Review of Dyslexia Services for Arlington Public Schools

* This report was written specifically for Arlington Public Schools. The Dyslexia Training Institute/Dr. Kelli Sandman-Hurly encourages schools to conduct their own analyses to determine what specific recommendations may be appropriate for their individual district needs.*

Submitted by

Kelli Sandman-Hurley, Ed.D.

Dyslexia Training Institute

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Introduction

This report is a review of the current dyslexia services, as of the 2015-2016 school year, provided to the students with dyslexia or characteristics of dyslexia, who attend Arlington Public Schools (APS). This report includes recommendations regarding how APS identifies, supports and instructs students with dyslexia both in special education and general education.

Dyslexia

This review focused on the services provided to students with dyslexia and students who have characteristics of dyslexia. The definition of dyslexia that was used for the review was the same definition that APS uses and has been adopted by the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) as well as the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE):

The International Dyslexia Association (IDA) provides the following definition of dyslexia:
Dyslexia is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge." (Adopted by the IDA Board of Directors, Nov. 12, 2002. This Definition is also used by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)).

Dyslexia is a difficulty with phonological and orthographic processing, which can make it challenging to decode (read) words, encode (spell), comprehend what has been read, and write sentences and longer compositions. Those with double deficit dyslexia also struggle with rapid naming, which makes it difficult for them to name things (letters, numbers, objects, etc) quickly and efficiently, which makes fluency more difficult to improve and is in addition to a weakness in phonological processing. These students need the most support from their teachers because they come to school lacking both phonological processing skills and the ability to process visual

information rapidly (Wolf & Greig Bowers, 1999). Additionally, difficulty with spelling and orthographic awareness in the absence of below average phonological awareness can also describe a student with dyslexia and is often referred to orthographic dyslexia.

Students with dyslexia and characteristics of dyslexia require a structured literacy intervention which is multisensory, explicit and systematic and teaches the underlying structure of the English language.

Dyslexia Task Force

The Dyslexia Task Force was established in March 2015 in response to the identified need to improve services for the up to 20% of students with dyslexia. Dr. Michelle Picard, ELA Supervisor, and Dr. Kelly Krug, ATSS Supervisor, facilitated the development of a three to five year plan which described how APS would more effectively serve students who demonstrate characteristics of dyslexia or are identified as dyslexic.

The Dyslexia Task Force met in March, April, May and June of 2015 and developed a working document. Members of the Dyslexia Task Force continue to meet to monitor the progress of the plan and to make revisions and additions.

Methodology

The recommendations in this report are based on the results of focus groups with principals, administrators, classroom teachers, special education teachers, school psychologists, school board members and parents of children in the Arlington Public Schools (APS), which took place in March 2016. Observational data was collected during classroom observations in two elementary schools. Additional information was gathered via a review of the current screening tool, parent survey and review of currently implemented curriculum.

Strengths

- APS trained 133 teachers, 126 of which are in the classrooms, in the Structured Literacy (Orton-Gillingham) approach through the Institute for Multisensory Education (IMSE).

- APS has registered 300 more teachers in the 2016 summer IMSE Orton-Gillingham training.

- Universal Screening was instituted for kindergarten (PALS-K). Students are also screened with the PALS in grades 1 and 2, as well as students new to Virginia in grades in k-2. In grades 6-12 students are given the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI). Students are also given the Diagnostic Reading Assessment (DRA) and the Diagnostic Spelling Assessment (DSA).

- APS plans to implement the PALS PLUS for ESOL/HILT in 2016-2017.

- Professional development (2-hour workshop) in the area of dyslexia was created and implemented for teachers and principals.

- Creation of an APS webpage for dyslexia (English and Spanish) is open to families, APS staff and the general public. http://www.apsva.us/Page/31000

- Creation of an intervention page on the ELA website with the publication of intervention guideline documents in Elementary and Secondary settings.

- Created the Dyslexia Basic Facts brochure which was published online and hard copies made available in English and Spanish

- Created a 45-60-minute face to face awareness training about dyslexia which included a Ted-Ed talk, anticipation guide, four articles and a jigsaw activity which included current research articles pertaining to dyslexia. All K-12 schools participated in the training. APS also purchased licenses for the dyslexia online module (MindPlay) for teachers.

- Creation and publication of the Elementary and Secondary Intervention Guideline Handbooks which was posted on the ELA and ATSS websites in September 2015 and December 2015 respectively.

- The Arlington Tiered System of Support (ATSS) was put into place to provide the appropriate interventions to those who have the need for extra support in the areas of reading and writing in the general education setting.

- A listserv for parents of students who are struggling academically was created so they would more effectively communicate with each other. Some members of the APS personnel are also included on this listserv.

- From August to November of 2015 all special education and ELA Reading teachers were engaged in professional learning about Dyslexia and then provided a turn-around training to their respective faculties.

- APS made intervention materials/programmatic approaches consistent across schools by providing initial training for teachers including: Orton-Gillingham (both levels of training and materials). APS also has the following interventions available to students with dyslexia or characteristics of dyslexia: Phono-graphix, SpellRead and My Virtual Reading Coach.

- Completed the Early Literacy Partnership with George Mason University, which focused on fundamentals in early literacy; also including a module on Dyslexia.

- APS included parents and community members on the Dyslexia Task Force.

Areas that Need Improvement

- The teachers who are currently trained in Structured Literacy (Orton-Gillingham) have not completed a supervised practicum which would provide them with the feedback and coaching which is an integral part of making sure the approach is implemented with fidelity.

- Teachers expressed that they have not had enough training about dyslexia to know how to help a child who is struggling with reading and spelling.

- Teachers do not feel they have the background knowledge about dyslexia that is needed to feel confident when referring students struggling for assessment for special education services.

- When students transition from grade to grade or from school to school their interventions, whether they are in general education or special education, can be interrupted which can lead to some students no longer receiving the intervention that was previously working for them.

- Some classes where Structured Literacy (OG) is being implemented are more than five students and those groups are not homogenous.

- Teachers using Structured Literacy do not have mentors or a professional peer group.

- School psychologists are hesitant to recommend the appropriate remediation if they know the school does not have the remediation or a trained teacher available.

- School psychologists are unsure when to use the term dyslexia.

- Focus group participants expressed that they are not trained to determine if English language learners are at risk for dyslexia or if other factors are creating their academic struggles.

- APS does not have a designated dyslexia specialist who can create professional development, provide mentoring for teachers and aid in the IEP process.

- Middle and high schools are not equipped to help students who transition for elementary and middle school and still have reading and spelling needs.

- Principals have limited training and/or knowledge about dyslexia or the appropriate interventions and accommodations.

- Teachers working with students who struggle with reading and spelling need more professional development in the area of the structure of the English language.

- Focus group participants reported that their students who required specialized services were not identified in a timely manner and not provided with an appropriate intervention.

- IEP goals are not consistently written to assure the student is receiving the appropriate intervention.

- The current list of interventions does not have a clear delineation of which programs are appropriate for students with dyslexia.

- There is no training about the common co-existing conditions of dysgraphia.

Recommendations

1. Continue to provide the training in Structured Literacy (Orton-Gillingham) to general education and special education teachers in grades k-12. Additionally, at least one teacher per school site should complete the practicum portion of the Structured Literacy training and be designated as the mentor to other OG teachers at that school site. Middle and high school students who still require an OG-based approach should have the opportunity to

receive that instruction outside of a content-area course and it should be delivered by a teacher trained in OG.

