

LOVE YOUR SCHOOL

DYSLEXIA GUIDE



Dear Families,

Thank you for downloading our Dyslexia Resource Guide. As a mother of 3 children diagnosed with dyslexia, this guide is something I wish I would have had when I started the process of discovering how to get my children evaluated.

This guide is designed to give a broad overview of the topics, issues, and terms that you need to know if you suspect your child has dyslexia, if you're getting your child evaluated, or if you have recently received a diagnosis. Even better, our organization, Love Your School, is here to help you every step of the way when it comes to the process of evaluating your child and knowing your rights. For five years we have supported parents on these journeys, and we can't wait to support you!

This guide puts into writing the expertise, training, and wisdom from our team in supporting parents. How should you request an evaluation? What if the district says "no"? What should you do if the district won't call it dyslexia? How can you get an IEP that addresses your child's unique educational needs?

We cover those topics, and more, and we're always here to help if you have additional questions or need further support.

Please enjoy our guide, and don't hesitate to reach out with questions and feedback.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "jenny". The signature is written in a cursive, lowercase style with a long, sweeping tail on the "y".

Jenny Clark
Founder
Love Your School
Dyslexia Mom



Table of Contents

Understanding Dyslexia

What It Is: Definition and basic explanation of dyslexia.....	3
How Common It Is: Prevalence statistics and general understanding	4
The Cause: Genetic and neurological factors.	4
How It Affects the Brain: Impact on brain regions related to reading and language.	4

Signs of Dyslexia

Early Signs: Indicators in preschool-aged children (e.g., difficulty with phonemic awareness, slow speech development).....	6
School-Aged Children: Common signs in elementary and middle school (e.g., reading difficulties, trouble with spelling).	7
Older Students: Signs in high school students (e.g., issues with reading comprehension, slow reading speed).	8

Dyslexia and English Learners

Recognizing Signs: How dyslexia signs may appear in bilingual or multilingual students.....	10
Supporting Them: Effective strategies for supporting English learners with dyslexia	10
Considerations: Addressing unique challenges faced by bilingual students.....	10

Table of Contents



Specific Learning Disability - Dyslexia

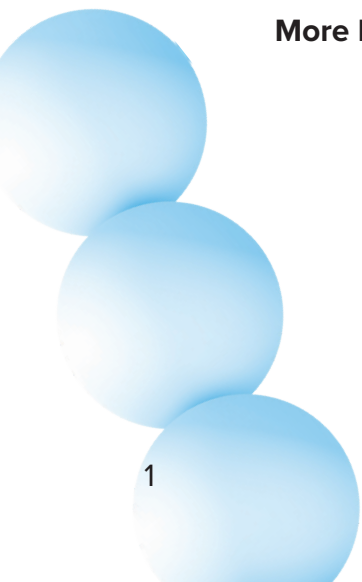
What's a SLD?: Definition and relationship between dyslexia and Specific Learning Disabilities	12
Evaluation Process: Steps for diagnosing dyslexia, including testing and assessment methods	14
IEP: Explanation of the Individualized Education Program and its role in supporting students with dyslexia	18
Understanding the Legal Rights: Information about students' rights under disability laws	21
Proportionate Share Equitable Services	24

Dyslexia Myths vs. Facts

Common misconceptions and clarifications	26
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Technology for Children with Dyslexia

Helpful Tools: Overview of technology aids such as text-to-speech, audio-books, and specialized apps.....	30
More Resources: Find more resources related to specific articles.....	34



Understanding Dyslexia



Understanding Dyslexia



If you're reading this article, you may suspect that your child or someone you love has dyslexia. Welcome! You are not alone!

This is the first in a series of articles about dyslexia from Love Your School. One of the first steps in the dyslexia journey is understanding what dyslexia is and how this learning disability affects individuals. This can help families understand how to offer or find effective support. To better understand how dyslexia's brain differences translate into everyday challenges, let's explore what dyslexia actually entails and then we will talk about how to get an evaluation and diagnosis.

What is Dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a learning disability that affects how people read and spell¹. There are different types of dyslexia, but we are focusing on dyslexia in the most basic of terms for our readers. Dyslexia is not related to intelligence - it's how a person's brain is "wired" and understands and perceives information². People with dyslexia often struggle with recognizing and decoding words³, which can also make understanding what they read challenging. Dyslexia can often be seen with poor spelling, fluency in reading, and sometimes comes alongside speech delays¹ and other diagnoses

1. Specific Learning Disability and SLD - dyslexia. (n.d.). CT.gov - Connecticut's Official State Website. <https://portal.ct.gov/sde/special-education/specific-learning-disability-and-sld--dyslexia>
2. Nixon, G. (2024, April 30). Dyslexia not correlated to IQ. Gemm Learning. <https://www.gemmlearning.com/blog/dyslexia/dyslexia-not-correlated-to-iq/>
3. International Dyslexia Association. (2020, March 10). Dyslexia Basics - International Dyslexia Association. <https://dyslexiaida.org/dyslexia-basics/>
4. Snowling, M. J., Hulme, C., & Nation, K. (2020). Defining and understanding dyslexia: past, present and future. Oxford Review of Education, 46(4), 501–513. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7455053/>

(more on that later)!

How Common is Dyslexia?

Dyslexia can affect anyone, regardless of their background or intelligence because it's genetic. Some research suggests that between 5% to 20% of children may have dyslexia ^{2,3} or 1 in 5 kids. Some people are evaluated and diagnosed when they are young, while others might not be diagnosed until they are much older⁴. While we will discuss evaluation in later articles, please know that signs of dyslexia can present as young as age 3, and you can get a diagnosis as young as 6. Screening and diagnosis are different!

What Causes Dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a learning difficulty, and it is commonly understood to run in families⁵. This means that dyslexia can be inherited from parents to their children. So, if a parent or family member has dyslexia, the child might also be at risk for developing it⁶.

How Does Dyslexia Affect the Brain?

Dyslexia is linked to differences in how the brain processes language. Key areas of the brain involved include:

Broca's Area: This part of the brain helps us analyze and understand language. For people with dyslexia, this area might not work as smoothly when breaking

down words and sounds^{6,7}. This can make reading and speaking more challenging.

