



STATE OF ALABAMA  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**



Thomas R. Bice  
 State Superintendent of Education

December 11, 2015

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**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** City and County Superintendents

**FROM:** Thomas R. Bice *TJB*  
 State Superintendent of Education

**RE:** Resources and Suggested Timeline for Implementation of Dyslexia Support

This memorandum is to make you aware of resources that will be available to aid in your implementation of the October 8, 2015, revisions to the *Alabama Administrative Code* (AAC) regarding support for struggling readers, including students with dyslexia, and of a suggested timeline for implementation.

The goal of PLAN 2020 is for all students to graduate prepared for college, career, and life. Literacy skills—reading, writing, and spelling—are essential to all learning in school and beyond. Individuals who do not develop solid literacy skills are at risk for school failure and possibly dropping out, limited job opportunities and earning potential, and even incarceration.

One goal of the October 8, 2015, revisions to the AAC is to identify, as early as possible, those students who are struggling to acquire literacy skills and to provide specific interventions to support their identified needs. We have referred to these revisions as “dyslexia revisions” because research tells us that the instructional practices outlined in the revisions will meet many of the specific instructional needs of students with dyslexia. These practices that are necessary for dyslexic students will provide the same benefits to students who struggle to master literacy skills for reasons other than dyslexia. While the goal IS NOT to diagnose dyslexia, students who are struggling with the challenges associated with dyslexia will be identified early and provided with specialized instruction designed to meet those challenges. Your Problem Solving Team (PST) will review the implementation and effectiveness of these instructional practices through your Response to Instruction (RtI) process.

We understand there is a sense of urgency for your implementation of these support practices. However, we urge you to examine your screening data and consider the unique needs of your students in order to make implementation decisions that will maximize your resources and support. A suggested timeline for implementation throughout the 2015-2016 school year will be available on the Web site of the Alabama State Department of Education ([www.alsde.edu](http://www.alsde.edu)) for those who are interested.

Resource materials, training, and support will be available to aid in your implementation. Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI) staff, along with other staff from the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE), will offer this training and support.

The Alabama Dyslexia Guide is currently posted on the ALSDE Web site (<http://www.alsde.edu/sec/ari/Pages/home.aspx>). This guide has a wealth of information about supporting students with the characteristics of dyslexia. It is filled with links to other helpful sites and resources.

A video presentation is now available on the ALSDE Web site for viewing by all educators. This informational presentation gives an overview of the practices outlined in the October 8 revisions to the AAC (<http://www.alsde.edu/sec/comm/Pages/VideoLargeltem.aspx?ID=752>). We urge you to make this presentation available to every educator in your district for viewing and discussion.

A second presentation will be available in the next few weeks with information about the screening process.

Dyslexia Awareness Training will be available from the ARI beginning in January. This simulation training features several activities that allow participants to experience some of the reading and writing challenges that are faced daily by students with dyslexia.

There is a continuum of severity of dyslexia characteristics ranging from mild, in which a student might have challenges with spelling, to more severe, in which a student struggles to master basic reading skills, including letter-sound patterns and sight words. The level and type of support needed will also vary depending on where the student falls along the continuum. Following the dyslexia simulation, participants have a better understanding of the needs of their struggling students.

Other groups have offered this half-day simulation training in some locations. For those educators who have not already experienced this simulation training, the ARI is offering several options for participation.

- At one of the professional development days already built into your school calendar
- At one of several training opportunities to be offered regionally beginning in January
- At a regional training in the summer
- At the MEGA Conference in July

Contact your ARI regional team leader to schedule training for your teachers.

A Professional Learning Unit (PLU) was submitted to and approved by the Alabama Council for Leadership Development. This PLU can help administrators phase in dyslexia support throughout this school year.

If you have questions about training or resources, please contact Ms. Judith Stone at (334) 353-1389 or via e-mail at [jstone@alsde.edu](mailto:jstone@alsde.edu). For questions regarding your PST process or Rtl, contact Mrs. Christine Spear at (334)-353-5320 or via e-mail at [cspear@alsde.edu](mailto:cspear@alsde.edu).

TRB:SMW:LMD

cc: Mrs. Sherrill W. Parris  
Mrs. Shanthia M. Washington  
Ms. Judith Stone  
Mrs. Robin Nelson  
Mrs. Christine Spear

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