2. Require teachers who complete the IMSE or VDOE training to take the Tier 1 Certification in Structured Literacy that is provided by the Center for Effective Reading Instruction (CERI).

3. Structured literacy (OG) groups in both general education and special education classrooms should be no more than five people and they should be grouped homogeneously in ability.

4. Create district Dyslexia Specialists/Coaches who will provide support to teachers who are working with students with dyslexia and suspected dyslexia. The Dyslexia Specialists will assist teachers with progress monitoring, assure the fidelity of the intervention, provide feedback about teaching techniques, aid in goal writing for IEPs, attend IEP meetings, host ongoing professional development in the area of intervention, progress monitoring and accommodations for students with dyslexia.

5. Invite all k-12 principals, with special emphasis on middle and high school principals, to attend trainings that include the following topics: special education law as it relates to students struggling in reading and writing, a dyslexia simulation, an overview of what an appropriate intervention is for a student with dyslexia and accommodations.

6. APS should continue to use the PALS assessment in k-2 for universal screening. Students who may have milder dyslexia or dyslexia which manifests in spelling or rapid naming can be identified with early screening that includes spelling analysis and a rapid naming measure, and they should also receive intervention. Screening should include a short background survey, in order to consider pertinent qualitative information.

7. Screening in middle and high school should be implemented using a screener that includes phonological processing, spelling, rapid naming and reading fluency measures. This should also be accompanied by background information.

8. Develop or provide an existing professional development course that provides teachers who teach reading and spelling the basics about the structure of the English Language. This would include basic principles of linguistics that cover the followings topics: morphology, etymology and phonology.

9. Develop a goal-writing workshop for personnel who develop IEPs for students with dyslexia or suspected dyslexia.

10. Develop a dyslexia handbook to be posted on the Dyslexia webpage.

11. Ensure that students who are receiving an intervention, either in special education or in the general education setting, will continue to receive the same intervention when transitioning from grade to grade.

12. Develop a training for parents and community members that would include information about special education law and eligibility parameters and explanation of current interventions and screening processes.

13. Reorganize the ATSS chart to include Orton-Gillingham on all tiers so that it is noted as available to students with dyslexia and characteristics of dyslexia at every stage of the intervention process.

14. Develop training specific to school psychologists which includes a clarification of the use of the term dyslexia and includes how indicators of dyslexia can manifest in standardized testing. This should include more training about spelling assessment and qualitative information.

15. Teachers of English learners should receive more training in language acquisition in order to be able to determine if academic struggles are developmentally appropriate or a learning disability.

Review of Current Dyslexia Services Provided to at Arlington Public Schools (APS)

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Dyslexia Overview

Dyslexia is a neurobiological 'glitch' in the brain that makes reading and spelling more difficult than would be expected in students who have the capability to learn as evidences by their limitations appearing amid a 'sea of strengths'(Shaywitz, 2003). The prevalence of dyslexia is estimated to be up to twenty percent of the population. Reading and writing are manmade constructs and not every brain has the ability to learn those constructs as readily as others, without explicit instruction. Dyslexia can manifest differently in each student. Some may have extreme difficulty with decoding. Some may read accurately, yet slowly, and then cannot tell you what they read. Others may read well enough to keep up, but be poor spellers. Some may read a little slowly. Most students with dyslexia have a difficult time composing written compositions. These are all symptoms of dyslexia. Dyslexia also occurs on a continuum. It may be mild in one student and severe in another. But this is the annotated version about dyslexia. The International Dyslexia Association (IDA) provides the following definition of dyslexia:

> Dyslexia is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge." (Adopted by the IDA Board of Directors, Nov. 12, 2002. This Definition is also used by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)).

Dyslexia is a difficulty with phonological and orthographic processing which can make it challenging to decode (read) words, encode (spell), comprehend what has been read, and write sentences and longer compositions. Those with double deficit dyslexia means they also struggle with rapid naming, which makes it difficult for them to name things (letters, numbers, objects, etc) quickly/efficiently and makes improving fluency difficult.

Dyslexia and the Brain

Researchers, using sophisticated imaging technology (such as fMRI and MEG), have been able to identify areas of the brain that are most active during a reading activity. Researchers then used this neural signature for reading in comparison to the neural signature of the brains of students with dyslexia and discovered that students with dyslexia do not use the reading areas of the brain as efficiently as those without dyslexia. Interestingly, researchers have also identified that students with dyslexia utilize the right hemisphere of their brain during reading activities more than those who do not have dyslexia. Additionally, they have been able to conduct studies that provide evidence that after an appropriate intervention the brains of those with dyslexia begin to function more like those without dyslexia during a reading tasks.

Signs and Symptoms of Dyslexia

The following is a list of signs and symptoms of dyslexia. It is important to understand that there is not one profile for a student with dyslexia. Dyslexia occurs on a continuum and can be mild to moderate to severe to profound. One child with dyslexia might have extreme difficulty with basic reading tasks, while another may be able to decode but has difficulty with spelling and another might have trouble with reading fluency. It is extremely important to determine the strengths and weaknesses of each individual in order to determine what is appropriate for them to improve their literacy skills. Some symptoms of dyslexia are listed below:

- Difficulty decoding words in isolation: This is difficulty reading words out of context, usually in lists. This is often more difficult for children with dyslexia because they have to rely on their knowledge of the structure of English to decode isolated words instead of guessing the word based on context when it it presented within a sentence or passage.
- Difficulty spelling (orthography): Children with dyslexia almost always struggle with spelling and are usually relying on the one-to-one sound to symbol relationship to spell words rather than an understanding of English orthography. For example, they might spell <spilled> as *<spild> or <spilld>.

- Difficulty with phonemic awareness: Phonemic awareness is the ability of the student to verbally manipulate language before graphemes are presented. For example, your student may have difficulty understanding, or articulating, that the word <cat> has three phonemes, /c/ /a/ /t/ and may instead say it the following way /c/ /at/.

- Difficulty with phonological awareness: Phonological awareness is the ability to manipulate language when graphemes are presented. For example, give the student the word <cat> and ask them to tell you to remove the <c> and then pronounce the letter string that remains, which would be <at>.

- Slow, laborious reading: Children with dyslexia might read a passage or sentences very slowly, trying to decode (sound out) each and every word. This is especially prominent when larger, polysyllabic words are included in the text.

- Difficulty with math word problems: A child with dyslexia who is struggling with reading will also struggle to read math problems.

- Reversing letters passed the second grade: The reversal of b and d, as well as other letters, is normal through the first grade, after that it becomes a red flag.

A child with dyslexia needs a structured, multisensory, explicit, intervention.

English is a rules-based language that makes sense when the underlying structure is taught, studied and investigated. When a child with dyslexia is taught the structure of the language with a structured, multisensory, explicit and systematic approach, they are able to improve their reading and spelling. Approaches that encompass all the components listed above fall under the umbrella term of Structured Literacy. The International Dyslexia Association (IDA) describes Structured Literacy the following way (https://dyslexiaida.org/effective-reading-instruction/):

> **Phonology.** Phonology is the study of sound structure of spoken words and is a critical element of *Structured Language* instruction. Phonological awareness includes rhyming, counting words in spoken sentence, and clapping syllables in spoken words. An important aspect of phonological awareness is phonemic awareness or the ability to segment words into their component sounds, which are called phonemes. A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in a given language that can be recognized as being distinct

from other sounds in the language. For example, the word *cap* has three phonemes (/k/, /ă/, /p/), and the word *clasp* has five phonemes (/k/, /l/, /ă/, /s/, /p/).