Parietal-Temporal Lobe: Found at the back and sides of the brain, this region helps us decode words and combine sounds with letters. When someone has dyslexia, this area can have trouble putting these elements together quickly^{6,7}. This makes reading difficult.

Occipital Lobe: Located at the back of the brain, this lobe is key for processing visual information. For those with dyslexia, this part might not be as quick as recognizing and interpreting words and letters^{6,7,8}. This can slow down reading speed and fluency.

By understanding how these brain areas are involved, professionals and families can better support people with dyslexia and help them develop strategies to improve their reading abilities.

Understanding dyslexia is essential for offering the right support and tools to those who need it. By learning about how dyslexia affects reading and the brain, we can better assist individuals in their learning journeys. If you have more questions about dyslexia or need more information about getting a diagnosis or getting your school to evaluate and provide services for dyslexic students, please reach out to hello@loveyourschool.org! We are here to answer your questions!

MORE RESOURCES >>

1. Friedman, M. (2020, April 1). Oral Language Impairments and Dyslexia - International Dyslexia Association. International Dyslexia Association. <https://dyslexiaida.org/oral-language-impairments-and-dyslexia-2/>
2. Wagner, R. K., Zirps, F. A., Edwards, A. A., Wood, S. G., Joyner, R. E., Becker, B. J., Liu, G., & Beal, B. (2020). The Prevalence of Dyslexia: A new approach to its estimation. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 53(5), 354–365. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8183124/>
3. The Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity. (n.d.). Dyslexia FAQs. Yale Dyslexia. <https://dyslexia.yale.edu/dyslexia/dyslexia-faq/>
4. International Dyslexia Association. (2020, March 10). Dyslexia Basics - International Dyslexia Association. [https://dyslexiaida.org/dyslexia-basics/](https://dyslexiaida.org/dyslexia-basics/International%20Dyslexia%20Handbook_0.pdf?id=5ada56093217e11d10341d52)
5. Rawe, J. (2024, May 30). What is dyslexia? Understood. <https://www.understood.org/en/articles/what-is-dyslexia>
6. York, I. (2015, February 26). Dyslexia and the brain - International Dyslexia Association. International Dyslexia Association. <https://dyslexiaida.org/dyslexia-and-the-brain-fact-sheet/>
7. Arizona Department of Education, Douglas, D. M., & Arizona Technical Assistance System (AZ-TAS). (2018). *Dyslexia Handbook: A technical assistance document to support families and teachers*. https://www.azed.gov/sites/default/files/2018/04/AZ-TAS%20Dyslexia%20Handbook_0.pdf?id=5ada56093217e11d10341d52
8. Hudson, R., High, L., & Al Otaiba, S. (n.d.). Dyslexia and the brain: What does current research tell us? Reading Rockets. <https://www.readingrockets.org/topics/dyslexia/articles/dyslexia-and-brain-what-does-current-research-tell-us>

Signs of Dyslexia by Age Group



Signs of Dyslexia by Age Group

Recognizing early signs of learning difficulties can make a big difference in a child's educational journey. From preschool through high school, different challenges might appear, and understanding these can help parents and teachers support students in the best way possible. Here are some key indicators to watch for as children progress through different stages of their education.

EARLY STAGES

Indicators in Preschool-Aged Children

- Some children might start talking later than expected.^{1,2}
- They may say words like “busgetti” instead of “spaghetti” or hold on to baby talk longer than usual.^{1,2}
- Struggles to understand simple rhyming words like “cat,” “bat,” and “sat.”²
- Challenges in breaking words into sounds, such as figuring out that “at” is left when you remove the “b” sound from “bat.”²
- Difficulty remembering nursery rhymes or chants.³
- Need help adding new words to their vocabulary.¹
- Often, they can't find the right word during conversations.¹
- Struggles to recognize letters and numbers, even those in their own name.¹



1. Gillis, M. (Ed.). (2024, April 30). Signs of dyslexia at different ages. Understood. <https://www.understood.org/en/articles/checklist-signs-of-dyslexia-at-different-ages>
2. Signs of Dyslexia. (n.d.). Yale Dyslexia. <https://dyslexia.yale.edu/dyslexia/signs-of-dyslexia/>
3. Osborn, C. O. (2023, July 13). How to recognize dyslexia symptoms by age. Healthline. <https://www.healthline.com/health/dyslexia-symptoms-by-age>

SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN

Common Signs in Elementary and Middle School

Kindergarten through Second Grade:

- Difficulty breaking words into smaller parts, like splitting “napkin” into “nap” and “kin.”³
- Trouble identifying and playing with sounds in syllables, such as sounding out “Sam” as /S/ /ă/ /m/.¹
- Struggles with linking letters to sounds, like connecting the sound /b/ with the letter “b” or /j/ with “dge.”¹
- Challenges in sounding out simple words like “mat” or “nap.”¹
- Relies on picture clues or guessing instead of decoding words.¹
- A family history of reading difficulties can be a factor.^{2, 3}

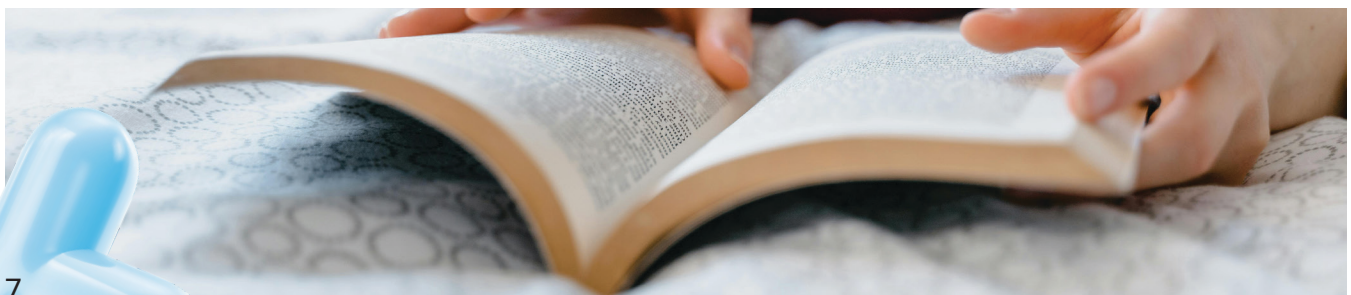
Third through Eighth Grade

- Fear of reading aloud in front of classmates.²
- Often guesses wildly when reading unfamiliar words instead of sounding them out.¹
- Prefers using simpler words in writing that are easier to spell, like choosing “big” instead of “gigantic.”^{1,4}
- Difficulty pronouncing words correctly, such as saying “mazigine” instead of “magazine.”²
- Struggles with rhyming, whether it’s finishing a rhyming poem or thinking of a word that rhymes with “loop.”³
- Finds writing and organizing thoughts on paper challenging.^{1,2}

