



Georgia Professional Standards Commission

Dyslexia Endorsement Guidance

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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of potential course content to support EPPs as they work towards earning and maintaining GaPSC approval to offer the Dyslexia Endorsement. Following are definitions of related terms, as well as guidelines related to program design and delivery.

The following terms, found in GaPSC Rule 505-3-.01 *Requirements and Standards for Approving Educator Preparation Providers and Educator Preparation Programs*, are described here to support better understanding of content-specific terminology.

Dyslexia: Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurological in origin, which is characterized by difficulties with accurate 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 the growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.

Aphasia: Aphasia is a condition characterized by either partial or total loss of the ability to communicate verbally or through written words. A person with aphasia may have difficulty speaking, reading, writing, recognizing the names of objects, or understanding what other people have said. The condition may be temporary or permanent and shall not include speech problems caused by loss of muscle control.

Dyscalculia: Dyscalculia is the inability to understand the meaning of numbers, the basic operations of addition and subtraction, or the complex operations of multiplication and division or to apply math principles to solve practical or abstract problems.

Dysgraphia: Dysgraphia is difficulty in automatically remembering and mastering the sequence of muscle motor movements needed to accurately write letters or numbers.

Guidance

Guideline 1: Stand-alone Dyslexia Endorsement or embedded program to meet the requirements of GaPSC Rule 505-3-.01, paragraph (3) (e) 4. (v).

The content of the Dyslexia Endorsement meets the requirements of GaPSC Rule 505-3-.01, paragraph (3) (e) 3. (v). This endorsement may be achieved through a stand-alone program or embedded in an initial preparation program or advanced/degree only program. The stand-alone program is a planned sequence of courses and field experiences offered independently of another program that leads to a certified educator meeting all [Georgia Dyslexia Endorsement Standards](#) for P-12 certification. An embedded endorsement addresses these standards through coursework and/or additional experiences and assessments within an existing program. Additional information may be found in Rule 505-3-.01, paragraph (3) (e) 4. (xi).

GaPSC-approved EPPs shall require candidates seeking teacher certification to demonstrate:

- Knowledge of the definitions and characteristics of dyslexia and other related disorders
- Competence in the use of evidence-based interventions, structured multisensory approaches to teaching language and reading skills, and accommodations for students displaying characteristics of dyslexia and/or other related disorders
- Competence in the use of a response-to-intervention framework addressing reading, writing, mathematics, and behavior, including:
 - Universal screening;
 - Scientific, research-based interventions;
 - Progress monitoring of the effectiveness of interventions on student performance;
 - Data-based decision making procedures related to determining intervention effectiveness on student performance and the need to continue, alter, or discontinue interventions or conduct further evaluation of student needs; and
 - Application and implementation of response-to-intervention and dyslexia and other related disorders instructional practices in the classroom setting.

Guideline 2A: Knowledge of characteristics of dyslexia and other related disorders

Students with dyslexia struggle with the relationship between letters and sounds. Because of this, they have a hard time decoding, or sounding out, unfamiliar words, and instead often misread them based on an overreliance on their sight-word memory. Deficits are unexpected relative to cognitive abilities in that the student’s skills are lower than their overall ability and are not due to a lack of intelligence. Screening for characteristics of dyslexia is a proactive way to address skill deficits through appropriate interventions. Screening results that reflect characteristics of dyslexia do not necessarily mean that a student has dyslexia nor can dyslexia be diagnosed through a screening alone.

More information can be found in the [Georgia Dyslexia Informational Handbook, pp. 8-11](#).

Guideline 2B: Evidence-based interventions

Once a school identifies that a student shows characteristic of dyslexia, it is important to provide aligned interventions. School and district leaders should evaluate their existing intervention resources to ensure they include evidence-based interventions that include all of the following principles:

- Explicit – explains skills, directly teaches, and models what is expected.

