

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### MSDE Releases Dyslexia Technical Assistance Bulletin (TAB) on Dyslexia, Dysgraphia and Dyscalculia

*When schools identify the underlying difficulty it drives effective instructional decisions*

**Statewide, MD (November 18, 2016):** In response to the Federal Dyslexia Guidance issued in October 2015, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) issued technical assistance to Maryland school districts on how to **define, identify and provide instruction** to students with **dyslexia, dysgraphia and dyscalculia**. The 12 page document dedicates the first five pages to special education identification processes and the remainder to specifics on dyslexia, dysgraphia and dyscalculia.

“This is a significant guidance from MSDE because many Maryland school districts previously would not use the term dyslexia which limited instructional decisions,” explained Lisa Blottenberger,” a state leader with Decoding Dyslexia Maryland and a disability advocate. “MSDE addressed the call to action from the U.S. Department of Education and we appreciate the opportunity to work with them to help build a consensus document that parents, teachers and other related professionals can use to help all struggling students,” said Blottenberger.

#### KEY ELEMENTS of the Dyslexia Technical Assistance Bulletin:

1. **Defines dyslexia, dysgraphia and dyscalculia** (*p. 5, Definitions*)
2. **Early Screening:** Clarifies that MD Public Schools do NOT screen for dyslexia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia, but acknowledges that early screening is a best practice (*p.6, Identification, Do Maryland Public Schools screen all students for these conditions?*)
3. **Identification of dyslexia, dysgraphia and dyscalculia:** provides information on who can identify these conditions both within and outside the school system (*p. 6, Identification, Who can identify one of these conditions?*)
4. **The IEP and Dyslexia:** Clarifies that dyslexia, dysgraphia and dyscalculia can be referenced in the IEP to address the student’s **needs** resulting from that disability; further clarifies that the IEP should include information about the disability and how it relates to **eligibility, educational needs, and specially designed instruction** to address dyslexia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia (*p. 7, Can these conditions be referenced in a student’s IEP?*)
5. **Lists general problems experienced by students with dyslexia, dysgraphia and dyscalculia** (*p. 7-8, Instruction*)
6. **Instruction:** Acknowledges that dyslexia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia may impact achievement across academic content and explains that ALL students should be provided evidence based practices and interventions “matched to their identified area of need.”

- a. **Progress Monitoring:** clarifies that general education students who receive interventions for reading, writing and/or math and who are not achieving adequately may require more intense specially designed instruction and should be evaluated for an IEP. (p. 8, *Instruction: How do I know if one of these conditions requires specially designed instruction?*)
- b. **Dyslexia Assessments:** Lists assessments (universal screeners) known to identify dyslexia including Rapid Automatized Naming (RAN) and Rapid Automatized Spelling (RAS) (p. 9, *Instruction*)
- c. **Specially Designed Instruction:** Delineates the elements and principles of **Structured Literacy**, “a highly recommended approach” to address dyslexia. The elements of structured literacy include phonology, sound-symbol association, syllable instruction, morphology, syntax and semantics and is taught in an explicit, systematic, cumulative and diagnostic way (p. 10, *Instruction, What might specially designed instruction look like?*).

Karleen Spitulnik, a Baltimore County parent of a child with dyslexia and state leader for Decoding Dyslexia stressed that “the dyslexia technical assistance is a huge benefit for students with dyslexia because the school team can now discuss dyslexia and develop specially designed instruction for the student. I would like to see MSDE encourage all local districts to screen all Kindergarten students for reading difficulties so students can get effective interventions and avoid reading failure.”

Students with dyslexia and characteristics of dyslexia often have average to above average intelligence and can learn to read on grade level if they are identified early and if appropriate, effective, evidence based instruction is provided. Dyslexia is known to affect up to 20 percent of the population and students with dyslexia represent 80% of all students with specific learning disabilities served in special education. The 2016 Maryland Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) results show that **93% of students in special education read below grade level.**

You can read the full [Dyslexia Technical Assistance Bulletin](#) here:

[http://www.decodingdyslexiamd.org/uploads/1/7/7/2/17722255/dyslexia\\_tab\\_final\\_2016.pdf](http://www.decodingdyslexiamd.org/uploads/1/7/7/2/17722255/dyslexia_tab_final_2016.pdf)

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*Decoding Dyslexia is a nationwide grassroots movement of parents, students, teachers and related professionals concerned with the limited access to educational interventions for dyslexia and other language-based learning disabilities within our nation’s public schools. Decoding Dyslexia Maryland’s mission is to raise dyslexia awareness, empower others to support struggling readers and students with dyslexia, and to inform policy-makers on best practices to identify, educate and support students with dyslexia.*

*#SayDyslexiaMD #CloseTheGapMD #narrowthegap*