

## Identifying Emergent Bilingual Students (EBs) with Dyslexia

### Author Note

Dr. Pooja Gupta, Ed.D.  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7639-4814>

Dr. Corinna Cole, Ph.D.  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8820-6470>

Both authors are at the School of Teaching and Learning, Sam Houston State University

We have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Pooja Gupta.

Email: [pxg055@shsu.edu](mailto:pxg055@shsu.edu)

## **Abstract**

Dyslexia is a neurological disorder that affects both phonological and orthographic processing, thereby interfering with reading proficiency. It is the most common disability diagnosed today and is estimated to affect 20% of the population. Early dyslexia screeners followed by formal assessments facilitate the identification process in students with dyslexia. When it comes to emergent bilingual students (EBs) with dyslexia, the above process is further complicated. EBs with reading difficulties are often misdiagnosed or undiagnosed altogether for various reasons. Chief among these is parental resistance, bias in assessment instruments, inadequate teacher training, and a lack of policy in school systems. This article investigates the assessment process and solutions in terms of the various stakeholders (students, parents, educators, and the school system) mentioned above.

# Identifying Emergent Bilingual Students (EBs) with Dyslexia

## Introduction

Dyslexia is a neurological disorder that affects phonological and orthographic processing, interfering with reading proficiency. It is the most common disability diagnosed today, and it is estimated to affect 20% of the population. Data from a large school district in Texas indicates there are about 13,000 students with some form of dyslexia (Facts and Figures, 2023). Early dyslexia screeners are given to all school children in Texas. Children who fail the screeners are then given formal assessments, with the consent of their parents. Children and parents then participate in Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) meetings (the name and acronym given to Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings in Texas), during which appropriate interventions are recommended for future implementation. However, the above process is complicated for emergent bilingual students (EBs) who are often misdiagnosed or undiagnosed. There are several reasons why this may occur. Chief among these is the reluctance or unwillingness of EB parents to have their children assessed in the first place, the lack of teacher knowledge on second language development, the lack of school policy for testing EB students, and the assessment instruments themselves, which may reflect biases that place EB students at a disadvantage. This article will investigate the assessment process and discuss solutions for the various stakeholders to the problems mentioned above.

### *Definition of dyslexia*

Dyslexia is a neurological disorder that affects phonological and orthographic processing, or the way a person perceives and interprets what they see. The ability to read is necessarily connected to the ability to process information orthographically (which is being able to form,

store, and access representations of words, i.e., letters and letter combinations) (Deacon et al., 2012). In other words, orthographic processing is the ability to learn how written words are organized (Black, 2016). Orthographic processing involves orthographic awareness, which is learning how letters in words are organized, realizing that they form certain patterns, and being able to connect these letters and letter combinations to the various sounds they make (Black, 2016). Black (2016) posits that if a reader is struggling with orthographic processing, they will have trouble visually recognizing words with automaticity, especially if the words are not commonly used words or have irregular spellings or silent letters (e.g., yacht). The reader will also have trouble spelling and may try to use impossible word combinations (e.g., eggzit/exit) instead of relying on the audio features of words (e.g., becuz/because) which include acoustic features (such as frequency (pitch), duration (length) and amplitude (loudness)), temporal features which explain how acoustic features change over time, and prosodic features that include stress, intonation, and tempo (Zhang, 2001).

On the other hand, phonological processing is the ability to learn and apply letter-sound associations to identify words (Black, 2016). Black (2016) continues, “Phonological and orthographic awareness interact to produce (sight) word recognition memory” (p. 31). Finally, Black (2016) writes that phonological processing can interfere with decoding nonsense words (not recognizing regular letter patterns and the sounds they make), and can result in adding, omitting, or confusing similar sounds in words. It can also cause readers to rely too heavily on the visual features of words (e.g., becuaes/because)

Dyslexia is a neurological disorder which means it is an innate medical condition that disrupts a person’s nervous system and is not something that can be cured (Cleveland Clinic, 2025). Researchers have found that there are brain differences in children with and without

dyslexia leading them to conclude that it is a neurological disorder with neurological origins (Yale Center, 2025).