Sound-Symbol Association. Once students have developed the awareness of phonemes of spoken language, they must learn how to map the phonemes to symbols or printed letters. Sound-symbol association must be taught and mastered in two directions: visual to auditory (reading) and auditory to visual (spelling). Additionally, students must master the blending of sounds and letters into words as well as the segmenting of whole words into the individual sounds. The instruction of sound-symbol associations is often referred to as phonics. Although phonics is a component of *Structured Literacy*, it is embedded within a rich and deep language context.

Syllable Instruction. A syllable is a unit of oral or written language with one vowel sound. Instruction includes teaching of the six basic syllable types in the English language: closed, vowel-consonant-*e*, open, consonant-*le*, *r*-controlled, and vowel pair. Knowledge of syllable types is an important organizing idea. By knowing the syllable type, the reader can better determine the sound of the vowel in the syllable. Syllable division rules heighten the reader's awareness of where a long, unfamiliar word may be divided for great accuracy in reading the word.

Morphology. A morpheme is the smallest unit of meaning in the language. The Structured Literacy curriculum includes the study of base words, roots, prefixes, and suffixes. The word instructor, for example, is contains the root *struct*, which means *to build*, the prefix *in*, which means *in* or *into*, and the suffix *or*, which means *one who*. An instructor is one who builds knowledge in his or her students.

Syntax. Syntax is the set of principles that dictate the sequence and function of words in a sentence in order to convey meaning. This includes grammar, sentence variation, and the mechanics of language.

Semantics. Semantics is that aspect of language concerned with meaning. The curriculum (from the beginning) must include instruction in the comprehension of written language.

***Structured Literacy* is distinctive in the principles that guide *how* critical elements are taught:**

Systematic and Cumulative. *Structured Literacy* instruction is systematic and cumulative. Systematic means that the organization of material follows the logical order of the language. The sequence must begin with the easiest and most basic concepts and elements and progress methodically to more difficult concepts and elements. Cumulative means each step must be based on concepts previously learned.

Explicit Instruction. *Structured Literacy* instruction requires the deliberate teaching of all concepts with continuous student-teacher interaction. It is not assumed that students will naturally deduce these concepts on their own.

Diagnostic Teaching. The teacher must be adept at individualized instruction. That is instruction that meets a student's needs. The instruction is based on careful and continuous assessment, both informally (for example, observation) and formally (for example, with standardized measures. The content presented must be mastered to the degree of automaticity. Automaticity is critical to freeing all the student's attention and cognitive resources for comprehension and expression.

Multisensory

Students with dyslexia require an intervention that is also multisensory. The Oxford dictionary defines the word <multisensory> as, 'Involving or using more than one of the senses'. The senses in this case include, hearing, seeing and tactile/kinesthetic. If a student is receiving a program that is multisensory they are using more than their eyes and ears to learn. For example, they might be manipulating parts of the language, like bases and affixes, by manipulating cards. Or they might be creating flow charts to determine when to drop the single silent e. For students with dyslexia who are learning the structure of English, this means they are also manipulating word parts on cards, grapheme (letter) cards, using word matrices and building word sums. For example, a student who is explicitly investigating the word <sign> using multisensory techniques will write out the following word sum, while simultaneously announcing each letter, verbally checking for changes to the base word along the way and then rewriting the word and the word sum looks like this: sign + al —> signal. Then he notices the reason for the <g> in that word. They will also be manipulating grapheme cards to blend simple words and learn how the phonology of each grapheme blends together to create a pronounceable (readable) word. For

example, they will have the grapheme cards <c> <a> <t> out on the table and using their fingers to trace below the word from left to right, they will be able to decode the new word.

Explicitness

Students with dyslexia require an intervention that explicitly teaches the the underlying structure of English. The Oxford dictionary defines the word explicit as, 'Stated clearly and in detail, leaving no room for confusion or doubt.' An appropriate intervention guides the teacher to explain why words are spelled and pronounced the way they are. It leaves no room for confusion. In fact, the student who receives the appropriate, explicit intervention will know why words are spelled the way they are and can explain those reasons to anyone who asks. For example, a properly trained person will be able to explicitly explain to a student why the word <circus> has two different phonemes /k/ and /s/, represented by one grapheme <c>. They will also be able to explain that the suffix for the word <action> is <-ion> and the base is <act>. They will then take that a step further and notice the phonology change for the grapheme <t> in the word <action> from the related word <acting>. This explicitness leaves the student with less confusion about the the structure of the language and having this information helps them understand how to pronounce (read) and spell words with a deep understanding of English orthography.

However, the approach and curriculum is only half the recipe; the teacher needs to be highly trained in order to be effective in helping the child with dyslexia understand English orthography and be able to transfer that understanding into improved reading and spelling. In the dyslexia community, highly trained does not mean one day training, or even a week-long training. When using the Orton-Gillingham approach, the highly trained component is accomplished when the teacher completes coursework and a supervised practicum.

The Center for Effective Reading Instruction (CERI) published "The standards that outline the 1) content knowledge necessary to teach reading and writing to all students, including those who are at risk for reading difficulty; and 2) practices of effective instruction. Teachers should have the foundational knowledge of language, literacy development, and individual differences to serve all the children in their classroom. The full document, entitled *Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading* can be located here: http://effectread.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/KPS.pdf.

Dyslexia Myths

Myth #1: *"Students with dyslexia see the letters or words backwards."*
People with dyslexia see letters and words the same way those without dyslexia do, dyslexia is not a vision problem. It cannot be 'cured' with covered overlays or vision therapy. In fact, the American Academy of Ophthalmologists (AAO) states that, most tracking problems are a result of dyslexia, not the cause.

Stanislaus Dehaene, the author of Reading in the Brain (2010), explains why students confuse b, d, p and q in his book, *Dyslexia Across Languages* (2011). Reading is not an innate ability, the human brain has adapted to allow us to read. We know from Maryanne Wolf and Stanislaus Dehaene that the written language was not created arbitrarily but it was created in a way that our brains could understand. Most letters are less than three lines. They were not made with more than that, because our brains could not process those configurations due to the fact that the reading part of our brains were originally wired to do things like recognize faces. Our brains were not built for reading, we had to fit reading into our brains (Wolf, 2008). Our brain is naturally wired to be able to determine that a cow is a cow no matter how we see it. If we see it facing left, it's a cow. If we see it facing right, it's still a cow. So, when we introduce letters like and b and d to the preschooler, he has to unlearn this mirror image ability that is built in to the brain. It is developmentally normal for children to confuse letters through the end of the first grade.

People with dyslexia see words and letters the same way people without dyslexia do. Therefore, any 'intervention' that targets the visual (sight) system is misguided. This includes colored paper, covered overlays, colored lenses and vision therapy. The American Academy of Ophthalmologists released this statement about the misuse of vision interventions for students with dyslexia: http://one.aao.org/clinical-statement/joint-statement-learning-disabilities-dyslexia-vis.

Myth # 2: *"Let's wait until the third grade to have him tested."*
Dyslexia is not something that is outgrown, in fact once students hit the third grade, or even worse yet, the fourth grade, they have are having significant difficulty that may be starting to

affect their emotional health. The key to helping someone with dyslexia is to have them identified as early as possible. The introduction of Arlington Tiered System of Support (ATSS) is a positive step in the right direction, provided the student is not released from the program too soon, the chosen intervention is appropriate, and implemented with fidelity by an adequately trained professional. (Professional Learning Recommendation).

