

Dr. Ref Rodriguez, Mr. Scott Schmerelson—Recognizing and Addressing the Educational Implications of Dyslexia in LAUSD Schools

Whereas, Ensuring a high-quality education for children with specific learning disabilities is a critical responsibility for the Los Angeles Unified School District;

Whereas, The term “dyslexia” is found in twenty-two state laws, including the California Education Code, and in Federal law under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) within the broad eligibility category of a Specific Learning Disability (SLD);

Whereas, There is compelling scientific evidence that early identification and intervention improves literacy outcomes for most students with symptoms of dyslexia;

Whereas, LAUSD recognized October as Dyslexia Awareness Month in 2016;

Whereas, In October 2015, the Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS), published a “Dear Colleague” letter encouraging state education agencies and local school districts to consider situations where it would be appropriate to use the term dyslexia to describe and address a child’s unique, identified needs through evaluation, eligibility, and IEP documents. OSERS further encouraged States to review their policies, procedures, and practices to ensure that they do not prohibit the use of the term dyslexia. Finally, in ensuring the provision of free appropriate public education, OSERS encouraged States to remind local school districts of the importance of addressing the unique educational needs of children with specific learning disabilities resulting from dyslexia during IEP Team meetings and other meetings with parents under IDEA;

Whereas, IDEA requires that the IEP Team tailor specifically designed instruction to meet the individual needs of students, and students who exhibit characteristics of dyslexia must be provided appropriate individualized intervention;

Whereas, Deficits in phonological awareness is viewed as the hallmark of dyslexia, and under the California Education Code Section 56334 and Section 3030 of Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations, deficits in phonological processing must be identified as part of special education eligibility requirements;

Whereas, In 2015, AB 1369 became law requiring the California Department of Education (CDE) to develop program guidelines for dyslexia, in time for use no later than the beginning of the 2017-18 school year, to be used to assist regular education teachers, special education teachers, and parents to identify and assess pupils with dyslexia, and to plan, provide, evaluate, and improve educational services to pupils with dyslexia;

Whereas, The CDE advised school districts to be proactive in their implementation of AB 1369 and not to wait until the guidelines are released in August 2017, and multiple SELPAs and school districts in California have already begun adopting policies to implement AB 1369;

Resolved, That the Superintendent review and update LAUSD policies, procedures and practices to ensure that: (1) such policies, procedures and practices are aligned with the October 2015 “Dear Colleague Letter” and AB 1369 and its forthcoming guidelines; and (2) IEP Teams understand that the term “Specific Learning Disability” is an umbrella term and does not prohibit the use of the term “dyslexia” when determining special education eligibility and educational services noted in IEP documents. The Superintendent shall complete such review and update to LAUSD policies, procedures and practices and report back to the board within 90 calendar days;

Resolved, That the Superintendent create a plan to provide teacher and staff training necessary to improve the understanding of dyslexia and its warning signs, appropriate evidence-based Structured Literacy Instruction, and appropriate classroom accommodations/modifications, and report back to the Board with such plan within 90 calendar days;

Resolved, That LAUSD use the Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP-2) or other appropriate assessments, to ensure that phonological processing is assessed when conducting an evaluation for special education eligibility under the eligibility category of Specific Learning Disability, following State and Federal laws and regulations. ~~determining special education eligibility and when determining the unique educational needs of students with dyslexia;~~

Resolved, That LAUSD ensure the provision of Free and Appropriate Public Education by providing an evidence-based, multisensory, direct, explicit, structured, and sequential approach to instructing students with dyslexia, as required by AB 1369, such as those used by Intensive Diagnostic Educational Centers (IDEC).