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, or the DSM-5 (2013), “Learning Disorder is the generic term used... to describe disorders that are characterized by difficulties in learning academic skills and which significantly affect academic achievement or daily functioning if accommodations are not made” (Snowling & Hume, 2011, p. 593). The DSM-5 (2013) defines learning disorders as “dyslexia, dyscalculia, and disorders of written expression” (Snowling & Hume, 2011, p. 593), suggesting that children with dyslexia have trouble mastering spelling patterns and their pronunciation (Snowling & Hume, 2011). This implies that these children struggle to match the letters with the sounds they make (Yale Center, 2025). Therefore, a person with dyslexia may have difficulty reading because the order of the letters will affect how the person processes a word. If the person with dyslexia sees the letters in the wrong order or out of alignment, they might not comprehend the word. In addition, a person with dyslexia may have trouble seeing the letters of a word on the same line, which will also interfere with comprehension.

### *Characteristics of dyslexia*

According to U.S. Senate Resolution 765 (S. Res. 765), dyslexia is defined by two main criteria including a reading difficulty that is unexpected given the person’s level of intelligence and problems with phonological processing (understanding and being able to use individual sounds when speaking). These two criteria cause a person to struggle with a variety of tasks including speaking, reading, spelling, and the ability to acquire a second language (Pearson, 2025). From this definition, it is easy to see why EB students with dyslexia would struggle when

trying to learn English. In addition, students with dyslexia display characteristic patterns or miscues when reading. These include omissions (words are left out or omitted), insertions (words are inserted or added), substitutions (words are confused with similar words), and reversals (e.g., reading a b for a d) (Hada, 2024). These various miscues interfere with meaning and comprehension. This means that students with dyslexia struggle with various academic tasks. Comprehension is a necessary tool to help a student understand what they read and to perform mathematical problems. Students with dyslexia may have trouble with reading comprehension (because it takes them so long to process what they are seeing, meaning is lost), reading rate (they are slow readers and often have to reread what they have read multiple times), reading accuracy (they do not see what they are reading correctly), mathematical problems (they may have trouble aligning numerals on the lines which will interfere with their understanding of equations), writing, and spelling. Writing is affected by difficulties in orthographic or phonological processing and may be expressed in several ways: difficulty forming words, sloppy or unreadable handwriting, and inconsistent spacing where letters are either too close together or not close enough. With respect to spelling, students with dyslexia may have difficulty with this skill because it requires being able to memorize the correct order of letters as well as recognize common patterns of letters.

Students with dyslexia may struggle in every subject that requires reading. This means they may struggle with English, writing, mathematics, social studies, science, and spelling. They may also have trouble learning to play a musical instrument because reading sheet music entails correctly seeing the notes on the staff.

*Identifying dyslexia*

Identifying dyslexia begins in the early school years with a universal dyslexia screener. Due to the high incidence of dyslexia, it is now mandated in many school districts to use a universal dyslexia screener for all children, administered as early as possible and repeated when necessary. This screening takes place as early as preschool and can occur up to three times a year until a child reaches the second grade (IDA Universal, 2025). Several screeners are available, and they vary depending on grade level. For example, when assessing Kindergarten children, the screener measures skills such as phonological awareness, or being able to break phonemes into their individual sound units and recombine them, automatically naming letters fluently, associating letters with their corresponding sounds, and being able to remember unique letter sound combinations (IDA Universal, 2025). According to the International Dyslexia Association IDA (2025), some of the available screeners include the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (or DIBELS Next, now known as Acadience Reading), Aimsweb, Predictive Assessment of Reading (PAR), and the Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI).

Regardless of their reading skills, all children are given one of these assessments so they can receive, if warranted, the necessary interventions (such as Tier 1) to help them improve their reading skills. Tier 1 interventions include foundational strategies such as establishing clear routines, providing frequent praise or other reinforcers for desirable behavior, and teaching social-emotional learning skills (Center on PBIS, 2025). The importance of early intervention cannot be overstated. According to the International Dyslexia Association (2025), it can take a fourth grader with dyslexia four times as long for interventions to make a difference as it does for a child in late kindergarten who is receiving the same kind of interventions. There are a couple of reasons for this. For one, it is easier for the younger child to learn new skills such as reading because their brains have higher plasticity, and two, there is less material to master at

that age in terms of vocabulary and other content. In addition, by the time a child struggling with reading reaches fourth grade they may have already experienced anxiety related to the reading process. This anxiety continues to plague their reading proficiency.