1. Gillis, M. (Ed). (2024, April 30). Signs of dyslexia at different ages. Understood. <https://www.understood.org/en/articles/checklist-signs-of-dyslexia-at-different-ages>

2. Signs of Dyslexia. (n.d.). Yale Dyslexia. <https://dyslexia.yale.edu/dyslexia/signs-of-dyslexia/>

3. Osborn, C. O. (2023, July 13). How to recognize dyslexia symptoms by age. Healthline. <https://www.healthline.com/health/dyslexia-symptoms-by-age>



OLDER STUDENTS

Signs in High School Students

- Reads at a slower pace and struggles to keep up with schoolwork.¹
- Feels frustrated by the amount of time and effort reading assignments require.²
- Often skips small words or leaves out parts of longer words when reading aloud.¹
- Finds multiple-choice questions easier than fill-in-the-blank or short-answer questions.³
- Struggles significantly more than peers when learning a new language.³

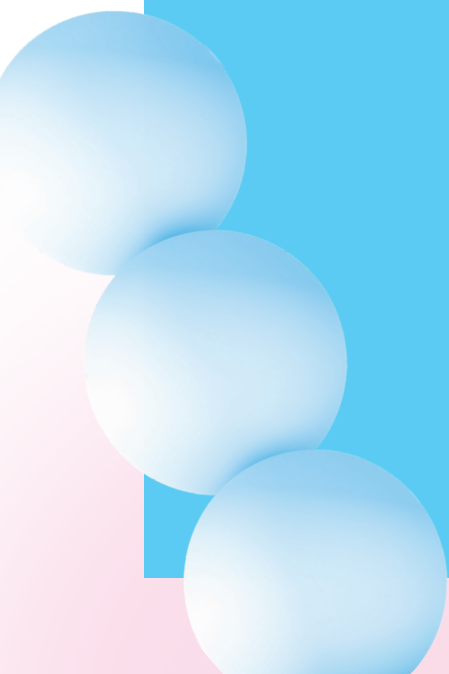
Being aware of these signs can help identify when a child might need extra support in their learning. If you have any more questions, feel free to reach out to hello@loveyourschool.org! We are here to answer your questions!



1. Gillis, M. (Ed.). (2024, April 30). Signs of dyslexia at different ages. Understood. <https://www.understood.org/en/articles/checklist-signs-of-dyslexia-at-different-ages>
2. Osborn, C. O. (2023, July 13). How to recognize dyslexia symptoms by age. Healthline. <https://www.healthline.com/health/dyslexia-symptoms-by-age>
3. Arizona Department of Education, Douglas, D. M., & Arizona Technical Assistance System (AZ-TAS). (2018). Dyslexia Handbook: A technical assistance document to support families and teachers. https://www.azed.gov/sites/default/files/2018/04/AZ-TAS%20Dyslexia%20Handbook_0.pdf?id=5ada56093217e1fd10341d52



English Learners and Dyslexia



English Learners and Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a brain-based condition that can make reading and writing difficult for anyone, but it poses extra challenges for students who are learning English as a second language. Because these students are juggling two languages, it can be hard to tell whether their struggles are due to learning a new language or because of dyslexia.

Recognizing Signs

Spotting dyslexia in English learners is a bit tricky and requires a close look at various factors. These students might read slowly,¹ mix up letters,² or find it hard to connect letters with their sounds.¹ But since they are also learning English, it's essential to consider their progress in both languages. Teachers and specialists should use multiple assessments over time, rather than just a one-time test, to get a clear understanding of what's going on.^{1, 3} Interviews with family members and observations in different settings can also provide valuable insights.³

Supporting Them

Supporting English learners with dyslexia involves tailored strategies that address both their language learning and their reading challenges. Interventions should start early, with close monitoring of progress.^{1,3} Teaching methods that engage multiple senses – like using visuals, sounds, and hands-on activities – can be particularly effective. Regular check-ins on both reading and oral language skills are crucial to ensure the student is progressing.

Considerations

Bilingual students often seem comfortable speaking English in casual settings, like on the playground or

during small talk, but they may struggle with more complex academic language in the classroom.¹ This gap between conversational skills and academic performance can make it harder to recognize dyslexia.² It's important for educators and parents to be patient and aware of these unique challenges and to support the students in a way that addresses both language learning and dyslexia so these students can thrive.



1. Arizona Department of Education, Douglas, D. M., & Arizona Technical Assistance System (AZ-TAS). (2018). Dyslexia Handbook: A technical assistance document to support families and teachers. https://www.azed.gov/sites/default/files/2018/04/AZ-TAS%20Dyslexia%20Handbook_0.pdf?id=5ada56093217e11d10341d52
2. Lexia Learning Systems. (2019, August 5). English Learners and Dyslexia: a guide. <https://www.lexialearning.com/blog/english-learners-and-dyslexia-guide>
3. English Learners and Dyslexia - International Dyslexia Association. (2023, March 12). International Dyslexia Association. <https://dyslexiaida.org/english-learners-and-dyslexia/>

Specific Learning Disability - Dyslexia




What's a SLD?

A Specific Learning Disability (SLD) is a disorder that affects one or more basic learning processes. This makes it difficult for a person to understand or use language, whether it is spoken or written.¹ This can lead to significant challenges in listening, speaking, reading, writing, spelling, or doing math.² Students diagnosed with an SLD receive special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA),³ which ensures they get a free and appropriate public education.