Myth #3: *Dyslexia is out-grown.*

A person is born with dyslexia, and once they are born with dyslexia and they will always have dyslexia. They will not outgrow it, but with the correct intervention they will improve their reading and writing and they hopefully they will be encouraged to embrace their dyslexia. Ben Foss writes: "Welcome to the Nation of Dyslexia." He goes on to state, "Whether your child is on the cusp of being identified or you've known about his dyslexia for quite some time, I say welcome to the club! It's safe here, and you can let go of your fear and anxiety about this identification. Believe me, I know how you feel. I was there and so were my parents, and I can tell you with 100 percent certainty that it will get better. Indeed, you're going to have fun." Lastly, retaining a child with dyslexia is waiting for the child to change, when the intervention is what needs to change.

Myth #4: *Dyslexia requires a medical diagnosis*

Dyslexia is not a medical condition. There are no medications for dyslexia and no medical interventions for dyslexia. Usually, if you ask a pediatrician for a diagnosis they usually refer the parent back to the school.

Accommodations

It is important students with dyslexia or characteristics of dyslexia to have access to accommodations, if and when they choose to use them. Below is a list of accommodations that are helpful for students with dyslexia. Accommodations should be individualized so not every accommodation will be appropriate for every student.

READING

• Provide access to audiobooks

• Provide access to text-to-speech software

• Provide a set of textbooks for home use

• Only ask the student to read aloud if he volunteers

• Provide extra time for reading assignments

• Allow student to preview reading materials

SPELLING

• Reduce spelling lists

• Do not take off points for spelling errors on written work

• Allow access to a spellcheck

• Provide access to word prediction software

WRITING

• Provide a scribe

• Provide access to speech-to-text software

• Offer alternative projects instead of written reports

• Provide written copies of notes

• Minimize the amount of copying from the board

• Allow student to use a keyboard to take notes

• Allow student to record lectures

• Reduce written work

APS Dyslexia Services

• Provide graphic organizers

• Grade assignments on content rather than form

HOMEWORK

• Reduce homework

• Allow student to dictate answers

• Allow typewritten homework

• Limit time spent on homework

• Email list of assignments to student or parent

TESTING

• Allow student to take tests orally

• Provide for extra time

• Read directions aloud

• Read test questions aloud

• Provide alternatives to testing (oral projects or videos)

• Provide a quiet testing area with minimal distractions • Grade in collaboration with special educator

• Clarify or simplify written directions

Conclusion

On May 10 2016 Dr. Guinevere Eden spoke to the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Finance[1] on the topic of dyslexia. She testified that 'Academic and educational

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[1] Testimony of U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Finance can be found at this link http://www.help.senate.gov/hearings/understanding-dyslexia-the-intersection-of-scientific-research-and-education

institutions will need to embrace a cultural change that facilitates jointly tackling the collective complexity of dyslexia, and engaging a common language and a common understanding of how to harness the knowledge of teaching and learning to the benefit of children with dyslexia.'
Dr. Sally Shaywitz also testified on May 10, 2016 where she outlined the best practices for schools to help students with dyslexia. Those best practices include:

- School climate – everyone at school on is board and uses the word dyslexia.

- Small classes

- Evidence-based methods

- Knowledgeable, flexible, caring teachers

- Consistency in instruction across all classes

The following recommendations attempt to give APS a roadmap to use in order to implement the best practices outlined by Dr. Shaywitz and supported by the dyslexia community.

Strengths, Needs and Recommendations

The Dyslexia Task Force was established in March 2015. Dr. Michelle Picard and Dr. Kelly Krug developed a three to five plan to more effectively serve students with dyslexia and or characteristics of dyslexia. This working document[2] includes tasks in the areas of assessment, professional learning, instruction and interventions, communication and guidance and parents. Additionally, in September 2015 APS published the *Intervention Guidance Document for Elementary English Language Arts (*http://www.apsva.us/cms/lib2/VA01000586/Centricity/Domain/3169/2015%20Elementary%20Intervenions.pdf*)* which described the interventions that are available to students in both general education and special education in k-12. The organization of this report follows the organization of the Dyslexia Task Force plan.

Since March 2015 APS has taken necessary and impressive steps to improve the services of students with dyslexia or characteristic of dyslexia. The task force has delineated and published steps that are needed in order to implement the most effective program possible in a public school district. During this process APS developed several strengths that improve the academic career of students with dyslexia. Within many of those strengths are recommendations for improvement. In the following section the strengths, identified needs and implementation steps are outlined in the areas of screening, professional learning, instruction and interventions, communication and guidance, parents, special education personnel and English learners.

> ## Screening and Progress Monitoring

Strengths

APS currently employs a universal screener (PALS - Phonological Awareness Literacy Screener) in K-3 and will be implementing universal screening for K-5 in 2016. APS also has plans to use a more sensitive diagnostic screener in ESOL HILT as a universal screening next year (PALS PLUS). The PALS is an acceptable tool for screening and is included in the Literate Nation

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[2] The Dyslexia Task Force working document can be located at this link: http://www.apsva.us/Page/33938

White Paper as an effective screener for dyslexia. According to APS, students who demonstrate a need on the PALS screener, which includes students who score right on the benchmark or just slightly above, are entitled to one of the interventions that is listed in the *Intervention Guidance Document for Elementary English Language Arts.* Additionally, APS implemented the PALS Quick Check in an effort to continue to monitor progress to determine current placement and interventions. APS also uses the Developmental Spelling Assessment (DSA) in grades 3-5 to identify the students' current stage of spelling development.

In order to collect more information about the literacy achievement of students, APS uses the following informal assessments: Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI), the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Literacy Assessment, the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), PALS Quick Checks as well as assessments that are embedded with specific interventions such as Earobics, Orton-Gillingham etc.

APS is currently using the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) for the upper grades which is a research-based, computer adaptive assessment that measures reading skills and longitudinal progress. The computer software automatically monitors the response to every question and therefore adapts to the student's performance. The SRI assesses a student's reading level in Lexiles, a measurement aligned with grade level performance.

Identified Needs

- Universal dyslexia screening should continue in k-3. In grades 3-12 screening for students who are continuing to struggle academically should also continue to be screened with the PALS, SRI and DSA for the 2016-2017 year.

- In order to incorporate a rapid naming measure, APS should investigate the Predictive Assessment of Reading (PAR) and adding a rapid naming component to screening as well as a background questionnaire for grades K-3.

- For students in grades 3-12 APS should investigate using the Feifer Assessment of Reading (FAR) Screening Tool. The FAR is available for use through grade 12, includes a rapid

naming component and by using the same assessment throughout all grades would provide a consistent way to monitor progress.

- Additionally, teachers should receive training to be able to qualitatively interpret the spelling mistakes on the DSA in order to determine the instructional need. (A recommendation for training in Linguistics for Educators follows later in this report).

- Those students with deficits that indicate they may be at-risk for dyslexia should be automatically placed in an Orton-Gillingham group in Tier 1, which means OG needs to be universally accessible. The quantitative at-risk factors which would indicate a need for OG are: below average or low average abilities in phonological awareness, phonemic awareness and rapid naming on the PALS and a rapid naming measure. Qualitative measures should also be considered and those are described under the Implementation steps. Therefore Orton-Gillingham should be included as option in the Tier 1 (Core Programs) for students who meet the criteria for an SL intervention.

