include the specially designed instruction necessary to address the unique needs of the child that result from the child’s disability and ensure access of the child to the general education curriculum, so that the child can meet the State academic content standards that apply to all children, as well as the support services and the program modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided to enable the child to advance appropriately toward attaining the annual goals.

Opportunities for Input

We are interested in receiving comments on this document to inform implementation of this guidance. If you are interested in commenting on this document, please e-mail your comments to iepgoals@ed.gov or write to us at the following address: US Department of Education, 550 12th Street SW, PCP Room 5139, Washington, DC 20202-2600. Note that we are specifically interested in receiving input from the field on examples of models of alignment of IEP goals with State content standards that are working well at the State and local level, and how this guidance could be implemented for children with disabilities who are English learners and children with the most significant cognitive disabilities. We will share appropriate models with you in further communications as they become available. We would also be glad to help answer your questions and help with your technical assistance needs in this important area.

We ask you to share this information with your local school districts to help ensure all children with disabilities are held to high standards and high expectations. Thank you for your continued interest in improving results for children with disabilities.

Sincerely,

/s/

Michael K. Yudin
Assistant Secretary

/s/

Melody Musgrove
Director
Office of Special Education Programs

Dyslexia Discussions: Information for Schools and Families

This document is designed to support schools and families in their discussions about dyslexia. The school may need to initiate a dyslexia discussion with families based on classroom observation, screening or evaluation data or the student's response to instruction. Schools may also need to respond to conversations initiated by the family. When families initiate a discussion about dyslexia concerns, it is important for schools to open the door to more conversation and to document and respond to these concerns in a timely manner. This document provides a list of situations in which the school or family might initiate a discussion about dyslexia. A list of responses for schools to provide and a sample script related to dyslexia is also provided based on current Minnesota statutes.

Students with characteristics of dyslexia typically demonstrate deficits in foundational reading skills, including difficulties with phonemic awareness, word-reading accuracy, decoding, fluency and spelling. They may also struggle with oral language and reading comprehension. There is no reading center of the brain that just "clicks on" through exposure to print. Rather, every student needs to create new neural pathways to map sounds to letters in order to become accurate, fluent readers. Every student goes through this process regardless of differences in culture, race, cognitive ability or socio-economic status. However, struggling readers and those with characteristics of dyslexia require more explicit, systematic instruction and intentional practice in order to become proficient readers.

It is also important to remember that these difficulties with foundational reading skills do not reflect a student's cognitive ability or academic potential. Students often demonstrate strong oral language skills and content knowledge, but are unable to read text proficiently enough to demonstrate their academic skills.

Dyslexia discussions may be initiated by the school or by the family and may occur in the following situations:

Family Concerns: If the family suspects their child may have dyslexia, or the child already has a diagnosis of dyslexia, the family may initiate a dyslexia discussion with the school. The family may use the term dyslexia and ask for the child to be screened for dyslexia, receive evidence-based instruction or a special education evaluation. Parents may also suggest that interventions currently in place are not effective or are insufficient to meet their child's needs. ***It is important to note that a child may not qualify for special education, but may still meet criteria for a diagnosis of dyslexia.*** These students may qualify for additional supports and intervention through the MTSS process at school.

Teacher Observation: The teacher may identify a student as having possible characteristics of dyslexia through observation in the classroom. They may observe the student struggling to read grade-level text accurately and fluently. The student may have difficulty sounding out unfamiliar words so that they use context to guess words they cannot read. ***Even if students are able to comprehend what they read, it is important to note that slow, effortful and inaccurate word reading is a strong indicator of dyslexia*** (see Teacher Checklist on page seven of the [MDE Screening and Identifying Characteristics of Dyslexia guidance document](#)). Teachers may also observe that the student has frequent misspellings and may

spell the same word differently throughout the same assignment. Difficulties with spelling and written expression are also indicators of dyslexia. The teacher should initiate a conversation with the family about these concerns within the multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) process.

Screening Process: The school may initiate a dyslexia discussion with the family if the student is screened and identified as having possible characteristics of dyslexia. The school will reach out to the parents: a) to gather relevant family and child history data as part of the secondary/diagnostic screening process; and b) to communicate the results of dyslexia screening and the intervention plan moving forward.

