

The Special Education Report



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Dyslexia-Separating Facts from Myths

Information Provided by the Kansas Association of Special Education Administrators (KASEA)

KASEA is a state-wide professional organization representing special education administrators. Through KASEA, special education administrators share and promote effective instructional practices, work to integrate special and general education processes, and advocate for the rights of students and families dealing with disabilities.

Myth: *Public schools do not serve students with dyslexia.*

FACT: **Dyslexia** is a condition related to reading difficulties. **It is specifically named** in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Kansas Special Education for Exceptional Children Act, and Kansas Administrative Regulations under the definition of ***specific learning disability***. **Students who have met the definition of one of the categories** of exceptionality, such as specific learning disability, **which includes dyslexia**, and, as a result of that exceptionality need special education and related services, **may receive those services through established state and Federal laws in public schools.**

Myth: *All students with dyslexia qualify for special education services.*

FACT: **Dyslexia occurs in 15-20% of the population and ranges from mild to severe.** Some children who are **mildly impacted** will not qualify for school-based services while others with **moderate to severe impact** may qualify for special education or other supports that are available through general education. However, it is important to understand that **some children with dyslexia achieve at an average or above average level and do not qualify for school-based services.**

Myth: *Students with dyslexia must be taught with a specific methodology, such as Orton-Gillingham.*

FACT: **A one-size-fits-all approach is seldom a sound educational practice.** As with all disabilities, the unique learning needs of specific students must be considered. **Methodology is selected** by educational professionals, **based on a number of factors**, including the age of the child, areas of delay, cognitive level, and response to interventions.



Myth: *Legislation is required to meet the needs of students with dyslexia.*

FACT: In recent years, advocates for students with dyslexia lobbied for legislation specific to this particular condition. **Proposed legislation attempts to mandate specific instructional and professional development** programs would open the door for non-educational personnel to “prescribe” special education **services in lieu of adherence to eligibility determination processes that are required by state and Federal law.**

KASEA is opposed to legislation

that addresses learning needs for students diagnosed with a particular condition.

Reasons for this position are as follows:

- ✓ It is **not** recommended to have legislation specific to one type of condition. For example, under the umbrella of the emotional disturbance category, special education services may be provided for students with a diagnosis of schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, or attachment disorder. To have a separate law for each condition would result in over-regulation, increased financial burden, and likely conflict with state and Federal Law. The same is true for reading disabilities. **Dyslexia already is included in the definition of learning disabilities, and therefore a separate category and specific legislation is not needed.**
- ✓ Current special education regulations provide extensive due process rights for parents of students with disabilities, along with processes for dispute resolution.
- ✓ **State and Federal law already require identification of any student who may be in need of special education services.** Kansas laws and policies must comply with Federal statutes and regulations and not conflict with what is required by the IDEA.
- ✓ **Federal IDEA regulations specifically stress that states must strive to minimize the number of rules, regulations, and policies** to which the local education agencies and schools located in the state are subject under Part B of the IDEA.
- ✓ When a student meets the definition of one of the categories of exceptionality and, as a result of that exceptionality, needs special education and related services, these services are outlined in an Individualized Education Program (IEP). **Parent involvement is an important part of the process in determining eligibility and services.**
- ✓ **Schools are already held accountable** with respect to student achievement through the state assessment process, **a process that fully included students with exceptionality.**

For Further Information

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Kansas Association of Special Education Administrators (KASEA) Legislative Platform

Recognizing the critical importance played by both State and Federal legislators, KASEA members are politically active and work to provide comprehensive and timely support for legislators as key decisions are made. The KASEA legislative platform is as follows:

1. Kansas special education mandates should mirror those in Federal individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) statutes and regulations.
2. Public funds should be used to fund Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) as determined by the Individual Education Program (IEP) team.
3. KASEA should be an active participant in the research regarding any potential changes in the current funding formula.
4. Special education should be funded at 100 percent of excess cost.

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