

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

July 31, 2015

Mr. Michael Yudin  
Assistant Secretary  
Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Assistant Secretary Yudin,

On behalf of children with dyslexia and other learning disabilities in our districts, we request that the U.S Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) issue guidance to states and school districts regarding the use of the term 'dyslexia'.

Dyslexia is the most common learning disability in the United States, impacting Americans of all ages and backgrounds, including Members of Congress, our families and thousands of our constituents. In fact, as many as one in five Americans struggle with dyslexia or other learning disorders.

Despite the prevalence of dyslexia among students, parents nationwide have discovered that some states and school districts will not include the word "dyslexia" in a student's Individualized Educational Program (IEP). In many cases, parents have been told that their state does not "recognize" dyslexia; and instead only uses the term 'specific learning disability.'

Dyslexia is explicitly mentioned in the IDEA 2004 statute (Sec. 602(30)(B)) and its regulations (Sec. 300.8(c)(10)) as part of the definition of 'specific learning disability' (SLD). Further, the term dyslexia is mentioned as a specific subtype of learning disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V) (see p. 67). Thus, it is appropriate to make specific mention of these subtypes of specific learning disorders in an IEP. By not including the term 'dyslexia', an IEP is simply too vague a description to communicate to a teacher that the child needs intensive, explicit, systematic, evidence-based instruction to make progress. Accuracy in the IEP is critical to ensuring that students, families and educators all have the information needed to guide decision-making.

We urge the Department to issue guidance to states and local educational agencies to:

- Affirm that the term ‘dyslexia’, exists in both the IDEA 2004 statute (Sec. 602(30)(B)) and its regulations (Sec. 300.8(c)(10)) as part of the definition of ‘specific learning disability.’
- Affirm that there is no legal reason why the term ‘dyslexia’ should not be used by a state or local educational agency when referring to the identification of and services for a student who does in fact have this specific learning disability.
- Urge states and local educational agencies to evaluate existing policies – both written and non-written institutional policies – to determine whether the term ‘dyslexia’ is being prohibited or suppressed during the comprehensive evaluation process, IEP meetings, identification of specialized instructional programs or related service providers, in conversations with parents, or by systemic omission in state/LEA policies.
- Affirm that states and local educational agencies should have policies in place that allow for the use of the term ‘dyslexia’ on a students’ IEP, if the findings of a student’s comprehensive evaluation document the presence of any of this type of specific learning disability.
- Provide states and local educational agencies with a comprehensive list of resources supported by the U.S. Department of Education to assist with the evaluation and identification of students with specific learning disabilities, such as dyslexia.
- Provide states and local educational agencies with a comprehensive guide to commonly used accommodations for students with specific learning disabilities, including ‘dyslexia’, and a list of resources for teachers to assist them in incorporating these accommodations into daily instruction and classroom management techniques.

Families in our Congressional districts rely on access to a high quality education for their children with dyslexia. We look forward to your ensuring that the millions of students with dyslexia receive the evidence-based instruction and interventions needed to succeed in school and life. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

  
Lamar Smith

  
Julia Brownley

Blake Farenthold

Blake Farenthold

Bruce Westerman

Bruce Westerman

Peter Roskam

Peter Roskam

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