Special Education Evaluation and IEP Meetings: A dyslexia discussion may occur during a special education evaluation process or IEP meeting. Parents may ask if their child has dyslexia based on the evaluation findings. The evaluation/IEP team will need to have a discussion of dyslexia within the context of the evaluation process.

It is important to share with parents that not all students diagnosed with dyslexia will qualify for special education. Therefore, a student may meet clinical criteria for a diagnosis of dyslexia, but not meet the standard for receiving special education. Special education means that the student requires specially designed instruction to make progress toward grade level standards.

Dyslexia is named in the definition of Specific Learning Disability criteria. See [Minnesota Rules, 3525.1341 Subpart 1](#)

It is also important to know that if students meet criteria for special education services under the category of Specific Learning Disability in the academic areas of *foundational reading skills* (phonemic awareness and decoding), *fluency*, *written expression (poor spelling)* they would be expected to meet criteria for a diagnosis of dyslexia.

As described in the table below, schools should not argue or debate the label of dyslexia with families. Regardless of diagnosis, the school team will find that the evidence-based instruction and supports effective for those diagnosed with dyslexia are also effective for students with SLD and low achievement in reading. Both require systematic, explicit, cumulative instruction based on the science of reading.

Educators are not qualified to diagnose dyslexia. Therefore, ***educators should not reassure parents that their child does NOT have dyslexia.*** Schools do not make a diagnosis of dyslexia, nor do schools determine that a student does not have dyslexia.

Note: While both schools and clinics use the label SLD, they don't mean the same thing. The diagnostic term used by licensed psychologists is Specific Learning *Disorder* (SLD) and the special education category is Specific Learning *Disability*. Disorder is a clinical term and disability is a legal term. For more information, see page 30 of the MDE guidance document, [Navigating the School System When a Child is Struggling with Reading or Dyslexia](#).

Information to Guide Dyslexia Discussions in Schools

Questions	Accurate	Not Accurate
	Based on current MN statutes, dyslexia research, school-based practices and clinical practices, the following statements and messages are Accurate and should be used in conversations within schools.	The following statements and messages are Not Accurate and <i>should not</i> be used in conversations within schools.
Can schools initiate use of the term dyslexia?	<p>YES. Schools can initiate use of the term dyslexia when they identify that a student has characteristics of dyslexia.</p> <p>NOTE: Schools should not tell a family that a student “has dyslexia” as this implies a diagnosis. However, schools can say that they have identified <i>characteristics of dyslexia</i>.</p>	<p>Do Not Say: <i>“We cannot /do not use the term dyslexia.”</i></p> <p>Do not Say: <i>“Dyslexia is a medical diagnosis. So, it is not the school’s responsibility to address dyslexia.”</i></p>
Is a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) identified through a special education evaluation the same as a diagnosis of dyslexia?	<p>While dyslexia is often referred to as a ‘medical diagnosis,’ the diagnosis of dyslexia is given by a licensed psychologist. A primary care doctor or pediatrician does not diagnose dyslexia, but they can make a referral to a licensed psychologist.</p> <p>A diagnosis of dyslexia is made based on the current diagnostic guidelines in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, 5th Edition (DSM-5). This diagnosis may be called a Specific Learning Disorder (SLD) - with impairment in reading. According to the DSM-5, “Dyslexia is an alternate term used to refer to a pattern of learning difficulties characterized by problems with accurate or fluent word recognition, poor decoding and poor spelling abilities” (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p.67). A diagnosis of dyslexia does not require a discrepancy between cognitive ability and academic achievement.</p> <p>While the label SLD is used both in schools and clinically, they don’t mean the same thing. The diagnostic term is Specific Learning <i>Disorder</i> and the special education category is Specific Learning <i>Disability</i>. Disorder is a diagnostic term and disability is a legal term.</p>	<p>Don’t Say: <i>“Your child does not qualify for a specific learning disability. So, they do not have dyslexia.”</i></p> <p>Educators are not qualified to diagnose dyslexia. Therefore, educators should not reassure parents that their child does not have dyslexia. Schools do not make a diagnosis of dyslexia, nor do schools determine that a student does not have dyslexia.</p> <p>Many students with dyslexia do not qualify for special education services. The school needs to have a continuum of supports in which to provide systematic, explicit, cumulative evidence based instruction.</p>