Once a child completes a screener and it is determined that they may have a learning disability or disorder, such as dyslexia, a formal diagnosis needs to be conducted by a qualified professional, such as an educational diagnostician or other licensed educational professional. Finally, if the assessment professional finds that the child qualifies as having an educational disability, an ARD (Admission, Review, and Dismissal) committee will convene to determine the child's need for specialized instruction and services. Members of the ARD committee will include the teacher, the parent, the child (if old enough to attend), the school administrator, the diagnostician, and, in the case of dyslexia, a dyslexia interventionist. The purpose of the ARD meeting is to identify a student's strengths and weaknesses, and create, if necessary, a written plan under the IEP, which will prescribe, if warranted, appropriate interventions that will help the student succeed academically and socially (TEA, 2025). Depending on the school district, ARD meetings are convened on a regular basis, which varies from school district to school district, to assess the student's progress (or lack of progress) and the effectiveness (or ineffectiveness) of the interventions.

When it comes to diagnosing EBs with dyslexia, there is an added layer of complexity. Many bilingual students (e.g., Spanish and English speakers) are misdiagnosed as having cognitive disabilities when they are having language difficulties closely related to the acquisition of English. Therefore, it is vitally important to test EBs in their most proficient language to avoid misidentifying them and preventing them from receiving the necessary and beneficial interventions (TEA, Dyslexia Handbook, 2024). It is vital that all children are screened for

dyslexia including EBs (IDA Universal, 2025), because otherwise, they may be placed in classrooms where their dyslexia needs may be ignored. One challenge for schools in addressing the needs of EBs with dyslexia is the availability of screeners in the child's dominant language. If a district does not have a dyslexia screener available in the appropriate language, they should administer the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (or TELPAS) to test the child's reading skills (TEA, Dyslexia handbook, 2024). Not all school districts nationwide require dyslexia screening for their students. However, in Texas this is a requirement. This means testing must be conducted for EBs in their native language.

According to Texas State Law (TEC §38.003), all public-school students must be screened for dyslexia in kindergarten and first grade (Texas.gov, 2025). However, if a student were to enter the Texas school system after first grade, they would have missed the requisite screening. In this case, a dyslexia screener can be administered if warranted (i.e., student is showing signs of reading difficulties) (TEA, Dyslexia handbook, 2024).

### *Incidence of dyslexia*

The actual incidence of people with dyslexia is unknown, but the Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity (2025) estimate this number to be as high as 20% of the general population, representing 80 to 90% of all those with learning disabilities. According to IDA (2025), about 50% of students with dyslexia have parents or other first-degree relatives with dyslexia which means there is most likely a hereditary component to this disorder. Therefore, it would be warranted to assess family history when diagnosing a child for dyslexia (Gaab, 2017).

In a school district such as Houston Independent School District, the largest school district in Texas and the eighth largest school district in the country, with an enrollment of

189,000 students (Facts and Figures, 2023), there will be approximately 37,8000 (or 20 % of 189,000) students with dyslexia. In addition, there are 66,000 EB students enrolled in HISD (Facts and Figures, 2023). Therefore, by making the assumption that EBs experience dyslexia at the same rate as the general population, there will be approximately 13,200 (20% of 66,000) EBs with dyslexia (Bauman, 2023). Bauman (2023) adds that EB students enrolled in Houston ISD comprise a third of the student population and speak nearly a hundred different languages. Therefore, the needs of EBs with dyslexia should not be ignored.

### *Challenges in diagnosing EBs with dyslexia*

One of the chief challenges with diagnosing EBs with dyslexia is the reluctance of the parent(s) to accept that their child is indeed struggling. Many parents of EBs are concerned with the issue of placing their child into a special education program or labeling them with a learning disability or a learning difference (Kim & Petermeier, 2019). When advocacy groups first formed and parents began to advocate for their children with disabilities, they were almost universally comprised of White parents (Pearson, 2023). For this reason, among others, historically marginalized communities and their children were excluded. When referring to historically marginalized communities, this has traditionally been used to refer to as “culturally and linguistically diverse students such as Black, Latinx, English Learners” (Pearson, 2023, p. 27).