Implementation:

1. Add a rapid naming component, such as the RAN/RAS to screening. Dr. Steven Dykstra in the *Selecting Screening Instruments: Focus on Predictive Validity, Classification Accuracy, and Norm-Referenced Scoring* suggest, "Schools and districts with an established relationship to another screener may consider adding the RAN/RAS to other measure of phonologic processing and decoding in order to improve the range of critical skills including in screening." This recommendation further supported by Dr. Dystra's summation of the importance of Rapid Naming, "The RAN/RAS tests represent one of the most important predictors of reading ability across every writing system tested in the last three decades. Naming speed tests provide a quick, easily administered measure of the brain's underlying ability to connect visual and verbal processes. As such, they give a very basic index of present and future issues related to word-retrieval processes and the development of fluency in reading. RAN/RAS is also an excellent example of a skill that both predicts broad reading and is independent of each other subskills. It contributes unique information to the screening data, not available through any other assessment."

This can be accomplished by adding the RAN/RAS (http://www.proedinc.com/customer/productView.aspx?ID=2706) assessment to the PALS or replace the PALS with the Predictive Assessment of Reading (PAR) which is a dyslexia screening tool that is highly regarded in the dyslexia community. The PAR includes a rapid naming subtest (http://onlinepar.net).

2. Collect background information with a supplemental survey. Information about what to include on this survey can be found on International Dyslexia Association (IDA) website and includes the following information about the literacy development of the student (https://dyslexiaida.org/dyslexia-basics/):

   - Learning to speak

   - Learning letters and their sounds

   - Organizing written and spoken language

   - Memorizing number facts

   - Reading quickly enough to comprehend

   - Persisting with and comprehending longer reading assignments

   - Spelling

   - Family history

   Additionally, on May 10, 2016, Dr. Eden suggested, 'When a parent has dyslexia, the chances that their child has dyslexia are significantly higher, approximately 40%. Having this information provides a critical piece of information for educators and health care providers to consider when confronted with a child who is experiencing difficulties in learning to read, or even better, prior to that point. As such, a family history of reading disability should be noted on questionnaires for entering kindergarteners along with health conditions (allergies, asthma) and home language environment. A family history of dyslexia can be very predictive of children at risk for reading difficulties [20] and, together with early behavioral measures of skills known to predict later reading outcome (such as phonemic awareness and letter naming [21]), can be used to signal that a child is at risk for difficulties in learning to read'.

3. Consider using the DIBELS or AIMSWeb to monitor reading fluency with an emphasis in analyzing the types of miscues being made. This type of assessment is especially important for students in fourth grade and above. This is supported by the May 10, 2016[3] testimony given by Dr. Mahone, the Director of the Department of Neuropsychology at the Kennedy Krieger Institute in Baltimore.

> *Late Emerging Reading Disabilities and Reading Comprehension*
> Approximately 41% of all students with dyslexia *have late-emerging reading disabilities*; that is, deficits are not evident until at least third grade. This pattern, sometimes known as the "fourth-grade slump," can be associated with the transition from "learning to read" to "reading to learn," and may also be related to reduced vocabulary development in students of low socioeconomic status backgrounds. From this point forward, curricula emphasize fluency and comprehension rather than more basic word recognition skills. Beyond third grade, students are also expected to be able to incorporate cause/effect sequences, goals/plans for characters, and conclusions that relate to final events to those at the beginning of the story (all higher-order cognitive skills). Children who received early intervention and showed improvement may start to struggle again with the increased demands and volume of middle and high school reading and when they are expected to work more independently.
> Late-emerging reading disabilities are often associated with coexisting conditions, especially ADHD, the second most common developmental disability. It is clear that children who have early problems involving basic word recognition will most likely also have difficulty with reading comprehension; however, more recently, researchers have identified groups of children without reading basic word reading deficits who go on to have difficulties in reading comprehension, perhaps as a result of their associated executive function deficits (Sesma et al., 2009). These children are considered to have "specific" reading comprehension disorders

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[3] **Testimony of** U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Finance can be found at this link http://www.help.senate.gov/hearings/understanding-dyslexia-the-intersection-of-scientific-research-and-education

(Cutting et al., 2009; Locascio et al., 2010), and many also have associated ADHD. Working memory deficits (i.e., problems "holding" and manipulating information mentally) associated with ADHD can prevent students from monitoring what they read, as they are more susceptible to being distracted by detail when reading longer text—failing to "remember" main ideas. These findings challenge the long held "simple view" of reading (Hoover & Gough, 1990), which argued that reading comprehension was primarily the product of word reading and listening comprehension, and acknowledge the important contribution of higher-order "executive function" skills to the development of competent reading.

4. In addition to quantitative data, qualitative data should be considered when determining the appropriate intervention for a student. This information will include observations which might include how long it takes student to answer a question in untimed situation and whether or not that answer tends to be correct when given extra time to process. Qualitative information can also include how long it takes to complete homework, if correct spellings transfer from tests across the curriculum and teacher observations regarding the students' strengths in other academic areas.

Progress Monitoring

Focus group participants expressed concern that students were receiving small group instruction in reading and spelling, but progress was not being monitored correctly or shared with parents in a timely manner. According to focus group participants this resulted in students spending a significant amount of time in a particular program without evidence of progress which resulted in instructional time not being used appropriately. Progress monitoring using the PALS Quick checks, teacher reports, informal data collected via the IMSE provided curriculum and SOLs should be reported and shared with parents quarterly. Without consistent progress monitoring in the general education setting it is difficult to determine when it is necessary to refer the students or special education evaluation or when it is appropriate to change or adjust an intervention.

Further support for strengthening progress monitoring can be found in the *Evaluation of APS Services for Students with Special Needs*[4] that was conducted for APS in 2013 Implementation of progress monitoring was inconsistent in the following ways and focus groups for this review corroborated that the following weaknesses still exist in APS:

- Student records did not reflect consistent use of progress monitoring tools and most plans included no progress monitoring activities.

- Some IAT plans referenced the use of longer-term data sources such as quarterly grades.

- There were no examples of progress monitoring scores or other data collection activities connected to the IAT plans.

- When asked, the majority of the session participants had no knowledge of the term "progress monitoring," noted they did not consider it to be a part of the IAT process, and were uncertain about how it would look as part of their practice.

- Most participants noted that this type of data collection would likely be overwhelming or too much for most classroom teachers.

- Because student achievement data currently resides in multiple locations, data analysis is labor- intensive and is incomplete.

According to the PALS website[5] regarding progress monitoring:

> In addition to administering PALS during the fall, mid-year, and spring screening windows, PALS Quick Checks may be used to monitor student progress on targeted literacy skill acquisition throughout the year. PALS Quick Checks should be administered   to K-3 students who have been identified by PALS and are receiving intervention, but need even more intensive, explicit instruction in a specific skill. Once students reach mastery in the specific literacy skill, the PALS Quick Check for that skill

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[4] Full report can be found at
http://www.apsva.us/cms/lib2/VA01000586/Centricity/Domain/141/evaluation%20reports/APS%20Sped%20Final%20Report%201.18.pdf
[5] Phonological Awareness Screening at https://pals.virginia.edu

should be discontinued. PALS Quick Checks provide charts for graphing student progress over time and are a curriculum-based measurement.

The publishers of PALS describes the progress monitoring process the following way:

> Quick Checks should be administered three to five times between the fall and mid-year PALS assessment window and an additional three to five times between the mid-year and spring PALS assessment window. Quick Checks should be administered in equal intervals.