Questions	Accurate	Not Accurate
<p>Who can identify dyslexia?</p>	<p>Schools do not provide a diagnosis of dyslexia. As described above, this diagnosis is provided by a licensed psychologist. However, schools <i>are required</i> to screen and identify students with characteristics of dyslexia and to share these results with parents (Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.12).</p> <p>There are currently three ways a student with characteristics of dyslexia may come to the attention of a schools and families under ‘dyslexia identification’ in Minnesota:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A child may complete a private evaluation and receive a diagnosis of dyslexia from a licensed psychologist. 2. The school may identify “characteristics of dyslexia” Through its screening system and MTSS process. The school will report this information to parents and use knowledge of dyslexia to guide instruction. 3. A child may be identified through a special education evaluation and require special educaiton services and supports under the category of Specific Learning Disability (SLD). If students meet criteria for SLD, and they demonstrate foundational reading deficits, they would be expected to meet criteria for a diagnosis of dyslexia. 	<p>Dyslexia is a diagnosis provided by a licensed psychologist. This is correct. However, in the past this information may have been shared with parents without a follow-up discussion about the role of schools with regard to dyslexia. Rather than telling parents that dyslexia is a medical diagnosis and therefore not the responsibility of the school, it is critical to engage in follow-up conversations to learn more about family concerns and plan appropriate intervention.</p> <p>Don’t Say: <i>“Your child doesn’t have dyslexia because they passed XYZ test.”</i></p> <p>Schools should not reassure parents that their child does <i>not</i> have dyslexia. Schools do not make a diagnosis of dyslexia nor do schools determine that a student does not have dyslexia.</p> <p>Don’t Say: <i>“Don’t worry, your child is very bright, reading will ‘click,’ we just need to wait and give them more time.”</i></p> <p>Reading is not a natural or automatic process that just ‘clicks’ on with exposure to books and print. Reading occurs via a network of neural connections created through instruction and practice.</p> <p>Due to neurobiological differences in ‘brain wiring,’ students with dyslexia <i>require</i> evidence-based, explicit, systematic, cumulative instruction to become skilled readers. For students with dyslexia or characteristics of dyslexia, ‘waiting’ and not providing evidence-based instruction only serves to further delay the development of the neural connections required for skilled reading.</p>

Questions	Accurate	Not Accurate
How common is dyslexia?	Dyslexia is estimated to affect 17% of the population (approximately 1 in 5) when including those with mild symptoms. Therefore, students with characteristics of dyslexia are likely present in every classroom.	Don't Say: <i>"I have never had a dyslexic student in my 20 years of teaching."</i>

Evidence-Based Instruction: Struggling readers and students with characteristics of dyslexia require explicit, systematic, cumulative reading instruction to address foundational reading skills deficits. Parents may ask for specific instruction that they know to be effective for students with dyslexia. Per Minnesota statute, a student identified as being unable to read at grade level ([Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.12](#)) must be provided with alternate instruction under this subdivision that is multisensory, systematic, sequential, cumulative, and explicit.

It is also important to remember that students who struggle with reading fluency are typically lacking foundational reading skills such as phonics/decoding and phonemic awareness (specifically the more advanced skills of sound deletion, substitution, manipulation). Encouraging students to memorize sight words, or to use context and meaning to support weak decoding skills, are not effective instructional strategies for struggling readers or those with dyslexia. It is critical to provide phonemic awareness and phonics instruction until the student is both accurate and automatic with advanced phonemic awareness skills, as well as advanced decoding and spelling skills (e.g. mapping of sounds to letters, syllable division and blending, morphological analysis). Students must demonstrate reading accuracy before focusing on increasing fluency.

Sample Script:

Parent or Guardian: "I am concerned because I think my child might have dyslexia."

Educator: "Thank you for sharing your concerns. Please tell me more about what you are seeing at home. What difficulties are you seeing that might be an indicator of dyslexia? How long has this been a concern?"

"Let's take a look at your child's performance _____." The educator is encouraged to review the student's screening or assessment data with the parent. The educator documents the concerns.

Educator: "Let me talk with the MTSS team about next steps. I will get back to you by ____ date."