The most common type of SLD in reading is dyslexia,⁴ which primarily impacts reading, specifically the ability to decode and recognize words accurately and fluently, and can also affect spelling. Dyslexia is neurobiological in origin, meaning it's related to the brain's functioning, and it often presents despite the student having strengths in other cognitive areas like reasoning and problem-solving.⁴



1. Solodev, S. (n.d.). Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD). [www.fldoe.org. https://www.fldoe.org/academics/exceptional-student-edu/ese-eligibility/specific-learning-disabilities-sld/](https://www.fldoe.org/academics/exceptional-student-edu/ese-eligibility/specific-learning-disabilities-sld/)
2. Specific learning disability. (n.d.). Colorado Department of Education. <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/sd-sld>
3. Understand the issues. (2024, June 20). National Center for Learning Disabilities. <https://www.ncl.org/join-the-movement/understand-the-issues/>
4. Specific Learning Disability and SLD/Dyslexia--FAQ. (n.d.). CT.gov - Connecticut's Official State Website. <https://portal.ct.gov/sde/special-education/specific-learning-disability-and-sld--dyslexia/faq>



NOTE FOR PARENTS: When a parent starts the process with a concern about dyslexia through a school evaluation, it may result in paperwork that says “Specific Learning Disability” SLD - Reading. Why? Because they have to categorize their evaluations based on the Federal Disability categories, and Dyslexia is technically under SLD. This can frustrate parents because you may hear “We can’t diagnose dyslexia at the school” or you may hear “We can’t put dyslexia on the paperwork”. While schools don’t diagnose dyslexia (neuropsychologists or developmental pediatricians do) they absolutely can and should put dyslexia on their evaluation paperwork and any subsequent IEP. The law does not prohibit them from putting “dyslexia” on the paperwork. This is important for parents to know because services for a student with dyslexia may vary greatly than just a child with a generalized learning disability in reading. Please see the letter at the back of this booklet from the federal government about dyslexia being used on an IEP.

Dyslexia and other SLDs are not caused by visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, intellectual disabilities, emotional issues, lack of proper instruction, cultural or environmental factors, or limited English proficiency.^{1,2} Instead, they are specific issues related to how the brain processes language. Without appropriate interventions, students with dyslexia may struggle with vocabulary growth, written expression, and learning a second language.³ Even with effective interventions, some students may continue to face challenges with reading fluency, spelling, and written expression, requiring ongoing support.

While dyslexia is the most common SLD, other SLD types include perceptual disabilities, brain injuries, minimal brain dysfunction, and developmental aphasia.² It's important to note that a child with an SLD may or may not have dyslexia, as SLDs encompass a range of learning challenges.

1. Specific Learning Disability and SLD/Dyslexia--FAQ. (n.d.). CT.gov - Connecticut's Official State Website. <https://portal.ct.gov/sde/special-education/specific-learning-disability-and-sld--dyslexia/faq>
2. Ross, J. (2022, December 28). Are SLD and dyslexia the same diagnosis?. Smart Kids. <https://www.smartkidswithld.org/community/ask-the-experts/sld-dyslexia-diagnosis/>
3. Signs of Dyslexia. (n.d.). Yale Dyslexia. <https://dyslexia.yale.edu/dyslexia/signs-of-dyslexia/>
4. Osborn, C. O. (2023, July 13). How to recognize dyslexia symptoms by age. Healthline. <https://www.healthline.com/health/dyslexia-symptoms-by-age>



Evaluation Process

A thorough evaluation is a game-changer when it comes to ensuring your kiddo receives the best education possible - it's also your legal right under IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) to get an evaluation, for free, from your local school district. This includes homeschool and private school children. During an evaluation, your kiddo will undergo multiple assessments to see if they qualify for special education services. Note: you do not have to enroll your child as an attending student to qualify for a Child Find evaluation.

At Love Your School, we always recommend parents email the principal and special education director and formally request an evaluation in writing. This “starts the clock” and lets the district know you are aware of your legal rights to an evaluation. If you have specific questions or are experiencing difficulties getting your child’s evaluation process started, please email us at hello@loveyourschool.org so we can help!

We recommend parents request a full cognitive

evaluation and in the initial meeting to discuss whether to evaluate (often called a RED or Review of Existing Data meeting) you may be asked to complete a questionnaire and possibly provide work samples. Please note that offering to “Screen” the child for dyslexia is not a reason to deny a parent a request to evaluate. Parents may say “I am fine with a screening, but I would like to reiterate that I am requesting a formal evaluation of my child to see if they qualify for specialized instruction under IDEA and Child Find”.

Remember, no one cares more about your child than YOU, and you should always communicate with the school in writing. If you receive a phone call, you should hang up and ask the district to email you. You want a written record because it will help you better track the process and protect your legal rights.

Below are a few things that may take place during testing. Please read to the end of the article to learn more about getting an actual dyslexia diagnosis at the end of this process.



Testing

Students will undergo a series of tests designed to assess different skills. For students with dyslexia, these tests may focus on reading, writing, and language abilities to identify specific challenges.^{1,3} It is our personal recommendation at Love Your School Cognitive tests will measure skills like memory, attention, and problem-solving, which are often areas of concern for students with dyslexia.² Additionally, other tests might assess speech and language development or any physical or medical needs.⁴ These tests are essential in identifying the areas where a student may need additional help.

Observations

Specialists will observe students in different environments, such as during classroom activities or social interactions.^{1,3} This helps them understand how students with dyslexia navigate daily tasks, follow instructions, and interact with others. These observations are important to see how dyslexia affects the student in real-world situations.

Work Samples

Reviewing a student's completed assignments, tests, and other work gives professionals insight into how dyslexia impacts their performance over time.⁵ By analyzing work samples, specialists can see patterns in the student's strengths and challenges, especially in areas like reading and writing.⁴

Together, these assessment methods create a detailed understanding of the student's abilities and needs. The information collected during the evaluation helps the team determine if the student qualifies for special education services and what specific supports are necessary. This ensures that students with dyslexia receive the tailored assistance they need to thrive in school.