There is still a stigma about the term special education which is a holdover from the time when special education referred to children with intellectual disability (ID), Down syndrome, low functioning autism (ASD), or other exceptionalities (today referred to as children with Extensive Support Needs (ESN)). Goffman (1963) defines stigma as the process by which

students are undervalued and marginalized because they have been labeled with a disability (as cited in Pearson, 2023). Today, special education encompasses a variety of learning disabilities or differences. However, parents in historically marginalized communities are still wary of the labeling experience. Many parents of EBs are reluctant to have their children tested in the first place. Some parents of EBs may be well aware that their child is struggling in school, but may not really want to know why. Pearson (2023) explains that stigma can affect the way a family member of a child with a disability feels. This is especially true in historically marginalized families. This negative self-perception can cause family members to isolate and avoid others, which will ultimately prevent them from seeking the help they need for their child and their family (Ali et al., 2012; Howard et al., 2021, as cited in Pearson, 2023). The outcome may be negative for the child, especially since there are now many interventions available that can be used to help children learn to compensate for their learning difference(s), and, as a result, enable them to keep up with their peers or even to surpass them. It therefore becomes necessary for classroom teachers, special education interventionists, and all the members of the ARD committee to communicate effectively with parents of EBs to understand the intervention process, overcome their concerns and/or doubts, and help them realize that everyone is looking out for their child's best interests.

Another difficulty with diagnosing dyslexia in EBs may be with the assessment itself. Some parents of EBs report their children as monolingual and English dominant, even though they may not be proficient in English. In addition to stigmas about special education, mental illness, or learning disorders, there is still a stigma about being identified as bilingual in some multilingual homes. Parents may insist their children are proficient in English when they are not. The consequences in such cases are clear. A child being assessed in a language they struggle

with is unlikely to perform as well on a reading test as they should. Testing results may show the child's reading comprehension difficulties stemming from a language acquisition delay, not a cognitive one. Further confusion can be avoided if educational professionals communicate with parents in their preferred language (Pearson et al., 2021; Turnbull et al., 2016, as cited in Pearson, 2023).

Bias in assessment for dyslexia in EB students can occur when testing tools and procedures do not match the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of these learners. There are very few standardized assessments available in the native languages of students, and the majority of tests available are normed on monolingual English speakers; therefore, evaluators may inaccurately diagnose these learners with dyslexia rather than identifying testing results as mere second language acquisition challenges (Biza & Giannakou, 2022). Furthermore, evaluators administering dyslexia screeners should be well informed about cultural differences, communication styles, educational history, and additional information from the parents. EBs may struggle with reading fluency or spelling due to limited English exposure rather than a true reading disability. Depending on the native language of the student, there are common errors made by speakers of that language. For example, in Spanish, the initial /s/ sound in words does not exist; therefore, when encountering English words such as "stop," the Spanish speaker will invariably add an "E" before the "S" and pronounce the word as "estop." These types of errors can be readily explained as crosslinguistic influences between languages, which are not errors but attempts by EBs to make sense of their new language. If assessments do not reflect a student's language and culture, evaluators might make wrong assumptions. This can lead to delays in getting the right help or even mislabeling the student. To avoid this, it is important to

look at the student's skills in both languages, their background, and their learning environment. (Dyslexia handbook, 2024).

Finally, there is the problem of misdiagnosis. Although the actual incidence is not well documented, many EBs are diagnosed with cognitive disabilities that are actually difficulties in second language acquisition. Baseggio (2018) indicates that in order to avoid misidentification of EBs, assessment must take into account language proficiency. Otherwise, a deficiency in second language acquisition might be interpreted as a learning disability. Once misdiagnosed, EB students are often placed in settings to receive special education services. This failure to correctly identify language abilities versus cognitive ones can result in labeling a student with special needs when none exist. Maxwell and Shah (2012) state that it is vital to differentiate between students struggling to learn English and students struggling because they have a learning disability (as cited in Baseggio, 2018). This is why in some school districts, the number of students in special education programs receiving services is disproportionately comprised of EBs. This eventuality can interfere significantly with the academic progress of EBs with dyslexia.

### *Solutions*

When addressing the diagnostic and educational needs of multilingual students with dyslexia, implementing workable solutions needs to involve several stakeholders. These stakeholders include the student, the parent, family or caregiver, the educator, and the school system itself.