Documented concerns are to be used in the school's secondary screening process for dyslexia. Universal screening identifies students at risk for possible reading difficulties or characteristics of dyslexia. Schools should then conduct a secondary screening to determine if the student demonstrates characteristics of dyslexia. Secondary screening by the school should also include collecting relevant family history. Please see MDE guidance document *Screening and Identifying Characteristics of Dyslexia* for more detailed information.

Educator reaches out to parent on agreed upon date:

Educator: "I spoke with the MTSS team. Here is the plan..."

Based on the screening / assessment data, your child is demonstrating difficulties in the following areas: _____ (e.g. phonemic awareness, phonics/decoding, fluency, spelling). Here is the instruction being provided in the classroom to address your child's areas of difficulty _____. Based on your child's screening / assessment scores, we will also provide the following reading intervention services _____.

We will monitor progress on a weekly/monthly basis using _____ tool to measure the following skills _____ (e.g. phonemic awareness, phonics/decoding, fluency, spelling). I will touch base with you in _____ weeks with an update on your child's progress with these services."

Website Resources

General Dyslexia

- International Dyslexia Association - Upper Midwest Branch - Resources, referrals, webinars, and lists of tutors. <https://umw.dyslexiaida.org/>
- The Yale Center for Dyslexia & Creativity - <http://dyslexia.yale.edu/>
- National Center for Learning Disabilities - <https://nclid.org/>
- Dyslexia Training Institute - Online classes and advocacy resources for parents. <https://www.dyslexiatraininginstitute.org/>
- Learning Disabilities Association of Minnesota - <https://LDAminnesota.org/>

Learning/Tutoring Centers

- The Reading Center, Dyslexia Institute of MN - Tutoring and training. <https://www.thereadingcenter.org/>
- Orton-Gillingham of Minnesota - Tutor referrals, training, student courses. <http://ogmn.org/>
- Bright Solutions for Dyslexia - General dyslexia information & list of Barton tutors. <https://www.dys-add.com/>
- Reading Rockets - Resources for teaching/helping struggling readers. <https://www.readingrockets.org/>
- Lindamood-Bell- Learning center for reading, comprehension, and math. <https://lindamoodbell.com/location/twin-cities-mn-learning-center>

General IEP/504 and Disability Guidance

- Understood - Online resource for parents and teachers. <https://www.understood.org/>
- Wright's Law Special Education Law and Advocacy - <https://www.wrightslaw.com/>

MN Specific

- Groves Academy - An independent school for students with learning disabilities. <https://www.grovesacademy.org/>
- Pacer - Free advocacy services for students with disabilities. <https://www.pacer.org/parent/>
- Minnesota Department of Education - <https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/prof/Dyslexia/>

Assistive Technology

- Assistive Technology Solutions for Dyslexia - <http://www.atdyslexia.com/>
- Bookshare - <https://www.bookshare.org/cms/>
- Learning Ally - <https://learningally.org/>
- Voice Dream - <https://www.voicedream.com/>

For more information visit <https://www.decodingdyslexiamn.org/websites>

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Organizing Documents in your Binder

What Documents Belong in Your Binder

- Copies of emails and conversation logs.
- Examples of schoolwork through different grade levels. Be sure to include both current and past examples of schoolwork to show progress or regressions.
- Report cards to show academic progress and areas of concern throughout their educational career.
- Attendance records to show how dyslexia has affected school engagement.
- Copies of assessments and state testing data.
- For elementary school, review your district's Local Literacy Plan and ask for copies of your child's assessment scores.
- National Norms Tables for all school assessments your child is taking. You can get this by asking the school for the national norms table/percentiles for any assessment they perform.
- Copies of all evaluations done by the school and privately.
- Copies of current and past IEP/504 plans.
- Copies of applicable Health Records.
- Copy of Procedural Safeguards for students with an IEP.

How to Organize your Binder

It can be helpful to add tabs for papers you will want to access more frequently. You might want to have tabs for the following chronologically:

- Grade levels (Preschool, K, 1, 2, ...)
- Evaluation
- IEP/504 plan

Or you can organize your child's documents by type:

- School work
- Assessments, report cards, state testing
- Evaluations
- IEP/504 plan
- Communication

The way in which you choose to organize your binder is up to you. Making sure that your binder is efficient for you and your needs is what is most important.

For more information visit <https://www.decodingdyslexiamn.org/binders>

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