October 2, 2019

MEMORANDUM

TO: County and City Superintendents of Education

FROM: Eric G. Mackey, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education

RE: October is Dyslexia Awareness Month

The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) recognizes that reading, writing, and spelling are essential skills for all literacy learning in school and beyond. Students who do not develop these skills early on and do not receive explicit, systematic instruction and intervention will struggle with spelling, reading fluency, and reading comprehension along their entire educational journey. Often these struggling students may have characteristics of dyslexia, a language-based learning challenge that is neurological in origin. In an effort to bring attention to students with reading difficulties, the ALSDE encourages each school district to recognize October as Dyslexia Awareness Month.

I encourage you to actively assist educators in your system to engage in high-quality, science-of-reading professional learning that is grounded in evidence-based foundational reading and effective multisensory strategies. Currently, a second cohort of Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS®) is being provided to over 2,500 Alabama educators. The Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI) also provides on-going professional learning in the foundational science of reading, early literacy instruction, and effective interventions that support classroom teachers and struggling readers.

Another stellar professional learning opportunity hosted by the Alabama Branch of the International Dyslexia Association (IDA-AL) is Rise to the Challenge: IDA-AL Dyslexia Conference, October 17-18, 2019, at Spring Valley School, 2701 Sydney Drive, Birmingham, AL 35211. Information for the conference can be found by clicking on the highlighted link above. For more information, please contact Mrs. Gladys Schaefer, President of IDA-AL, at ida.alabama@gmail.com.

We will recognize Dyslexia Awareness Month in Alabama through a resolution at the October 10, 2019, State Board of Education Meeting. A sample dyslexia awareness resolution for use by your local board of education is attached. Additionally, you will receive a packet of district-specific dyslexia information and resources at the School Superintendents of Alabama (SSA) Fall Conference on October 14-16, 2019.
Please join the ALSDE as we all work together to *Rise to the Challenge in Alabama!* If you have questions regarding this information, please contact Mrs. Karen Porter, ARI Program Coordinator, or Mrs. Reeda Betts, ARI Dyslexia Administrator, at 334-694-4632 or by email at dyslexia@alsde.edu.

EGM:KWP

Attachment

cc: ARI Central Office Dyslexia Contacts
    IDA-AL Board of Directors
    Dyslexia Advisory Council Members
    Mrs. Gladys Schaefer
    Dr. Daniel Boyd
    Dr. Elisabeth Davis
    Mrs. Karen Porter
    Ms. Crystal Richardson
    Mrs. Reeda Betts

FY20-2003
SAMPLE LOCAL BOARD RESOLUTION

Dyslexia Awareness Month October 2019

WHEREAS, Dyslexia is a specific learning challenge, that is neurological in origin and is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities; and

WHEREAS, these difficulties typically are caused by a deficit in the phonological component of language that is unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and to the provision of effective classroom instruction; and

WHEREAS, secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge; and

WHEREAS, Dyslexia occurs on a continuum of severity, affecting between 10 and 20 percent of the population according to the National Institutes of Health; and

WHEREAS, our district and community will benefit from increased awareness of the nature of Dyslexia, the early warning signs of Dyslexia, and the value of multisensory structured language instruction for students with Dyslexia; and

WHEREAS, greater recognition and understanding are necessary to ensure that individuals with Dyslexia living in Alabama and all other Americans with Dyslexia are accurately identified and provided with appropriate services so that they might lead maximally productive lives:

NOW, THEREFORE, THE, __________________, __________________, do hereby proclaim October 2019, as **Dyslexia Awareness Month in (insert LEA)** and encourage all teachers, parents, and community stakeholders to learn more about dyslexia and to offer support to parents, educators and individuals affected by Dyslexia.