



AB 1369 Frequently Asked Questions

Why are these new laws important?

Without proper identification and appropriate, evidence-based intervention, most of our dyslexic students will be unable to read or spell accurately or fluently. Research studies have shown that individuals who are poor readers are much more likely to drop out of school; end up in jail; or struggle to find and keep meaningful, satisfying work.

20% of our population is estimated to have some signs of dyslexia. In CA, this means over 1 million students in our K-12 public schools have some signs of dyslexia. Of these 1 million kids, approximately 220,000 are receiving special education services under the category of a Specific Learning Disability in the area of reading. In 2015, 72% of California's fourth graders were not reading at grade level and there was only 1 other state in the nation that scored lower in reading achievement than California.

What is Dyslexia?

"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." (Source: Adopted by the IDA Board of Directors, Nov. 12, 2002. This Definition is also used by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD))

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability

- neurobiological in origin
- impacting a student's ability to read and spell accurately and/or fluently
- typically resulting from a deficit in phonological processing of language
- may cause secondary issues with written expression, reading comprehension, vocabulary knowledge and understanding word problems

What changes can we expect from these new laws?

The CA Superintendent of Public Instruction will consult with teachers, parents and experts in dyslexia to develop program guidelines regarding dyslexia. These guidelines will be used to assist teachers, parents and professionals in identifying, assessing and improving educational services for dyslexic students in public schools.

In addition, the new laws will clarify existing CA education law used in identifying dyslexic children for special education services by adding "phonological processing" to the identification process for special education eligibility.

What does Phonological Processing mean & why is it important?

The hallmark of dyslexia in most children is a deficit in phonological processing. When a child begins to learn to read, solid phonological processing skills are essential for successful acquisition of reading. But for a dyslexic child, phonological processing—the ability to attend to, discriminate, remember and manipulate sounds at the sentence, word, syllable and phoneme (individual sound) level—is typically significantly impaired.

When will the new laws take effect?

“Phonological Processing” law (new CA Education Code Section 56334) became effective January 1, 2016.

Program guidelines (new CA Education Code Section 56335) will be put in place no later than the beginning of the 2017–18 academic year.

How does this help kids with dyslexia in our public schools?

The laws will ensure that school psychologists look for the possibility of dyslexia when assessing public school students **for special education eligibility**. In addition, Statewide program guidelines will give schools and school districts consistent & up-to-date information on how to assist them in identifying, assessing, planning, providing, evaluating, and improving educational services for students with dyslexia.

What are the next steps?

The passage of this bill was an important first step but there still remains a lot of work to be done. Decoding Dyslexia CA is excited to work with the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the California Department of Education (“CDE”) in developing program guidelines. Decoding Dyslexia CA will be part of a CDE work group of nationally recognized dyslexia experts formed to begin drafting dyslexia program guidelines. The CDE work group began work on this important project in April 2016. In addition, the CDE is actively searching for a permanent job position for a dyslexia specialist at the CDE.

As a State, we still need to address the issues of early identification and appropriate intervention in the general education setting in order to potentially reduce the number of students who end up needing special education services.

We need to address the fact that our public school teachers are not receiving the training or support they need to both recognize dyslexia and be able to provide appropriate reading interventions effectively. General education and special education teachers also need to be given the proper curriculum to address the needs of students with dyslexia.

Do the new laws require that only one specific reading program be used in our public schools?

The program guidelines that will be developed will include the use of “an evidence-based, multisensory, structured, sequential, direct and explicit approach” for reading that provides each school district with the opportunity to select programs of their choosing. The new laws do not mandate a particular program nor does

Decoding Dyslexia CA or the International Dyslexia Association endorse a particular program. Instead, we are advocating for the use of an approach, a “Structured Literacy” approach that has proven, over time, in numerous research studies to be effective with dyslexic students.

What will it cost to implement these new laws?

It is estimated that these new laws will require a one-time cost of \$207,000 and ongoing costs of \$140,000 per year to be incurred by the CDE included in the ongoing costs will be a full time dyslexia specialist position at the CDE. However, Local Educational Agencies will need to address the incremental costs, if any, to assess for “phonological processing” skills when doing a special education assessment.

What is Decoding Dyslexia CA?

Decoding Dyslexia CA is a grassroots movement driven by California families, educators and professionals concerned with the limited access to educational interventions for dyslexia and other language-based learning disabilities within our public schools. We aim to raise dyslexia awareness, empower families to support their children, and inform policymakers on best practices to identify, remediate, and support students with dyslexia in CA public schools.

Learn more by going to our website: www.decodingdyslexiaca.org

Who supported this bill?

There were over 25 professionals, researchers and organizations in support of AB 1369 including, but not limited to, the International Dyslexia Association, CA State PTA, Lt. Governor Gavin Newsom, US Congressman Sam Farr and US Congresswoman Julia Brownley, numerous private schools for students with dyslexia to name a few. Support has continued to grow after AB 1369 was signed into law and Decoding Dyslexia CA continues to collaborate with an increasing number of organizations and individuals in growing our movement.

How can you contribute to the CDE Dyslexia Program Guidelines?

The CDE has set up a webpage for the public to follow the Dyslexia Work Group’s progress in developing program guidelines. Access to the webpage can be found at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/ac/dyslexia.asp>. The web page includes CDE Work Group member information, meeting calendar, agendas, archived videos of all work group sessions as well as link to access live Webcasts of the meetings. In addition, the CDE has created a unique email address (Dyslexia@cde.ca.gov) for the public to share comments and questions with the CDE Dyslexia Work Group.

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