Explicit Instruction is “an approach that involves direct instruction: The teacher demonstrates the task and provides guided practice with immediate corrective feedback before the student attempts the task independently” (Mather & Wendling, 2012, p. 326).

- Systematic and cumulative – introduces concepts in a definite, logical sequence; orders concept from simple to more complex.

“Multisensory language instruction requires that the organization of material follow order of the language. The sequence must begin with the easiest concepts and most basic elements and progress methodically to more difficult material. Each step must also be based on [elements] already learned. Concepts taught must be systematically reviewed to strengthen memory” (Birsh, 2018, p. 26).

- Multi-sensory – links listening, speaking, reading, and writing together; involves movement and “hands-on” learning (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile).
 - “Children are actively engaged in learning language concepts and other information, often by using their hands, arms, mouths, eyes, and whole bodies while learning” (Moats & Dakin, 2008, p. 58).
 - Writing words and sentences with tactile materials

- Physical activities to practice spelling
- Scavenger hunts for letters and words
- Shared reading
- Language-based – addresses all levels of language, including sounds (phonemes), symbols (graphemes), meaningful word parts (morphemes), word and phrase meanings (semantics), and sentence formation (syntax). Mather and Wendling (2012, p. 171) state individuals with dyslexia need to:
 - Understand how phonemes (sounds) are represented with graphemes (letters);
 - Learn how to blend and segment phonemes to pronounce and spell words;
 - Learn how to break words into smaller units, such as syllables, to make them easier to pronounce;
 - Learn to recognize and spell common orthographic graphic patterns (e.g., -tion);
 - Learn how to read and spell words with irregular elements (e.g., ocean); and
 - Spend time engaged in meaningful reading and writing activities.
 - Aligned to individual student need – addresses the skill deficit(s) identified through targeted assessments. “The teacher must be adept at prescriptive or individualized teaching. The teaching plan is based on careful and [continual] assessment of the individual's needs. The content presented must be mastered to the degree of automaticity” (Birsh, 2018, p. 27).

More information can be found in the [Georgia Dyslexia Informational Handbook](#), p. 24.

Guideline 2C: Structured multisensory approaches to teaching language and reading skills

The International Dyslexia Association provides guidance on the instructional features of structured multisensory approaches to teaching language and reading skills, which include:

- Instructional tasks are modeled and clearly explained, especially when first introduced or when a child is having difficulty.
- Highly explicit instruction is provided, not only in important foundational skills such as decoding and spelling, but also in higher-level aspects of literacy such as syntax, reading comprehension, and text composition.

- Important prerequisite skills are taught before students are expected to learn skills that are more advanced.
- Meaningful interactions with language occur during the lesson.
- Multiple opportunities are provided to practice instructional tasks.
 - Interactive read-alouds
 - Supported reading
 - Discussion
 - Verbal memory activities
 - Writing about reading
 - Sustained reading practice
 - Free writing
 - Small group work
- Student effort is encouraged.
- Lesson engagement during teacher-led instruction is monitored and scaffolded.
- Lesson engagement during independent work is monitored and facilitated.
- Students successfully complete activities at a high criterion level of performance before moving on to more advanced skills.

More information can be found in the [Georgia Dyslexia Informational Handbook](#), pp. 24-29.

Guideline 2D: Accommodations for students displaying characteristics of dyslexia and/or other related disorders

Instructional accommodations may include how instruction is provided, how the child is expected to respond to instruction, how the child participates in classroom activities and the kinds of instructional materials used. Accommodations provide children with disabilities a variety of ways to access the Georgia Standards of Excellence, so their disabilities are not barriers to achievement. Children receiving accommodations are still expected to meet the same grade level standards as their peers without disabilities. For example, a child might listen to portions of a text rather than reading it, answer questions orally, or use a computer keyboard instead of writing with a pencil.

More information can be found in the [Georgia Dyslexia Informational Handbook](#), pp. 31-32.