1. International Dyslexia Association. (2015, June 11). Testing and Evaluation. <https://dyslexiaida.org/testing-and-evaluation/>

2. Mather, N., & Schneider, D. (2023). The use of cognitive tests in the assessment of dyslexia. *Journal of Intelligence*, 11(5), 79. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jintelligence11050079>

3. Dyslexia evaluation overview. (n.d.). Yale Dyslexia. <https://dyslexia.yale.edu/resources/parents/what-parents-can-do/dyslexia-evaluation-overview/>

4. Kelly, K. (2024, April 3). Types of tests for dyslexia. Understood. <https://www.understood.org/en/articles/tests-for-dyslexia>

5. What to expect in a dyslexia evaluation. (n.d.). Dyslexia Help at the University of Michigan. <https://dyslexiahelp.umich.edu/parents/learn-about-dyslexia/dyslexia-testing/what-to-expect-in-dyslexia-evaluation>

What's Next?

So, the district identified your child with Specific Learning Disability - Reading. Now what?

When a parent starts the process with a concern about dyslexia through a school evaluation, it may result in paperwork that says "Specific Learning Disability" SLD - Reading. Why? Because they have to categorize their evaluations based on the Federal Disability categories, and Dyslexia is technically under SLD. This can frustrate parents because you may hear "We can't diagnose dyslexia at the school" or you may hear "We can't put dyslexia on the paperwork". While schools don't diagnose dyslexia (neuropsychologists or developmental pediatricians do) they absolutely can and should put dyslexia on their evaluation paperwork and any subsequent IEP. The law does not prohibit them from putting "dyslexia" on the paperwork. This is important for parents to know because services for a student with dyslexia may vary greatly than just a child with a generalized learning disability in reading. Please see the letter at the back of this booklet from the federal government about dyslexia being used on an IEP.



If you would like a formal diagnosis of dyslexia and you believe that the district evaluation was not sufficient for any reason, you may request an Independent Educational Evaluation at the district's expense.

If you, as a parent of a child with a disability, do not agree with the results of the individualized evaluation of your child, as conducted by the school system, you have the right to obtain what is known as an Independent Educational Evaluation, or an IEE (§300.502). This means that you may ask that a professional, competent evaluator who is not employed by the school system conduct another evaluation of your child.

If you request an IEE of your child, the school must provide you with information about where you can obtain such an evaluation." You may choose an evaluator not on their list. You may go outside the cost containment amounts set by the district by showing the cost of an IEE at multiple providers. You do NOT have to give a reason for your IEE request.

1. [International Dyslexia Association. \(2015, June 11\). Testing and Evaluation. https://dyslexiaida.org/testing-and-evaluation/](https://dyslexiaida.org/testing-and-evaluation/)
2. Mather, N., & Schneider, D. (2023). The use of cognitive tests in the assessment of dyslexia. *Journal of Intelligence*, 11(5), 79. <https://doi.org/10.3390/intelligence11050079>
3. Dyslexia evaluation overview. (n.d.). Yale Dyslexia. <https://dyslexia.yale.edu/resources/parents/what-parents-can-do/dyslexia-evaluation-overview/>
4. Kelly, K. (2024, April 3). Types of tests for dyslexia. Understood. <https://www.understood.org/en/articles/tests-for-dyslexia>
5. What to expect in a dyslexia evaluation. (n.d.). Dyslexia Help at the University of Michigan. <https://dyslexiahelp.umich.edu/parents/learn-about-dyslexia/dyslexia-testing/what-to-expect-in-dyslexia-evaluation>



“The school is entitled to ask that parent why they disagree with the evaluation. But the school is not allowed to require that a parent respond to that question. So, the school can ask but you do not have to tell them why you disagree. But it is a good idea to know why you are asking for the IEE as the school may seek to file a due process complaint if they think there is no specific reason you are asking for the IEE.” Love Your School generally recommends a simple email to the district after the completion of the evaluation process if you’d like to get a second opinion and diagnosis of dyslexia or if you feel the district did not assess your concerns related to a specific learning disability in reading. The email can say something like “I disagree with the evaluation and I am requesting an IEE at district expense. Please let me know your decision with my request and thank you for your time.”

If you’ve gotten this far - congratulations! While this article is not an exhaustive look at what can happen in the evaluation process, it should give you a broad overview so you feel empowered and know where to look should you need additional support and guidance.

Don’t forget to email us at hello@loveyourschool.org if you have any additional questions about the evaluation process for your child.



IEPs: Dyslexia Edition

Creating an IEP for a student with dyslexia can make a significant difference in their academic journey. The IEP is a customized plan designed to address the specific challenges that the student faces. Here's a breakdown of what goes into an effective IEP for a student with dyslexia.

Understanding Dyslexia and IEPs

Dyslexia primarily affects reading and related language-based processing skills. It can make it difficult for students to decode words, read fluently, comprehend text, spell correctly, and write with ease. An IEP is a legal document that outlines specific goals tailored to help the student overcome these challenges in a structured and supportive way. Remember, school districts may argue that they can't write dyslexia on the IEP depending on what state you're in. You need to make sure they know that they CAN put dyslexia on the IEP, even if the category box they check is "SLD - Specific Learning Disability in Reading". If you need help getting a dyslexia diagnosis (which most schools will not diagnose) please see our article about evaluations.

KEY COMPONENTS

Specific and Measurable Goals

The goals set in an IEP must be clear and measurable. This means defining exactly what the student should achieve and by when. For example, a goal might be for the student to improve their reading fluency. This would need to be specific, like increasing the number of words they can read per minute by a specific amount within the school year. Being specific allows everyone involved – teachers, parents, and the student – to track progress effectively.

Targeted Areas of Difficulty

Dyslexia affects different students in different ways. Some may struggle more with reading comprehension, while others might find spelling or phonological awareness (the ability to recognize and work with sounds in spoken language) more challenging. The IEP should focus on these specific areas. This provides targeted support to help the student improve where they need it most.

Considering the Student's Strengths and Interests

Every student has unique strengths and interests, even if they have learning challenges. Incorporating these into the IEP can make learning more engaging and enjoyable. For instance, if a student loves animals, reading assignments might include books about wildlife, which can make the process of learning to read more interesting for them.

EXAMPLES OF IEP GOALS FOR DYSLEXIA

Here are some examples of goals that might be included in an IEP for a student with dyslexia:

READING GOALS

- Improve reading fluency by increasing the number of words read per minute from 40 to 60 by the end of the school year.
- Enhance reading comprehension by achieving 75% accuracy in answering questions about grade-level texts.