Students should graduate out of an Orton-Gillingham or similar intervention only when they complete the program, which means when they have mastered all six syllable types, the schwa, morphology and several spelling rules as outlined in the IMSE provided curriculum and they continue the program regardless of new teachers or schools. The time frame for completion will vary based on the severity of the dyslexia, intensity of the intervention, size of the intervention group and consistency of the intervention. Most importantly, the success of the intervention is highly dependent on the teacher's ability to implement the approach with fidelity and use progress data to adjust the student's program.

During the focus groups it was shared that parents believe special education is more appropriate for their children because special education services guarantee, via 2004 IDEA, that the student receives the appropriate intervention and that progress on goals are measured and reported regularly. Special education services also ensures that accommodations are provided, that the teacher is highly qualified and that there has to be reasonable educational benefit. However, if APS does institute clear and consistent progress-monitoring, provides consistent access to OG to all students who need it, special education may no longer be necessary for these students.

APS created the ATSS tiered system which is a Response-to-Intervention (RTI) model, but without concrete instructions about progress monitoring and clear directions about when to refer a child for an assessment for special education services, students are at risk for failing to make progress with an inappropriate intervention.

Resources

Dyslexia Screening: Essential Concepts for Schools & Parents, Dr. Richard Selznick

Essentials of Dyslexia Assessment and Intervention, Dr. Nancy Mather and Barbara J. Wendling

Professional Learning

Strengths

APS has already trained over 123 general education and special education teachers in Structured Literacy (Orton-Gillignham) through the IMSE. APS enrolled an additional 300 teachers in the same training for the summer of 2016.

Several licenses were purchased for teachers to participate in the Mindplay[6] Understanding Dyslexia online, self-paced course on dyslexia.

Between August 2015 to November 2015 all special education and ELA reading teachers participated in professional learning about dyslexia. Upon completion of that workshop participants were expected to provide a turn-around training to their colleagues. The awareness training on dyslexia included the following components: a 4-minute TED-Ed video about dyslexia, an anticipation guide to guide group discussions, and four current articles about dyslexia to use during a jigsaw activity. All APS k-12 schools participated in the training. Participants included teachers and school administrators.

A Dyslexia Basic Facts brochure was created and subsequently published on the APS Dyslexia webpage. Print copies were also made available in English and Spanish.

Identified Needs

- APS has already trained over 123 general education and special education teachers in Orton-Gillignham through the IMSE or the VDOE[7] 2016 summer training. There are plans to have another 300 teachers trained in the summer of 2016. While the concentration of this training

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[6] Mindplay can be found at this link http://mindplay.com/teacher-programs/understanding-dyslexia/
[7] Virginia Department of Education 2016 Multi-Sensory Structured Language Instruction Pilot Project II http://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/superintendents_memos/2016/056-16.shtml

should be on kindergarten, first and second grade teachers, there needs to be a strong presence of equally trained teachers in third through the twelfth grade. The week-long IMSE training includes the typical components of a structured literacy program which includes how to teach: phonemic awareness, phonological awareness and spelling rules using an explicit, systematic, multisensory approach. However, the 30-hour, week-long training does not include a practicum which would allow teachers the opportunity to receive coaching from a highly trained and experienced Orton-Gillingham mentor. Practicums typically range from 45-60 hours of direct instruction time with students who have either been diagnosed with dyslexia or have characteristics of dyslexia while be monitored by the practicum mentor.

- Each school site should have at least one mentor teacher who has completed the practicum portion of a OG training and be designated as the mentor to other OG teachers at that school site.

- For students who do not respond to OG or for students who need an alternative intervention there should be teachers who have successfully completed an approved training in Phono-graphix or SpellRead.

- Focus group participants who attended the APS dyslexia training were uncomfortable being charged with training their colleagues after only two hours of training. The role of training colleagues should be left to mentor teachers or district dyslexia specialists who have a deeper knowledge about dyslexia. Additionally, the dyslexia training should include a more in-depth section about what an appropriate intervention needs to include to be successful. Focus group participants also shared that this training did not cover English learners who may have dyslexia. APS should consider adding an ESOL and dyslexia component or a separate training for ESOL teachers.

- *Mentor Teachers:* While all teachers trained in IMSE through APS do not need to complete the practicum, the teachers and their students would benefit from a having access to a mentor teacher at each school site who has completed the practicum and is considered highly qualified to work use a Structured Literacy approach.

Implementation

1. Require teachers who complete the IMSE or VDOE training to take the Tier 1 Certification[8] in Structured Literacy that is provided by the Center for Effective Reading Instruction.

2. Identify a training program that offers the practicum portion of Orton-Gillingham training. A list of training options is included at the bottom of this recommendation. Many programs now offer this portion of the training to be completed via an online format.

3. Mentor teachers should be teachers who have already completed the IMSE training, have had the opportunity to implement it and have had positive feedback from both colleagues and parents of children who received the intervention.

4. Mentor teacher candidates should complete the supervised practicum of at least 45 hours. Most practicums take approximately 6 months to one year to successfully complete.

5. Mentor teachers should be required to complete a minimum of one professional development course per school year in the areas of: dyslexia, dysgraphia, linguistics and/or executive function.

6. Upon successful completion of mentor teacher training, mentor teachers would be responsible for observing sessions and provide immediate feedback to the teacher. They would also hold monthly meetings that would provide an opportunity for teachers to talk about specific students, discuss progress monitoring, determine how to modify a program for students who are not making progress and share ideas.

Implementation in Middle and High School:

Students with dyslexia or characteristics of dyslexia who transition from elementary school to middle school and/or middle school to high school who still have a need to learn the concepts that are taught in an Orton-Gillignham based approach should be seamlessly matched with an

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[8] Tier 1 Certification in Structured Literacy is offered by the Center for Effective Reading Instruction
https://effectivereading.org/certification/how-to-apply/tier-1-certification-application/

appropriately trained teacher. Therefore, all parts of this recommendation pertains to all 6-12 schools.

Structured Literacy Training which include Practicum Options

Institute for Multisensory Education - www.orton-gillingham.com

Dyslexia Training Institute - www.dyslexiatrainginstitute.org

Mayerson Online - http://www.mayersonacademy.org/orton-gillingham-multisensory-reading-program/

Riverside School (Virginia) http://www.riversideschool.org/outreach-training/orton-gillingham-teacher-course/

Instruction and Interventions

Strengths

During the 2015-2016 school year, APS instituted an intervention block during the day for approximately one third of the elementary schools and one middle school. APS was able to offer OG intervention in the elementary schools that have IMSE trained teachers. APS does have a variety of interventions available for students who are struggling academically. These range from an intensive, explicit instruction to computer-aided instruction.

Identified Needs

1. Students who have characteristics of dyslexia (which can be found in the Dyslexia Overview Section) should initially be placed in a Structured Literacy (OG) intervention within the which is facilitated by a trained teacher who also has a mentor, and progress should be monitored and reported on a quarterly basis. If, based on progress monitoring evidence, the student is not responding to the OG intervention during the first academic year, then alternative interventions should be considered. Additionally, if the student is

not responding to the intervention, students should be referred to Special Education for an assessment to determine Special Education eligibility without delay.

2.   If the student is not responding to OG, APS currently has the following alternative interventions that may be appropriate, for a student who is not responding to OG:

- Phono-graphix

- SpellRead

- My Virtual Reading Coach

3.   APS should reconsider using Read Naturally, Reading Recovery and any type of eclectic approach which is not structured and explicit for students who have dyslexia or have characteristics of dyslexia. Read Naturally should be used a supplement for reading fluency only and not a core intervention for dyslexia.