The first of the stakeholders is the student. It is important for an EB with dyslexia to receive proper reading interventions that involve the development of both phonological and orthographic

processing skills. Because “dyslexia appears to arise principally from a weakness in phonological (speech sound) skills, there is good evidence that it can be ameliorated by systematic phonics teaching combined with phonological awareness training” (Snowling & Hume, 2011, p. 593). Teaching phonics or phonological awareness will facilitate the acquisition of letter combinations and letter sounds. According to the Dyslexia Handbook (2024), “Phonological awareness is the understanding of the internal sound structure of words” (TEA, 2024, p. 16). Without this knowledge, a student with dyslexia cannot recognize the individual sounds that letters or letter combinations make.

In addition to phonological skills, it is important for EBs with dyslexia to develop orthographic skills. According to the Dyslexia Handbook (2024), orthographic processing involves developing a “memory for letter patterns, letter sequences, and the letters in whole words” (TEA, 2024, p. 30). Applied Learning Processes (n.d.) discusses “methods based on Seeing Stars®\*, developed by Nanci Bell, to develop the brain’s ability to image, hold, and retain letter symbols in words. This approach starts with the most basic pieces of words, individual letters, and systematically strengthens the student’s orthographic processing for reading and spelling single-syllable words as well as complex multi-syllable words” (p. 1).

When it comes to assessment and planning reading interventions, it is important that students are allowed to participate fully in their own ARD meetings, when appropriate. Some children, especially older ones, are ready to advocate for themselves, while others may be too young to. In the case of EBs, it is necessary to have appropriate interpreters available to address communication needs. To expand on the idea of language accessibility, the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) Communication Bill of Rights, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (2025) states that students have “The right to meaningful communication that is culturally and linguistically

appropriate” (p. 1). In addition, the bill of rights points out that students have “The right to be addressed directly and not be spoken for or talked about as if not there” (p. 1). These rights do not just apply to students with hearing loss. They should apply to all students.

The second of the stakeholders is the family of the student. It is imperative that parents of EBs are on board when it comes to the education of their children. For a variety of reasons, families often do not have access to timely interventions for their children with disabilities (Amant et al, 2018, as cited in Ganz et al, 2023). These reasons include refusal or delays in having their children assessed (Mandell et al., 2009, as cited in Ganz et al, 2023) and misdiagnosis (Grendel et al., 2019, as cited in Ganz et al, 2023). EB students with disabilities are particularly susceptible to the problem of misdiagnosis (Liu et al., 2015, as cited in Ganz et al, 2023).

To address the issue of stigma, it is important to develop rapport with the student’s family. This must be based on mutual respect, open and effective lines of communication (which includes addressing parents in their preferred language and on their preferred schedules), and practicing cultural responsiveness. Effective communication is one way to help parents who are reluctant to obtain services for their children with dyslexia to understand how important the early diagnosis of a learning disability and appropriate interventions are. It is also a way to help parents appreciate the importance of reading. Cultural responsiveness entails being aware of the various cultural backgrounds represented in a classroom and treating all students with respect. Ganz et al. (2023) point out that being culturally responsive also means it is important to take into account a parent’s cultural background when working with them and providing services to their children. Being culturally responsive means not only being aware of the child and their

disability, but also how this disability may be related directly or indirectly to their cultural circumstances.

To address the issue of literacy with parents, it is important to understand the depth of this problem. It is estimated that 4.1% of American adults are functionally illiterate (National Center for Educational Statistics 2025). This means they do not possess the ability to compare and contrast information, paraphrase, or make inferences about what they have read (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2025). The good news is that most of these parents, especially those who are bilingual or multilingual, are well aware of the importance of being literate. Most of them are eager for their children to do well in school, which includes being proficient in English. However, many parents of EBs lack the resources to help their children. In the first place, many of them are not functionally literate in English and may not read themselves in their native language. If they do not read, they cannot spend time reading with their children. Research has shown repeatedly that children who learn to read before they enter school are at a distinct academic advantage over their non-reading peers (Forbes, 2019). For example, researchers found that three-year-old children whose parents read to them had better vocabulary skills than children whose parents did not read to them (Forbes, 2019).