WRITING GOALS

- Improve written expression by using correct grammar and punctuation in 6 out of 10 writing assignments.
- Increase spelling accuracy by correctly spelling 10 out of 15 high-frequency words.

PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS GOALS

- Enhance phonemic awareness by correctly identifying and manipulating sounds in words with 90% accuracy.

Monitoring and Evaluating Progress

To ensure that the IEP is effective, regular monitoring is very important. This involves ongoing assessments, such as regular reading tests, teacher observations, and reviewing the student's work. Collecting and analyzing this data helps educators see where the student is making progress and where they might need more help. If a student is not on track to meet their goals, the IEP team can adjust the plan as needed.

Supports and Services

To help students with dyslexia succeed, the IEP might include various supports and services, such as:

- Extra time to complete exams.
- Using audiobooks to support reading.
- Allowing students to take tests in a quiet room to minimize distractions.
- Providing visual aids or using speech-to-text technology to assist with writing.



Why Specific Goals Matter

It's essential to avoid vague or overly broad goals in an IEP. For example, setting a goal like "Improve reading skills" is too general and doesn't provide clear criteria for success. Instead, goals should be specific and based on the student's current abilities. They should also be realistic. The goals should be pushing the student enough to make progress, but not setting them up for failure with goals that are too difficult to achieve within a year.

By focusing on specific, measurable goals and regularly monitoring progress, an IEP can help your kiddo with dyslexia build the skills they need to thrive in school and beyond. If you have any questions or need help regarding IEPs for people with dyslexia, reach out to hello@loveyourschool.org! We are here to help!



Know Your Legal Rights: Dyslexia Edition

If your child has dyslexia, it's important to understand the laws that are put into place to help your kiddo in school. Every state handles dyslexia a little differently, but some states, including Arizona, have specific laws that guide how schools should identify and support kids with dyslexia. Here's what you need to know to make sure your child gets the help they deserve.

State Dyslexia Laws vs. Federal Law

Many states have laws focused on dyslexia that go beyond federal special education laws. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the federal law that provides special education services,¹ but it doesn't specifically define dyslexia or explain how schools should address it. That's where state laws come in. These laws fill in the gaps by providing specific guidelines on early screening, intervention, and teacher training.

Each state has its own dyslexia laws, and they're not all the same. Some states focus on early detection, while others ensure teachers are trained to help students with dyslexia. These laws aim to make sure that, no matter which school your child attends, they receive the same level of support.



1. IDEA – National Center for Homeless Education. (n.d). <https://nche.ed.gov/legislation/idea/>



How Arizona Supports Kids with Dyslexia

Arizona has laws in place to help students with dyslexia, particularly when it comes to early identification and intervention. Here's a breakdown of what these laws require:

- 1. Early Screening:** Arizona public schools must screen all students from kindergarten through third grade for signs of dyslexia.¹ This is important because catching dyslexia early can greatly affect a child's reading and writing abilities.
- 2. Trained Teachers:** Every public K-3 school in Arizona must have at least one teacher trained in dyslexia instruction.² This ensures that schools have staff who understand dyslexia and can provide the right support. If you suspect your child has dyslexia - you should email your principal and ask them which teacher is trained in dyslexia instruction. You have a right to know!
- 3. Evidence-Based Support:** Schools are required to use teaching methods that are backed by research to help dyslexic students improve their reading skills.² These interventions focus on things like decoding words and reading fluency, which are common struggles for kids with dyslexia. Please note: you can research and ask your school if their reading instruction is aligned for students with dyslexia. Don't be afraid to ask (and google)!

1. Arizona Revised Statutes [§ 15-701](#) and [§ 15-704](#)

2. Arizona Revised Statutes [§ 15-211](#)

Other Legal Rights to Note

If the district denies your request to evaluate, you can file Due Process Complaint for a hearing.

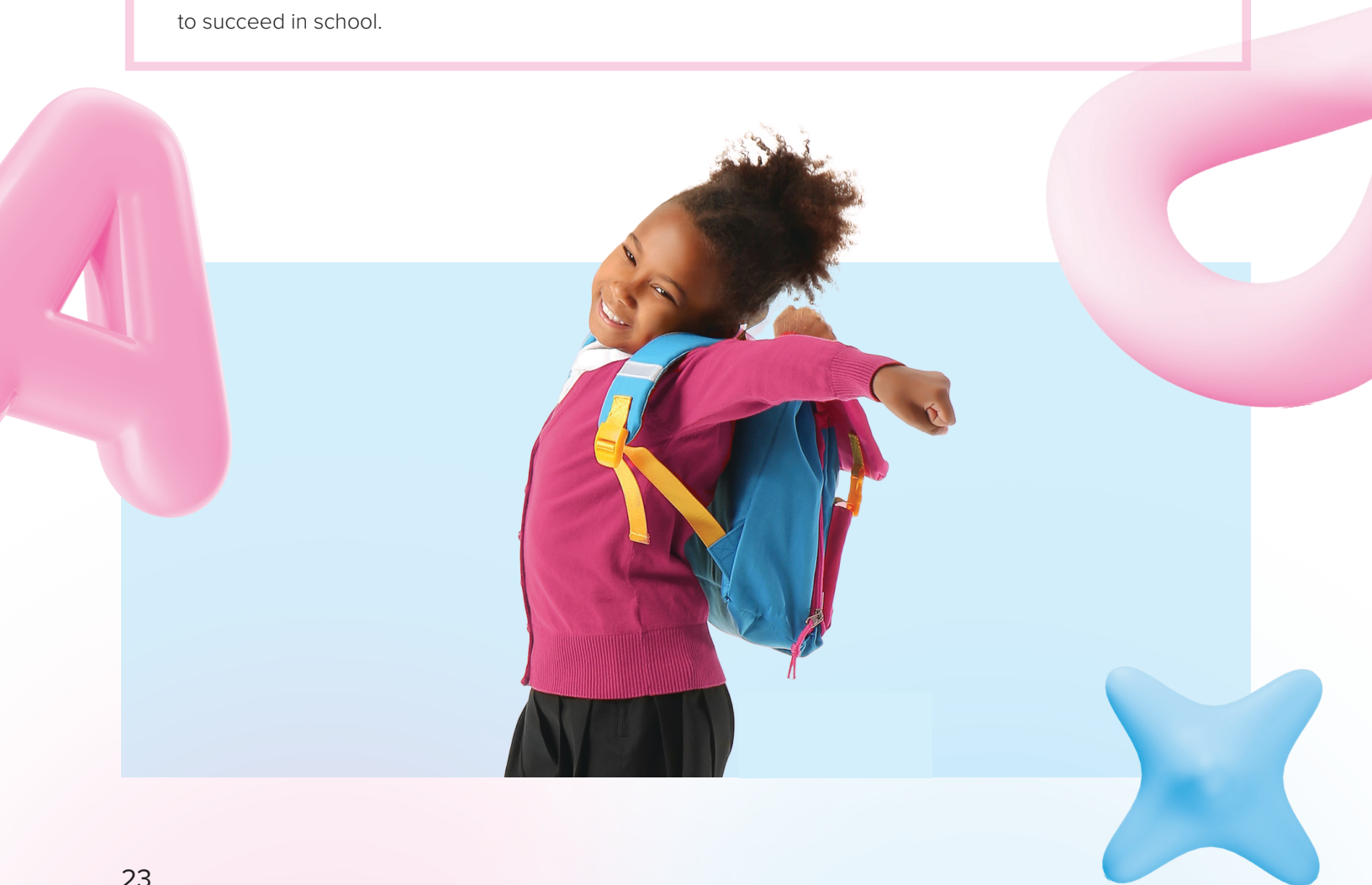
If you disagree with the evaluation, for any reason, you can request an Independent Educational Evaluation at the district's expense (IEE).