4.   An observation of a classroom in APS revealed that an OG group can have as many as 12 students in it. The class had a wide range of abilities and needs. Additionally, the teacher required some mentoring in order to implement OG with fidelity. Focus group participants confirmed that this was not an isolated case. Therefore, it is important for APS to understand the Orton-Gillingham approaches are designed for one-one-one or small group instruction in both general education and special education classes. In a public school setting it is most appropriate to implement the intervention in small groups. Those groups should be homogeneous in age and skill level. The group should not exceed five students. Groups should meet no less than thirty minutes per session a daily basis.

Implementation for Grouping

Step 1: Collect data regarding students' current levels in phonological awareness and orthographic awareness in order to create homogeneous groups. This data should include information from the PALS, DSA and SRI and should continue through high school.

Step 2: Data collection should be collected on no less than a quarterly basis and grouping evaluated as often as progress is reported.

Step 3: Ensure that students who transition to the next grade or the next school receive the same intervention from year to year as long as the intervention is necessary.

5. Lastly, the ATSS chart included in the *Intervention Guidance Document for Elementary English Language Arts* and *Intervention Guidance Document for Secondary English Language Arts* should include Orton-Gillingham in the Tier 1/core programming as well as Tier 3.

6. APS should either create or provide an already existing Linguistics for Educators professional development opportunity to all general education and regular education teachers who are responsible for teaching the reading and/or spelling. This will provide teachers with the background information they need to help students understand the structure of English and how that affects spelling and pronunciation (decoding). This training would be very beneficial for teachers who have a block of time in Language Arts. This course should include the following an overview of the following components:

    - Phonetics

    - Phonology

    - Morphology

    - Orthography

    Current training in Linguistics for educators can be found at:

    - www.linguisteducatorexchange.com

    - http://www.seethebeautyindyslexia.com/swi.html

    - www.wordworkskingston.com

    - www.dyslexiatraininginstitute.org

Communication and Guidance

In an effort to make research-based information available to the parents of APS students and the Arlington community, APS created and published a page on the APS website that is dedicated to providing information about dyslexia. This page was published in August 2015 and includes, the APS Dyslexia Basic Facts Brochure, a TED-Ed video about dyslexia, a list of strengths and

weaknesses, types of reading instruction best serves students with Dyslexia, and interventions currently available to students with dyslexia at APS. What are some classroom accommodations and supports that can be provided to students with Dyslexia? Where can I find additional information about Dyslexia

APS also created an Intervention page on the ELA website with the publication of intervention guideline documents in Elementary and Secondary as well as created and published the Elementary and Secondary Intervention Guideline Handbooks which are posted on the ELA and ATSS websites.

Identified Needs

APS has made a concerted effort to raise awareness about dyslexia within the district, however, participants in the focus groups either did not think the efforts were complete and some focus groups participants did not yet have a clear understanding of what dyslexia is, the importance of the correct and early intervention, appropriate accommodations or eligibility criteria for special education services. They did not feel like they had the access they needed to the correct intervention that is outlined on the APS dyslexia webpage. Therefore, it is recommended that more awareness about dyslexia be promoted and fostered by helping APS personnel develop more dyslexia awareness which would cultivate an environment where the term dyslexia is used and accepted in appropriate situations. Focus group participants did feel comfortable using the word dyslexia due to a perceived lack of training and lack of confidence that they are using the term correctly.

Implementation

1. Offer dyslexia simulations as part of professional development and require all employees of APS to attend. Dyslexia simulations provide participants the opportunity to gain empathy for struggling students while simultaneously reinforcing the importance of accommodations.

The following simulations could be utilized for this training:

1. *How Difficult Can This Be?The F.A.T. City Workshop*, Richard Lavoie
2. *Experience Dyslexia®,* Northern California Branch of the International Dyslexia Association
3. *Dyslexia for a Day,* Dyslexia Training Institute

2.   Develop a dyslexia handbook that is posted on the Dyslexia webpage. A dyslexia handbook should include the following information:

1.   Defining Dyslexia

2.   Early Indicators and Characteristics of Dyslexia

3.   ATSS

4   Dyslexia Screening

5.   Instructional Approaches for Students with Dyslexia

6.   Dyslexia Professional Development

7.   Special Education and Dyslexia

8.   IDEA and Dyslexia

There are several states with current dyslexia handbooks that can be used as templates:

1.   Texas - http://tea.texas.gov/Curriculum_and_Instructional_Programs/ Special Student Populations/Dyslexia/

2.   Nevada - http://www.doe.nv.gov/Office_of_Special_Education/

3.   Tennessee - https://www.tn.gov/assets/entities/education/attachments/ sped_understanding_dyslexia.pdf

4.   South Dakota - https://doe.sd.gov/oess/documents/SPED_DyslexiaGuide.pdf

5.   Mississippi - https://districtaccess.mde.k12.ms.us/curriculumandInstruction/ Dyslexia/Mississippi-Best-Practices-Dyslexia-Handbook-2010.12.13.pdf

3.   Create ongoing parent workshops that cover the topics of interventions, special education eligibility criteria and their parental rights under 2004 IDEA.

4. APS should consider making an impartial parent advocate/liaison who is knowledgeable about dyslexia and IDEA to be available for parents who can attend SST and IEP meetings with and for the parents.

<div style="border:1px solid #000; background:#cceef0; text-align:center; padding:8px; font-weight:bold;">District Level Support</div>

Strengths

Focus group participants were very appreciative of the creation of ATSS and the Dyslexia Task Force. It is also evident that the administrative offices at APS have made a strong concerted effort to address the need of the students with dyslexia or characteristics of dyslexia. In fact, APS is a national leader in the area of teaching training in Orton-Gillignham and the implementation of universal screening.

Identified Needs

Focus group participants expressed that they needed support from a very knowledgeable person about dyslexia in several areas. This could be accomplished with district level Dyslexia Specialists. APS should consider creating positions for district Dyslexia Specialists/Coaches who will provide support to teachers who are working with students with dyslexia and suspected dyslexia. The Dyslexia Specialists will assist teachers with progress monitoring, assure the fidelity of the intervention, provide feedback about teaching techniques, aid in goal writing for IEPs, attend IEP meetings, host ongoing professional development in the area of intervention, progress monitoring and accommodations for students with dyslexia.

Dyslexia affects up to twenty percent of the population[9]. For APS this means that up to 20% of the student population may need support at some point in their academic career. The District Dyslexia Specialists should have a deep understanding of dyslexia and co-morbid conditions such as dysgraphia and executive function issues. Currently APS has two Autism Specialists to

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[9] Shaywitz, Sally (2003). Overcoming Dyslexia.

serve the up to 1%[10] of students with autism. Given the significantly higher percentage of students with dyslexia and characteristics of dyslexia, it is recommended that APS have no less than three Dyslexia Specialists. The Specialists would be responsible for, but not limited to, the following:

- Facilitates the planning, evaluation and delivery the APS dyslexia program for grades K-12.
- Provides training and mentoring support to campus dyslexia mentor teachers.
- Implements and monitors the screening and referral process for dyslexia services.
- Assisting campus staff in developing intervention plans for students.
- Assuming responsibility for coordinating the dyslexia program throughout the district.
- Effectively communicates state and district dyslexia policy and guidelines to teachers and staff.
- Works with district and campus staff members for effective implementation of the dyslexia program.
- Monitoring dyslexia program on all campuses.
- Providing opportunities for staff development for the administrative staff and teachers.
- Works with the district and campus administrators to develop and provide dyslexia professional development programs.
- Works directly with the ESOL/HILT department to ensure that all dyslexic students are served.
- Encourages two-way communication between the district and the community.
- Encourages and promotes parental and community involvement in the educational process.
- Remains current in all legal requirements for services and procedures.

