



The North Dakota Association of School Psychologists (NDASP), along with the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) support the need to provide prevention and early intervention services to meet the needs of all students in the general education setting. As such, the NDASP support the need for a kindergarten through grade three initial teacher licensure candidate to provide evidence that the candidate meets the competency standards inclusive of the acquisition of knowledge of the essential components of beginning reading instruction, including (a) phonemic awareness, (b) phonics, (c) fluency, (d) vocabulary, (e) comprehension, (f) how to assessment reading ability; and (g) how to identify and correct reading difficulties.

As it relates to dyslexia-specific screening and intervention, the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (ND DPI) has existing guidance and recommendations regarding the intentional shift away from identifying and diagnosing characteristics that are internal to the student to an evidence-based early screening and intervention service model for children demonstrating lagging basic reading skills as part of the IDEA mandated child-find process.

This [link](#) is available for review and is inclusive of IDEA's definition of a specific learning disability, the need to consider the condition of dyslexia among other conditions (such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, and developmental aphasia) when completing a comprehensive evaluation of students and determining a need for specially designed instruction.

While these terms and conditions may be considered in determining the unique needs of a student, NDASP takes the position that these conditions are not exempt from these ND DPI established guidelines. Thus they do not require their own policies, procedures, and treatments that would be considered unique to already established evidence-validated assessments and interventions provided by trained North Dakota teachers, support staff, interventionists, and other related professionals.

NDASP welcomes and supports training opportunities for educators to identify learning disabilities, including dyslexia, and to deliver quality instruction for all students. Schools provide trained special education teachers and interventionists to treat reading disabilities as defined by the SLD definition and criteria explained in the document link above. These skilled staff receive the same training to meet the needs of students identified as having dyslexia.

Many students in North Dakota suffer from difficulties with learning in many areas. NDASP encourages ongoing screening and progress monitoring of students as this association, and its members, believe is tantamount to their academic success. NDASP believes dyslexia and other like conditions should be referenced in appropriate documentation when conducting a special education evaluation.

NDASP recommends additional consideration to the language in subsection 4 of HB1231 that states "A school district or special education unit shall provide an assessment under subdivision a of subsection 3 upon request by a parent, legal guardian, or teacher." Federal IDEA guidelines mandate that evaluation requests be *considered* by the school team, not necessarily acted on, if the school team can provide evidence that an evaluation is unnecessary. There are cases when an assessment is requested and is unwarranted by multiple data sources due to the student not showing an educational need for evaluation.



Results from a special education evaluation may find students diagnosed with a dyslexia condition eligible for special education services if the assessment team concludes all available sources of data demonstrate the disability or impairment have such an adverse effect on the student's educational performance that would require special education and related services through an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Dyslexia should not be considered a standalone qualification which would result in specially designed instruction through IEP.

It is recommended legislators match appropriations to the need to train and deliver appropriate instruction within the guidelines put forth in HB1231. Without appropriate funding, school districts will be unable to implement with fidelity, making another mandate an ineffective use of time and resources.

To reiterate, the North Dakota Association of School Psychologists is not opposed to additional training and interventions targeted to needs like dyslexia, but would ask that consideration be given to the language used within the bill and the execution of such mandates.

Sincerely,

Alannah Valenta, PsyS, NCSP

NDASP President, on behalf of North Dakota Association of School Psychologists

<https://www.nd.gov/dpi/sites/www/files/documents/SpeEd/Guidelines/Guidelines%20with%20ORTI.2.pdf>