Understanding Dyslexia

Welcome to our dyslexia information page, a resource dedicated to helping educators, families, and community members understand and support learners with dyslexia. Here, you'll find clear explanations of what dyslexia is, how it affects reading and learning, evidence-based strategies for instruction, and tools to help every student reach their full potential. Whether you're seeking guidance for the classroom or support at home, this page offers practical information to foster confidence, growth, and success for all learners.

Why it Matters

Every child deserves to learn to read with confidence. Yet for many learners with characteristics of dyslexia, word-level reading, and spelling difficulties create obstacles. The Michigan Dyslexia Handbook defines dyslexia as "a specific learning disorder that is neurobiological in origin, characterized by difficulties with accurate or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities."

Early awareness and effective supports make a difference — this brochure will help you understand dyslexia, how it works, and what you can do.

What is Dyslexia?

Dyslexia is Neurobiological: It originates in the brain and is related to how the brain processes sounds in spoken language in partnership with letters. It is not a vision or "seeing backwards" problem.

Example Characteristics:

- Slow, effortful reading; not attending to the sounds of letters within words; reads the first part of the word and guesses the rest; avoids reading
- Frequent spelling errors; avoids writing tasks; lacks written expression
- Needs support in following multi-step directions; difficulties finding the correct word when speaking; demonstrates limited vocabulary
- Family history of reading difficulties

**See Table 1. Potential Reading Difficulties by Grade-Level Bands in the Michigan Dyslexia Handbook (2025) for additional characteristics.*

For Families

Share your child's family reading history with the school

- Ask about screening results and supports being used
- Support reading at home: read aloud daily, talk about words/sounds, celebrate your child's efforts and progress
- Meet with your child's teacher(s) or reading specialist to review current instruction and supports

Effective Instruction

- Instruction aligned with the **science of reading** is essential: use **evidence-based practices**
- Provide **explicit** and **systematic** literacy instruction, often called **Structured Literacy**: **direct instruction** in all essential components of literacy (including phonemic awareness, phonics, spelling, vocabulary, and comprehension)
- Use **universal screening** to identify at-risk learners: assess early and often
- A **Multi-Tiered System of Supports** (MTSS) framework helps tailor **intensified instruction** and accelerate outcomes

Helpful Resources

Michigan Dyslexia Handbook

(IDA) Dyslexia Handbook; What Every Family Should Know

Intensifying Literacy Instruction

The Reading League: The Science of Reading

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