It is essential to involve parents in their children's education in whatever capacity is practical or possible. For example, parents of EBs should be encouraged to participate as much as possible in ARD meetings. Jimenez and Doughty (2023) suggest, "Parents of EBs should be allowed to lead meetings if they desire" (p.55). More importantly, Jimenez and Doughty (2023) write that educational professionals must provide assessment results to multilingual and culturally diverse parents and other stakeholders in their first language, especially if they have limited proficiency in English. Understanding what is going on in an ARD meeting with respect

to their child's education is vital for parents. That is why an appropriate interpreter is an integral part of the ARD meeting if a parent or student's first language is not English. Jimenez and Doughty (2023) propose that a lack of necessary services, such as interpreters, can prevent parents from receiving the data they need to motivate them to obtain the interventions their children need. There is also the consideration of socioeconomic status when it comes to parental involvement. Parents of lower-income households often have few or no books in the home. Again, the lack of books in the house makes reading difficult for children. Now that everything is online, it is easier for children to access reading material. However, the digital divide is still a very real problem (NCDIT, 2015). Many EBs may not have access to the internet or computers in their homes. According to the NCDIT (2015), 15 percent of American households with school-aged children still do not have access to high-speed internet.

Nonetheless, in today's high-tech environment, children often rely on digital sources (video) to acquire information. The easy availability of digital information is eclipsing the skill of reading. Children are now estimated to spend less than an hour a day reading (Rideout, 2014). Rideout (2014) reports that children (aged 2-10) spend around 40 minutes a day reading. This includes 29 minutes of reading print books and 13 minutes of reading on either a computer or tablet. Even adults spend little time reading for pleasure (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). From these statistics, one can conclude that reading is becoming an increasingly declining pastime. Interestingly enough, researchers found that during the pandemic, time spent reading varied greatly depending on age. Older adults (75 and older) read around 57 minutes a day, while younger adults (15-44) only spent around 12 minutes a day (U.S. Bureau, 2021).

Often, parents of students with learning disabilities such as dyslexia have difficulty understanding what their children are experiencing. One way to educate parents is to provide

them with a hands-on experience using an online dyslexia simulator. These simulators present pages of text as a person with dyslexia might perceive them. This single tool emphatically demonstrates how a person with dyslexia perceives the written word and what a difficult task it would be to then comprehend what they are seeing.

There are also many websites/resources available for parents of children with dyslexia, such as Dyslexia on Demand and Homeschooling with Dyslexia. A quick visit to the website Dyslexia on Demand to watch the video, “Experience Dyslexia” can give parents a window into their child’s world (Dyslexia on Demand, 2024). Homeschooling with Dyslexia (2025) has many helpful videos for parents, and it is well worth the hour or two a parent will spend visiting the website. Hopefully, by demonstrating visually what it is like to have dyslexia, parents can better understand what their child is going through and will be more motivated to help. This motivation will, in turn, facilitate their desire to enable their children to obtain and benefit from the necessary interventions.

The third stakeholder is the educator or classroom teacher(s). Because many EBs with reading difficulties are often misidentified as having a cognitive disability versus a language acquisition issue, it is vital that educators are on board when it comes to the issue of misidentification or overidentification. This means that educators need to take a child’s cultural background (especially language needs) into consideration when assessing or identifying disabilities. For instance, if an EB is having difficulty reading, assessors must be acutely aware of a tendency/bias/predisposition to label a child with a cognitive impairment (such as short-term memory), rather than a language one. Besaggio (2018) writes that teacher education is the most

commonly recommended solution to address the problem of misidentification of EBs. Teachers need to be aware of and willing to combat their preconceived notions and biases about EBs.

In addition to awareness about misidentification, educators can benefit from resources that enable them to better understand dyslexia. The International Dyslexia Association Northern California (2025) sells a Simulation Kit for schools to purchase, giving educators a hands-on experience and providing them with a perspective on the world of dyslexia.

The fourth of the stakeholders is the school system itself. In addition to changing the behaviors of teachers in the classroom, it is recommended that school policies be changed in order to address the issue of misidentification of EBs with dyslexia. Baseggio (2108) advises that the problem of teacher education must be addressed at the systemic level. This means that school systems need to have policies in place and be willing to implement these policies to avoid the misidentification of EB students with learning disabilities. These policies can include teacher education about learning disabilities and cultural awareness. A policy that would address this issue might look something like this. It would begin with the pre-referral process for EBs. This would be followed by delivering rigorous, planned RTI to EBs, and, finally, EBs students would be evaluated for learning disabilities (Barrio, 2017). Further, the policy should be a step-by-step intervention guide with progress monitoring tools for all students to ensure that only those who actually need special education services are prescribed them (Barrio, 2017).