Guideline 2E: Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)

A Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is a data-driven prevention framework that uses assessment (screening and progress monitoring) to identify and predict students who may be at risk for poor learning outcomes or who experience social/emotional needs, and/or behavioral concerns that impact learning.

MTSS is a framework designed to provide support matched to student need to maximize student achievement and reduce behavior problems. The Tiered System of Supports for Students includes school wide implementation that focuses on the “what and how of instruction” and the provision of services and supports to students that meet their unique, whole-child needs. Georgia’s MTSS framework consists of three levels of intensity or prevention that include high-quality core instruction and evidence-based interventions and supports. The levels are Tier I: Primary Level – Instruction/Core Curriculum; Tier II: Secondary Level – Intervention; and Tier III: Tertiary Level - Intensive Intervention.

Response to Intervention (RTI) is a process within the system of an MTSS framework. RTI is part of the data-based decision-making process within progress monitoring where team members review data to determine how students are responding to the interventions in place. It is a process to observe and adjust (intensify, select new, or continue) an intervention based on a student’s progress toward the targeted goal.

GaPSC Rule 505-3-.01, paragraph (3) (e) 4. (v) states that candidates seeking teacher certification demonstrate competence in the use of a **multi-tiered systems of support** framework addressing reading, writing, mathematics, and behavior. A multi-tiered systems of support framework includes the following components:

- Universal screening. The purpose of screening is to identify students who need enrichment/acceleration or who are at risk for poor learning and/or poor behavior outcomes and provide an indicator of system effectiveness. Screening assessments typically are brief and usually are administered to all students at a grade level. Additionally, these assessments should be valid, reliable, and evidence-based. The data obtained from screening assessments should be used with other data sources to verify decisions made about whether a student is or is not at risk or in need of enrichment/acceleration. Screening is a critical and necessary step in making informed choices about how to meet the unique needs of the whole child in Georgia’s Tiered System of Supports for Students.
- Progress monitoring of the effectiveness of interventions on student performance. Progress monitoring is a part of RTI and should be frequent and ongoing. The data should be used to monitor a student’s progress on both the content covered during the intervention lessons and the student’s progress toward meeting grade level standards.

The data will drive decisions regarding details such as frequency, length, duration, intensity of sessions.

- Data-based decision making procedures related to determining intervention effectiveness on student performance and the need to continue, alter, or discontinue interventions or conduct further evaluation of student needs; and
- Data-based decision making, an essential component of Georgia’s Tiered System of Supports for Students, is in alignment with coherent instruction and crucial to the school improvement process. Coherent instruction and the school improvement process are a part of Georgia’s Systems of Continuous Improvement. Data-based decision-making is a process for making informed decisions about instructional needs, the effectiveness of instruction, and level of intensity needed within a multi-level prevention system. The data-based decision process consists of using data to identify needs of all students, selecting and implementing evidence-based practices and interventions, monitoring the progress of students’ responsiveness to an intervention and making adjustments based on progress monitoring data, as needed.

More information can be found in the [Georgia Dyslexia Informational Handbook](#) pp. 17-20 and the Georgia Department of Education document, [What is MTSS in Georgia?](#)

Guideline 3: Guidance to embed content within teacher education programs

EPPs may include content required by GaPSC Rule 505-3-.01, paragraph (3) (e) 4. (v) in the exceptional education course required for all education majors PreK – grade 12. The following should be broadly covered in the course:

- Definitions
- Characteristics of dyslexia and related disorders
- Evidence-based intervention
- Structured multisensory instruction
- Multi-Tiered System of Supports
- Accommodations

For elementary education majors and middle grades majors, EPPs may include content required by GaPSC Rule 505-3-.01, paragraph (3) (e) 4. (v) either in an existing course (special education or general education) or provide an additional course in which the following information is comprehensively covered:

- Definitions
- Characteristics of dyslexia and related disorders
- Evidence-based interventions
- Structured multisensory instruction
- Multi-Tiered System of Supports
- Accommodations

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