

Addressing Dyslexia within MTSS

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According to the International Dyslexia Association (2018), dyslexia is “a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It 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.” Dyslexia is specifically cited in the implementing regulations of the IDEA and in the Kansas Special Education for Exceptional Children Act, under the definition of specific learning disability.

The following table provides information on how the Kansas MTSS and Alignment process addresses some of the facts and recommendations from The International Dyslexia Association and researchers of dyslexia.

What We Know: Prevention and Early Intervention	Kansas MTSS and Alignment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dyslexia, by definition, is a word level reading disorder (Fletcher, et al., 2018). Of the components needed for word-level reading – letter sound knowledge, phonological blending, phonemic awareness, and phonological long-term memory – the difficulties experienced with those with the dyslexic pattern can be narrowed down to some combination of the first three.” (Kilpatrick, 2017). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of Kansas MTSS and Alignment, students needing intervention are given universal screening and formal/informal diagnostic assessments to ensure students at-risk for phonemic awareness and other word level difficulties receive intervention early. After screening, all students are immediately placed in pre-determined evidence-based interventions according to their need. Students who are missing these critical early literacy skills are placed in interventions focused on developing letter-sound knowledge, phonemic blending, and phonemic awareness.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dyslexia is treatable with early intervention. It is heritable, but the neural systems are malleable both in development and in instructional response (Fletcher, et al., 2018). Early intervention or additional direct instruction should begin as early as kindergarten for struggling readers (Lowell, 2014). Over 20 studies that combine neuroimaging before and after reading intervention across the age span who have benefited from a year’s worth of targeted instruction start to resemble those of children who have never had any difficulty reading (Fletcher, et al., 2018). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kansas MTSS and Alignment begins in preschool. Universal screening and intervention are provided early to ensure all children (preschool through grade 12) receive appropriate reading instruction according to their skill needs in a timely manner. In an MTSS, the universal screening data (reading accuracy and fluency scores) and the diagnostic process are used to group students according to their needs and targeted instructional focus. This method provides an efficient method to determine and appropriate instructional match to meet students’ needs. (PreK-12 Reading Structuring Guide, 2018)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For 70-90% of poor readers, prevention and early intervention programs that combine instruction in phoneme awareness, phonics, fluency, and reading comprehension strategies and that are taught by well-trained teachers can increase reading skills to average reading levels (Torgesen, 1997). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In addition to a research-based core, students in PreK-3 receive targeted skill based instruction for supplemental intervention or comprehensive interventions for students with intensive needs.
What We Know: Identification of Student Needs	Kansas MTSS and Alignment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dyslexia or any learning disability should not be identified in the absence of documentation of adequate instruction (Fletcher, et al., 2018). It is possible to identify potential reading problems in young children even before the problems turn into reading failure. This can be done by assessing students three times a year using screening assessments that assess predictive reading skills (ex: curriculum-based measures). (IDA, 2017). Research (Fuchs, Deno, & Mirkin, 1984) shows that students with reading difficulties make stronger reading gains when teachers use Curriculum Based Measurement-Reading Assessments (CBM-R). CBMs help teachers amend instruction until effective and give the clearest picture of students’ ongoing reading growth (IDA, 2007). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Kansas MTSS and Alignment, schools are asked to evaluate the effectiveness of core curriculum and instructional practices. The process of finding students who are at-risk for reading difficulty is part of the Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports and Alignment (MTSS) framework. Schools trained in Kansas MTSS are adequately prepared to screen students 3 times a year with a Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM) and identify students with reading difficulties and target students’ word level reading difficulties, which are characteristics of dyslexia.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Careful progress monitoring and analysis of student performance are the key elements of a scientific approach to instruction that has the most promise to meet the unique needs of students with dyslexia (IDA, 2007). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequent progress monitoring for students receiving supplemental (Tier 2) and intense (Tier 3) instruction is a critical component of Kansas MTSS and Alignment. Regular adjustments are made to interventions based on student progress. The most frequent adjustments should involve group size and time(intensity), but may also involve a change of teacher or program. (PreK-12 Reading Structuring Guide, 2018)
<p style="text-align: center;">What We Know: Treatment</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Kansas MTSS and Alignment</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The effectiveness of treatment depends on whether it addresses the relevant causes (Seidenberg, 2017). Research supports explicit, comprehensive and differentiated approaches at the classroom and supplemental (Tier 2) level (Fletcher, et al., 2018). “Traditional service models are ineffective. What we should be doing is screening, preventing, remediating, and accommodating through a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS).” (Fletcher, 2018). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of MTSS Structuring and Implementation training, schools learn about reading science and the most effective instructional approaches to treating reading difficulties and how to match the focus of intervention to student needs. Multi-tiered instructional approaches begin with screening and progress monitoring in the context of strong core instruction and supplemental instruction and, if needed, intensive intervention.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The educational needs of these students can often be met in the general education classroom (least restrictive environment), which should be tried first according to IDEA (Berninger & Wolf, 2009). We must focus on instruction and amplify the role of general education as a primary source of prevention (Fletcher, et al., 2018). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core instruction provided to all students in the building should be consistent with research-based practices and the district allocation of instructional minutes. Differentiation of core curriculum is considered at Tier 1 for all students (PreK-12 Reading Structuring Guide, 2018). An understanding of reader development, the five areas of reading, and how reading skills are acquired is essential when considering a school’s curriculum materials. This knowledge will assist schools in ensuring that the highest-quality curriculum is selected and that the essential components are addressed through Tier 1 (core), Tier 2, and Tier 3 curricula (PreK-12 Reading Structuring Guide, 2018). Kansas MTSS and Alignment should not delay a student from receiving special education evaluation and students can be referred at any time in the process (Systems Implementation Guide, 2018).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals with dyslexia require intense, precisely focused instruction (IDA, 2007). If a child has dyslexia, the child needs specialized instruction in phonology, oral reading accuracy and fluency for single words and passages, and written spelling (Berninger & Wolf, 2009). The word recognition skills of many students with identified reading disabilities can be normalized with effective interventions (Foorman and Al Otaiba, 2009). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For supplemental and intensive support to be provided in grades PreK-3, curriculum materials must be selected that focus on skill-based instruction. Skill-based refers to the five essential areas of reading; phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Intervention curricula at Tier 2 and Tier 3 should be different from core curriculum and provide targeted and/or comprehensive intervention support, depending on the need of the student (Systems Implementation Guide, 2018).

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