



## Parent Guide to Evaluations when Dyslexia is Suspected

Students are typically evaluated for dyslexia via three main avenues:

- **Dyslexia-only evaluation** via the 504 process in a public school
- **Full Individual Evaluation (FIE)** via IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) in a public school
- **Private, outside evaluation** (paid for by parents, school is required to consider and may accept findings but is not required to)

Federal education law (IDEA) requires that schools assess any child who may need special education services “*in all areas related to the suspected disability.*” (IDEA (34 CFR Sec. 300.304)) This mandate is called Child Find, and it is an affirmative duty that obligates a school to take the initiative to identify, locate, and evaluate students when a disability is suspected.

### Benefits of Requesting a Full Individual Evaluation (FIE)

- Ensure your student’s learning challenges are fully identified, which is crucial since 60-80% of dyslexic students also have co-occurring learning differences (written expression, ADHD, executive functioning, working memory, etc).
- Ensures intervention targets all areas of need vs. focusing only on dyslexia for 2 years during Take Flight and then later identifying other challenges that were also impacting learning.
- Provides a complete picture of a student's learning profile vs. missing areas that may impact a student’s ability to be successful in school

### Overview of Dyslexia Section of an Evaluation

The [Texas Dyslexia Handbook](#) (2018) outlines areas for the evaluation of dyslexia when it is suspected for a student. The individual needs of the student, including age and stage of reading development, will be considered when an initial evaluation plan is created. Dyslexia is complex, and identifying each student is a unique process led by trained evaluators. Often, skilled evaluators will often make adjustments to the planned tests as they begin working with a student.

The Texas Dyslexia Handbook chart (below, from p 30) is helpful for parents to ensure that whatever route they pursue for a dyslexia evaluation, all key dyslexia information is included. The chart does *not* identify all the areas of possible learning differences that could be assessed in an Full Individual Evaluation (FIE) or private evaluation.

Figure 3.4. Areas for Evaluation

<u>Academic Skills</u>	<u>Cognitive Processes</u>	<u>Possible Additional Areas</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letter knowledge (name and associated sound)</li> <li>• Reading words in isolation</li> <li>• Decoding unfamiliar words accurately</li> <li>• Reading fluency (rate, accuracy, and prosody are assessed)</li> <li>• Reading comprehension</li> <li>• Spelling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phonological/phonemic awareness</li> <li>• Rapid naming of symbols or objects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocabulary</li> <li>• Listening comprehension</li> <li>• Verbal expression</li> <li>• Written expression</li> <li>• Handwriting</li> <li>• Memory for letter or symbol sequences (orthographic processing)</li> <li>• Mathematical calculation/reasoning</li> <li>• Phonological memory</li> <li>• Verbal working memory</li> <li>• Processing speed</li> </ul>

To assist parents in having a clear understanding of any evaluation planned, the chart below can be personalized to their student.

Areas of Evaluation	Test(s) planned to evaluate
<b>Academic Skills</b>	
Letter knowledge (name & associated sound)	
Reading words in isolation	
Decoding unfamiliar words accurately	
Reading fluency (rate, accuracy & prosody are assessed)	
Reading comprehension	
Spelling	
<b>Cognitive Processes</b>	
Phonological processing	
Phonemic awareness	
Rapid naming of symbols or objects	
<b>Possible Additional Areas</b>	
Vocabulary	
Listening comprehension	
Verbal expression	
Written expression	
Handwriting	

Memory for letter or symbol sequences (orthographic processing)	
Mathematical calculation / reasoning	
Phonological memory	
Verbal working memory	
Processing speed	

### **Related resources**

Parent Guide to IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act): [link](#)

Parent's Guide to ARD Process: [link](#)

Texas Dyslexia Handbook (2018): [link](#)

Dyslexia and Common Co-occurring Differences

[Dyslexia and Comorbidities Chart](#)

[Other Issues That Can Co-Occur With Dyslexia](#)

[National Institutes of Health study about Learning Disorders and co-occurring differences](#)

How to select a private evaluator

[Questions to Ask Specialists Who Evaluate for Learning Disabilities](#)

[Private Evaluations: What You Need to Know](#)

504 Plan vs Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

[504 Plan vs Individualized Education Plan \(IEP\)](#)

[Video: What's the Difference Between an IEP and a 504 Plan?](#)

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