## **Conclusions**

This article discusses what dyslexia is, how it is identified, its incidence in EB student populations, and ways to address the needs of the various stakeholders involved. Diagnosing dyslexia in EBs is a process that is difficult for several reasons. Chief among these is the

reluctance of many parents of EBs to have their children labeled with a learning disability, lack of teacher knowledge, lack of school policy, and the assessments themselves. Even though dyslexia is the most common learning disability identified today, there is still a stigma about learning disabilities in some multilingual communities, and many parents of EBs are reluctant to have their children tested in the first place. Early dyslexia screeners are given to all school children in Texas, and children who do not pass the screeners are then provided with appropriate dyslexia interventions. Formal assessments follow these screeners if needed. In this process, many EBs are misidentified and placed in special education programs with specialized instruction when they are struggling with language acquisition problems, not cognitive ones. This article discussed solutions to the issues mentioned above in terms of the various stakeholders involved, which include the student, the student's parents or caregivers, the service providers, and the school district.

## References

- Applied Learning Processes (n.d.). *Orthographic processing*.  
<https://appliedlearningprocesses.com/what-we-do/reading-and-spelling/orthographic-processing/>
- ASHA: American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (2025). *The communication bill of rights, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition*. ASHA. <https://www.asha.org/njc/communication-bill-of-rights/?srsltid=AfmBOookhVCr3NeA0E3ZWk-URjHDNGJnWFMVYJfLx6ewGaOOht3124yz>
- Barrio, B. L. (2017). Special education policy change: Addressing the disproportionality of English language learners in special education programs in rural communities. *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, 36(2), 64-72. doi:10.1177/8756870517707217
- Baseggio, K. (2018). A silent crisis: The misidentification of English Language Learners as students with learning disabilities. *Regis University Student Publications* (comprehensive collection). 865. <https://epublications.regis.edu/theses/865>
- Bauman, A. (2023). *HISD teachers say English Language Learners struggle under one size fits all instruction*. Houston Chronicle. <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/education/article/hisd-english-language-learners-18438533.php>
- Black, J.L. (2016). *Orthographic Processing: A Subcomponent or Subtype of Dyslexia?* Luke Waites Center for Dyslexia and Learning Disorders.  
[https://www.wcu.edu/webfiles/orthographic\\_handout\\_cullowhee\\_2016.pdf](https://www.wcu.edu/webfiles/orthographic_handout_cullowhee_2016.pdf)
- Biza, C., & Giannakou, A. (2022). Distinguishing between bilingualism and dyslexia: View of secondary school teachers in Greece. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 21(12), 218-237.

Center on PBIS: Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (2025). *What is Tier 1 support?*

Center on PBIS. <https://www.pbis.org/pbis/tier-1>

Cleveland Clinic (2025). *Dyslexia*. Cleveland Clinic.

<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/6005-dyslexia>

Deacon, S.H., Benere, J., & Castles, A. (2012). Chicken or egg? Untangling the relationship between orthographic processing skill and reading accuracy. *Cognition* 122(1), 110-117.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0010027711002332?via%3Dihub>

Dyslexia on Demand (2024). *Experience Dyslexia: Dyslexia Simulation*. [Video] YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UObxVHFdgEk>

Facts and Figures 2022-2023 (2023). Houston ISD.

[https://www.houstonisd.org/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=48525&dataid=395205&FileName=Pace-60711\\_2022-2023\\_Facts-Figures\\_7583c.pdf](https://www.houstonisd.org/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=48525&dataid=395205&FileName=Pace-60711_2022-2023_Facts-Figures_7583c.pdf)

Forbes, J. (2019). Young children and infants read to by parents have stronger vocabulary skills.

*Rutgers Today*. <https://www.rutgers.edu/news/young-children-and-infants-read-parents-have-stronger-vocabulary-skills>

Gaab, N. (2017). *It's a myth that young children cannot be screened for dyslexia*. Baltimore, MD: International Dyslexia Association. Retrieved from <http://dyslexiaida.org/its-a-myth-that-young-children-cannot-be-screened-for-dyslexia/>

Ganz, J.B., Rodriguez, D, & Yoro, A. (2023) Teach social communication behaviors, in Pennington et al. (Eds). *High leverage practices and students with extensive support needs* (pp. 107-118). Routledge.