You can file a state complaint (usually state investigates in 48 hours) if the district is not responding to your request to evaluate or is ignoring meeting requests.

There are many other rights your family is entitled to, which can vary by state. If you have a specific question, please reach out to our team!

Staying Informed and Involved

Many of the dyslexia laws we have today came from the efforts of parents advocating for their children. Understanding the laws in your state is key to making sure your child gets the help they need. Knowing your rights and the laws that apply to dyslexia can help you ensure your child gets the support they need to succeed in school.



Proportionate Share



Under [IDEA](#), public school districts are required to find and assess students with disabilities whose parents have enrolled them in private schools or are homeschooling them. The districts need to report the number of these students. Based on this count, they receive a portion of federal special education funds and are required by [34 C.F.R. §§ 300.132](#) and [133](#) to provide equitable services to parentally-placed private school students with disabilities.

What are Equitable Services?

Equitable services are special education and related services for private school students with disabilities.

Who Qualifies?

According to [34 CFR § 300.130](#), a student qualifies if they have a disability, are placed in a K-12 private school by their parents, and require educational support due to their disability. The private schools may be nonprofit elementary or secondary schools and homeschool programs. This includes families who are utilizing the Arizona Empowerment Scholarship Account program and families in other states besides Arizona.

Who Doesn't Qualify?

Private school students with disabilities who were placed in private schools by the district are not eligible for funds. This is known as “district private placement”. Additionally, it excludes children with disabilities covered under specific federal [regulations](#).

How Do Students Get Equitable Services?

To receive equitable services, your child needs to demonstrate the necessity for special education support. Instead of getting an Individualized Education Program (IEP), private school students with disabilities who are designated to receive equitable services need a service plan. This plan, mandated by [34 C.F.R. § 300.132\(b\)](#), is developed by the school district where the private school is located. Per [34 C.F.R. § 300.138\(b\)\(1\)](#), the plan outlines

the specific special education and related services your child will receive based on the district's offerings for private school students with disabilities. The first step is to email the district and schedule an evaluation. If you already have a district evaluation, you need to email the director of special education and request a meeting to discuss “proportionate share/ equitable services” for your child.

What Does the Process Look Like?

When a child with a disability attends a private school and receives special education or related services from the district where the private school is located, the district is mandated to organize meetings for developing, reviewing, and revising a services plan for the child. It is required that a representative from the private school attend these meetings. Furthermore, according to [34 C.F.R. § 300.138\(b\)\(2\)\(ii\)](#), the services plan must undergo an annual review and revision process.



How are Funds Determined?

Funds are determined by the public school district following consultations with private school representatives. The amount allotted for each student's services is decided based on discussions regarding individual needs, available resources, and the planned services. Once these funds are exhausted, the public school district's financial **obligation** for that school year concludes. For example, a district may say "Your child qualifies for up to \$2000 in speech therapy appointments" and then you choose from their list, or select your own speech therapy provider. The district is allowed to say the therapy has to happen at their school, with their provider, although that is not always the case.

However, it's important to note, as per [34 C.F.R. § 300.138\(a\)\(2\)](#), that these students do not have the right to receive all the special education services provided in public schools. Thus, some private school students with disabilities may receive no services while others do.

MORE RESOURCES >>



Dyslexia

Myth

VS

Fact

Myth #1:

Kids with dyslexia will outgrow it.

VS

Fact #1:

Dyslexia is a lifelong issue. It persists into adulthood, although individuals can improve their reading skills with the right support and many dyslexics can experience remediation

Myth #2:

Dyslexia is rare.

VS

Fact #2:

Dyslexia is the most common learning disability, affecting about 10-20% of the population.

Myth #3:

Dyslexia could be prevented if parents read to their kids more, or if teachers taught more phonics.

VS

Fact #3:

Dyslexia is a neurological condition, not caused by a lack of reading or phonics instruction. Reading more can help but won't prevent or cure dyslexia.

Myth #4:

Smart people cannot be dyslexic.

VS

Fact #4:

Intelligence and dyslexia are not related. Many highly intelligent people, including successful professionals, have dyslexia.

Myth #5:

People with dyslexia cannot improve their reading abilities.

VS

Fact #5:

With the right interventions, such as specialized reading programs, people with dyslexia can make significant improvements in reading, spelling, and phonological awareness.

Myth #6:

Dyslexia cannot be diagnosed until the student is older.