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[10] According to the Autism Speaks website, Autism affects approximately 1% of the population. https://www.autismspeaks.org/what-autism/facts-about-autism

Special Education

Strengths

APS school psychologists are knowledgeable about the assessment procedures and have a diverse range of expertise. An observation of a special education teacher revealed a highly engaging and effective educator.

Identified Needs

Focus group participants expressed a reluctance to use the term dyslexia in any official capacity during the special education eligibility process. It was a common theme that the although it was acceptable to use the term ADHD, which is listed as a qualifying condition under Other Health Impaired (OHI), it was not as readily acceptable to use the term dyslexia, which is listed as a qualifying condition under Specific Learning Disability (SLD). It was also noted that focus group participants did not have the necessary training to interpret spelling assessments or determine when a twice exceptional student who is obtaining passing grades would be eligible for special education services. Focus group participants also expressed a reluctance to recommend specific interventions if they were aware that those interventions were not available at the school the child currently attended, even if that would be the appropriate recommendation for the child. Another prominent theme was the process of how tests were interpreted as well as how additional information (IEE, classroom work samples, parent input) was considered when determining eligibility for special education services. Lastly, via a review of IEPs provided by parents, it was noted that personnel writing goals for children with dyslexia were lacking training in writing SMART goals that responded to individual needs.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Create a training specifically for school psychologists which might include, but is not limited to, the following components:

1. Review which assessments are most appropriate for students who are at risk for dyslexia. The assessment that should be included are:

    1. Gray Oral Reading Test (GORT-5). This must include a report of the qualitative data.

    2. Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing -2 (CTOPP-2). This should include the supplemental tests.

    3. Test of Word Reading Efficiency-2 (TOWRE-2)

    4. Test of Written Spelling - 5 (TWS-5)

2.. How to interpret spelling assessments

3. Twice exceptional students and eligibility

4. How to interpret qualitative data and how that affects eligibility

5. Overview of 2004 IDEA as it pertains to dyslexia. This could include a review of the following Dyslexia Guidance OSEP memo: https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/guidance-on-dyslexia-10-2015.pdf

6. Review case studies of students with varying dyslexia profiles and their eligibility status.

7. Review appropriate accommodations for students with dyslexia.

2. Create a training specifically for personnel creating IEPs and writing goals. This training should include guidance about goals being individualized, specific and responding to all identified academic needs. Training on what SMART goals are is important to the documentation of progress of the student. While it is not recommended to have a goal bank, some examples could be provided for training purposes. Table 1.0 provides an examples of goals for common areas of need for students with dyslexia

Need	Goal
Phonemic Awareness	By (insert one year from the date of the IEP) student will be able to add, delete and manipulate individual phonemes in one syllable words and one syllable words with affixes. that presented verbally with 90% accuracy as measured by teacher-kept data.
Phonological Awareness	By (insert one year from the date of the IEP) student will be able to decode a list of (insert number) previously unseen one and two syllable words which shall include closed (cat, belt, blast, intact), open (me, open) and vowel-consonant-e (decide, take) words that are presented in isolation with 90% accuracy as measured by teacher-kept data.
Morphological Awareness	Morphological Awareness Goal Template: By (enter date one year from this IEP) when given a list of 25 words containing a free base and prefixes and affixes (playing, mistrust, unedited) the student will be able to successfully identify the free base, the affix and the grammatical use of the affix with 90% accuracy as measured by teacher-kept data.
Encoding (Spelling)	Orthographic Awareness (Spelling) Goal Template: By (enter date one year from this IEP) when given a list of 25 words containing a free base and prefixes and affixes (playing, mistrust, unedited) the student will be able to successfully encode (spell) the free base, the affix and the grammatical use of the affix with 90% accuracy as measured by teacher-kept data.

English Learners

Focus Group Participants expressed concern that they did not have enough training to determine when an ESOL/HILT student was experiencing difficulty learning to read and write in English due to natural the language acquisition process or due to possible dyslexia.

Recommendation

APS should consider conducting a review of the ESOL/HILT process of tracking and assessing ESOL/HILT students to determine the reasons for academic difficulty and provide recommendations.

Summary

Arlington Public School has responded to the needs of their students with dyslexia by forming a task force, providing Orton-Gillingham training for hundreds of their teachers, creating professional development and implementing universal screening without being mandated to do so. On a National level APS far exceeds what other school districts have done in the face of the ever-increasing awareness of the needs of students with dyslexia. The recommendations in the report would ensure the APS would be one of the leading school districts in the country for students with dyslexia.

Resources

United States Special Education Regulations

Individuals with Disabilties Educaiton Act- http://idea.ed.gov

BOOKS

7 Steps for Success: High School to College Transition Strategies for Students with Disabilities, Elizabeth C. Hamblin.

All About IEPs, By Peter Wright, Pamela Darr Wright & Sandra Webb O'Connor

The Dyslexic Advantage: Unlocking the Hidden Potential of the Dyslexic Brain, by Drs. Brock and Fernette Eide

The Dyslexia Empowerment Plan: A Blueprint for Renewing Your Child's Confidence and Love of Learning, by Ben Foss

Essentials of Dyslexia Assessment and Intervention, by Nancy Mather & Barbara J. Wendling

Overcoming dyslexia: A new and complete science-based program for reading problems at any level, by Sally Shaywitz

Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain, by Maryanne Wolf

Reading in the Brain: The New Science of How We Read, Stanislaus Dehaene

Special Education Law, by Peter & Pamela Wright

When the School Says No, How to Get the Yes!: Securing Special Education Services for Your Child, by Vaughn Lauer

Wrightslaw: All About Tests and AssessmentsMay by Melissa Lee Farrall PhD SAIF and Pamela Darr Wright MA MSW

Wrightslaw: From Emotions to Advocacy: The Special Education Survival Guide, By Peter and Pamela Darr Wright

Dyslexia

Bright Solutions for Dyslexia: http://www.dys-add.com

Decoding Dyslexia – www.decodingdyslexia.net - These websites list current advocacy
efforts in your state.

Dyslexia Help – www.dyslexiahelp.umich.edu

Dyslexia Training Institute –www.dyslexiatraininginstitute.org

Embracing Dyslexia –www.embracingdyslexia.com

Headstrong Nation – www.headstrongnation.org

IEP Help - www.iephelp.com

International Dyslexia Association – www.interdys.org

Learning Ally – www.learningally.org

TED Ed – What is Dyslexia - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zafiGBrFkRM

Understood, www.understood.org

Wrightslaw - www.wrightslaw.com

The Yale Center for Dyslexia & Creativity – www.dyslexia.yale.edu

SIMULATION KITS

Dyslexia for a Day Simulation Kit – produced by Dyslexia Training Institute

How Difficult Can This Be? The F.A.T. City Workshop with Rick Lavoie – produced by PBS

WEBSITES - Advocacy

Dyslexia Training Institute – four week course and certificate program available

Wrightslaw Special Education Law and Advocacy - www.wrightslaw.com

APS Dyslexia Services

IEP Help - www.iephelp.com

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DeHaene, S. (2011) Reading as Neuronal Recycling: A Universal Brain Organization

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O.J.L.Tzeng (Eds.) Dyslexia Across Languages Orthography and the Brain-Gene-Behavior

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