Hada, S.S. & Vats, N. (2024). Reading miscue analysis of elementary students with dyslexia.

*AIP Conference Proceedings*. 2986(1).

<https://ui.adsabs.harvard.edu/abs/2024AIPC.2986c0171H/abstract>

Homeschooling with Dyslexia (2025). *Experience Dyslexia*.

<https://homeschoolingwithdyslexia.com/dyslexia-simulations/>

Houston Independent School District (2025). *ARD-IEP process*. HISD.

<https://www.houstonisd.org/Page/171489>

International Dyslexia Association Northern California (2025). *Experience Dyslexia*.

<https://norcal.dyslexiaida.org/experience-dyslexia/>

International Dyslexia Association Northern California (2025). *Universal screening: K-2*

*Reading*. <https://dyslexiaida.org/universal-screening-k-2-reading/>

Ives, C., Biancarosa, G., Fien, H., & Kennedy, P. (2018). *DIBELS 8<sup>th</sup> Edition as a screener for*

*Dyslexia*. University of Oregon. <https://dibels.uoregon.edu/sites/default/files/2021-06/DIBELS%208th%20Edition%20Dyslexia%20White%20Paper.pdf>

Jimenez, B. & Doughty, T.T. (2023). Interpret and communicate assessment information with

stakeholders to collaboratively design and implement educational programs, in

Pennington et al. (Eds), *High Leverage Practices in Students with Extensive Support Needs* (pp. 52-63). Routledge.

Kim, Y.B. & Petermeier, H. (2019). *Avoid labeling your child: Extension fact sheet 19-13*.

University of Nevada, Reno Extension.

<https://extension.unr.edu/publication.aspx?PubID=301>

National Center for Educational Statistics (2025). *Adult literacy in the United States*. Institute of

Education Sciences. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019179/index.asp>

NCDIT (2015). *Homework Gap*. North Carolina Department of Information Technology.

Technology. <https://www.ncbroadband.gov/node/104>

Pearson (2025), *Understanding dyslexia*. Pearson.

<https://www.pearsonassessments.com/professional-assessments/featured-topics/dyslexia/about-dyslexia.html>

Pearson, J. N. (2023). Collaborate with families to support student learning and secure needed

services in Pennington et al. (Eds). *High leverage practices and students with Extensive Support Needs* (pp. 25-38). Routledge.

- Rideout, V. (2014). *Learning at home: Families educational media use in America*. The Joan Ganz Cooney Center. [https://joanganzcooneycenter.org/wp-content/themes/jgcc/downloader.php?file=/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/jgcc\\_learningathome.pdf](https://joanganzcooneycenter.org/wp-content/themes/jgcc/downloader.php?file=/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/jgcc_learningathome.pdf)
- Snowling, M.J. & Hume, C. (2011). Annual Research Review: The nature and classification of reading disorders – a commentary on proposals for DSM-5. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 53(5), 593-607. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.2011.02495.x>
- TEA (2024). *Data tool selection guidance*. TEA. <https://tea.texas.gov/academics/early-childhood-education/early-learning-assessments/data-tool-selection-guidance#k>
- TEA (2024). *Dyslexia Handbook*. <https://tea.texas.gov/academics/special-student-populations/special-education/texas-dyslexia-handbook.pdf>
- TEA (2025). *ARD supports*. Texas SPED Support. <https://spedsupport.tea.texas.gov/resource-library/ard-supports>
- Texas.gov (2025). Texas Education Code § 38.003 (2025). Screening and treatment for dyslexia and related disorders. <https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/ED/htm/ED.38.htm>
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021). *Timespent reading for personal interest 2020*. <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2021/time-spent-reading-for-personal-interest-in-2020.htm>
- WebAIM (2025). *Dyslexia simulation*. Utah State University. <https://webaim.org/simulations/dyslexia>
- Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity (2025). *What is dyslexia?* <https://dyslexia.yale.edu/dyslexia/what-is-dyslexia/>
- Zhang, T., Kuo, CC.J. (2001). Audio Feature Analysis. In: *Content-Based Audio Classification and Retrieval for Audiovisual Data Parsing. The Springer International Series in*

*Engineering and Computer Science, 606.* Springer, Boston, MA.

[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4757-3339-6\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4757-3339-6_3)