



You Asked!

Q25: Does a student with dyslexia need to be found eligible as having a “Language or Speech Disorder” in order to receive speech-language services? My student is already eligible for special education services under “Specific Learning Disability”.

A: No, once qualified for special education services, a student is eligible for any service required to meet his educational needs [[20 USC Section 1414\(d\)\(1\)\(A\)\(i\)](#)]. A student does not have to be found eligible as having a Language or Speech Disorder in order to receive related speech and language services.

An example of this situation is where you are sitting in your student’s initial IEP meeting and the IEP team agrees that your student is eligible for special education under the category of Specific Learning Disability. As part of the IEP team review of the speech and language assessment, you note that there are some areas of below average scores that are “red flags” that would indicate the need for IEP goals and services for speech & language. However, the Speech & Language Pathologist says that the student isn’t eligible for speech & language services because the student didn’t meet the eligibility criteria for a Language or Speech Disorder.

This is a frequent misunderstanding at IEP team meetings. The Speech and Language Assessment may determine that the student’s assessment scores are not low enough for the student to be found eligible for special education under the category of a “Language or Speech Disorder”, however, if the student has already been found eligible for special education services under a different impairment category (i.e. Specific Learning Disability, Other Health Impaired, etc.) and the student’s speech and language assessment show that it is also an area of need, then the IEP team should develop speech-language goals and speech-language services should be included in the student’s IEP.

This is important because very low assessment scores are required under California law in order to meet the “Language or Speech Disorder” criteria and it can be very difficult to meet these criteria [[5 CCR 3030\(b\)\(11\)](#)].

In addition to phonological processing deficits, students with dyslexia may have a history of delayed speech or language development. These individuals may also have a history of impairment in articulation/phonological production and/or receptive/expressive spoken language skills. Although students with dyslexia may exhibit various types of language problems in the toddler and preschool years, their language problems typically become very obvious once they begin trying to learn to read and write [**Catts, H.W. and Kamhi, A.G. (Eds.). 2005. *Language and reading disabilities* (2nd Ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon**]. Therefore, there is an increased likelihood that dyslexic students may have a need for speech-language services as a related service in their IEP.

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It is important to remember that special education evaluations must be “sufficiently comprehensive to identify all of the child’s special education and related service needs, whether or not commonly linked to the disability category in which the child has been classified” [[34 CFR 300.304\(c\)\(6\)](#)].

According to the Special Education Rights & Responsibilities Manual, “speech and language therapy may be the most frequently requested related service. Speech therapy addresses articulation difficulties, a common disability. Language therapy addresses difficulties with memory, verbal expression, and listening. If your child has any difficulties with speech or language, you should ask the district, in writing, to do a speech and language evaluation. Any student eligible for special education may receive speech and language therapy if she needs the service to benefit from special education.” (Source: [Special Education Rights & Responsibilities Manual](#) by Community Alliance for Special Education and Disability Rights California, Chapter 5, Question 13, page 5-16).

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