VS

Fact #6:

Dyslexia can often be identified as early as kindergarten or first grade through early warning signs like difficulty with letter sounds and word decoding. Many standardized tests for diagnosing start at age 6.

Myth #6:

People with dyslexia cannot read.

VS

Fact #6:

People with dyslexia can absolutely learn to read well, although they may read at a slower pace or have difficulty with fluency. Many dyslexics overcome these barriers with interventions and support.

Myth #7:

Every child who struggles with reading is dyslexic.

VS

Fact #7:

Reading struggles can be due to many factors, and not all children who have difficulties with reading have dyslexia.

Myth #8:

People with dyslexia see things backward.

VS

Fact #8:

Dyslexia is not a vision problem. It affects language processing, not how words are seen on a page.

Myth #9:

Kids with dyslexia are lazy. They just need to try harder.

VS

Fact #9:

Dyslexia is a neurological condition, and it has nothing to do with effort or laziness. People with dyslexia often work much harder to read than others.

Myth #10:

Most teachers know the warning signs of dyslexia, so they can alert parents if their child is showing symptoms.

VS

Fact #10:

Many teachers are not trained to recognize the early signs of dyslexia, which can delay identification and intervention.

Myth #11:

Reversals of letters and words are symptoms of dyslexia.

VS

Fact #11:

While some children with dyslexia may reverse letters, this is not a definitive symptom. Reversals are common in early learners and are not a core indicator of dyslexia.

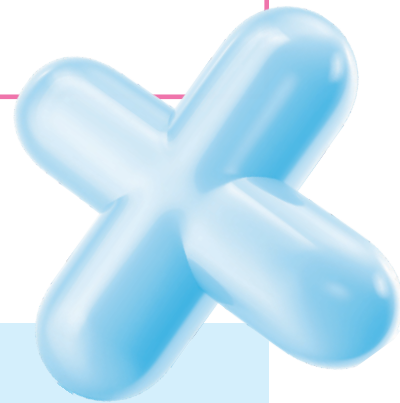
Myth #12:

Dyslexia is curable.

VS

Fact #12:

Dyslexia is not curable. However, with appropriate strategies and tools, individuals can manage and improve their reading and writing skills.





Technology for Children with Dyslexia



Helpful Tools

(A List from A Day in Our Shoes)

- 28 Sample **Vocabulary IEP Goals**
- 20 **Listening Comprehension IEP Goals** (and Examples)
- How to Write a Meaningful **IEP for Dyslexia** (includes IEP Goals for Dyslexia)
- 36 **Decoding IEP Goals** (Examples and Samples)
- 25 Measurable **Basic Reading Skills IEP Goals**
- Effective **Vocabulary Interventions**
- **Spelling IEP Goals**
- How to Write a Meaningful **IEP for Dyslexia** (includes IEP Goals for Dyslexia)
- 36 **Decoding IEP Goals** (Examples and Samples)
- 25 Measurable **Basic Reading Skills IEP Goals**
- 16 **IEP Goals for Phonemic Awareness**
- 14 **Letter Recognition IEP Goals** (including OT)
- 28 Sample **Vocabulary IEP Goals**
- 60 **Kindergarten IEP Goals** including Reading, Writing and Math
- 53 Measurable **IEP Goals for Writing and Written Expression** (and Objectives)
- 46 **Reading Comprehension IEP Goals**, including Fluency.



Websites

- International Dyslexia Association
www.eida.org
- The Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators (Official OG site)
Information about OG Approach, Directory of training programs, certified tutors and schools.
www.ortonacademy.org
- Information about learning to read, helping struggling readers. Book Lists
www.readingrockets.org
- Information about dyslexia, intervention
www.BrightSolutions.us
- (Formerly Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic) Audio Textbooks.
www.learningally.org
- Free audio book service for those who qualify w/ reading disability
www.statelibrary.sc.gov
- Richland Library - Books on dyslexia for children and adults. Materials & workshops for teaching beginning & struggling readers.
www.richlandlibrary.com



Books

- [Readiness for Reading - Beth Moore, 2017](#)
- [A Guide to Helping Your Child at Home - Diana Hanbury King, WVC Ed., 2015.](#)
- [Basic Facts About Dyslexia & Other Reading Problems-Louisa Cook Moats, Karen Daken, The International Dyslexia Association, 2008.](#)
- [Straight Talk About Reading: How parents can make a difference during the early years - Susan Hall & Louisa C. Moats, McGraw Hill, 2006.](#)
- [Recipe for Reading Intervention Strategies for Struggling Readers - Frances Bloom & Nina Traub, EPS, 2005.](#)
- [Overcoming Dyslexia - Sally Shaywitz, M.D., Vintage, 2003.](#)
- [Wrightsaw: From Emotions to Advocacy - Pam Wright & Pete Wright, 2006 For Educators & Administrators:](#)
- [Dyslexia in the Classroom - What Every Teacher Needs to Know International Dyslexia Association Handbook](#)

Parent Advocacy Resources

- [Appropriate Reading Instruction for a Child with Dyslexia](#)
- [Pushing Back: What to Say When Your School Gets It Wrong](#)
- [Dyslexia in the Classroom: What Every Teacher Should Know](#)
- [IDA Dyslexia Handbook: What Every Family Should Know](#)



More Resources

Understanding Dyslexia

[What is Dyslexia - Understood.Org](#)

[Dyslexia Basics - The International Dyslexia Association](#)

[Dyslexia FAQs - Yale](#)

[Dyslexia and the Brain - The International Dyslexia Association](#)

[Dyslexia Handbook - AZ Department of Education](#)

Proportionate Share

[FY24 ESS October 1 Parentally Placed Private School Students - AZ Department of Education](#)

[FAQs: Proportionate Share/Equitable Services - AZ Department of Education](#)

[Questions And Answers On Serving Children With Disabilities Placed By Their Parents In Private Schools - Office Of Special Education And Rehabilitative Services Office Of Special Education Programs](#)

[The ABCs of a 504 Plan - Raising Special Kids](#)

ABOUT LOVE YOUR SCHOOL

We **provide** relevant and fun resources for kiddos and their families

We **serve** families in their communities so they know the education options available to them

We **educate** families on education freedom and help them find the best education option for their kiddos

We **celebrate** education freedom for all children and families