



You Asked!

Q14: My student was assessed and did not show signs of a phonological processing deficit but my student still struggles greatly with reading and spelling. Do all dyslexic children display phonological processing deficits?

A: A dyslexic student may not display phonological processing deficits in an assessment for a variety of reasons. A few reasons why a dyslexic student may not show a phonological processing deficit are:

- When assessing, a single indicator won't be present in all students just because of measurement error. This is more likely to occur when only a single phonological measure is assessed.
- Dyslexic students with a higher vocabulary may score better on measures of phonological awareness. It is easier to do a phonological awareness task when you are manipulating the sounds of a word that you already know. In a standardized assessment, a student's performance can only be compared to the normative sample. If the student knows more words than the average person in the normative sample, it gives them a helping hand on phonological awareness tasks even if phonological awareness is somewhat weak.
- When a student has had previous intervention, he/she will have had a lot more practice on phonological awareness tasks than the comparative normative sample.

(Source: Richard Wagner, Ph.D., Principal Investigator, NICHD Florida Learning Disabilities Research Center / Associate Director, Florida Center for Reading Research)

It should be noted that no single score (or product of scores) test or procedure as the sole criterion for the IEP teams decision as to the student's eligibility for special education **(Source: Special Education Rights & Responsibilities by Community Alliance for Special Education and Disability Rights of California, page 3-14 <http://www.disabilityrightsca.org/pubs/PublicationsSERREnglish.htm>, [34 C.F.R. Section 300.306](#), [5 CCR Section 3030\(j\)\(4\)](#)).**

Also remember that even if a student is not dyslexic, there are other categories of disability under IDEA such as Other Health Impaired or perhaps the student qualifies under specific learning disability due to an impairment such as a math disorder (dyscalculia) or a writing disorder (dysgraphia) that may create special education eligibility. This is why comprehensive assessment in all areas of concern is so important.

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