

**PIEDMONT UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**M E M O R A N D U M**

**TO:** Board of Education

**FROM:** Dr. Donald Evans, Interim Superintendent  
Dr. Cheryl Wozniak, Assistant Superintendent

**DATE:** October 12, 2022

**SUBJECT:** **DYSLEXIA AWARENESS MONTH**

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**PURPOSE:** To highlight Dyslexia Awareness Month and provide an update on PUSD's response to the California Dyslexia Guidelines.

**BACKGROUND:**

According to the International Dyslexia Association (IDA), "Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge."

Dyslexia involves deficits in one or some of the following literacy skills: phonological awareness (sound structure), phonemic awareness (sound manipulation), phonological memory (coding in short term memory), rapid naming (from long term memory), and expressive and receptive language which can negatively impact a student's self-concept. Strengths of students with dyslexia include strong thinking skills: conceptualization, imagination, and reasoning; listening comprehension; problem-solving abilities; and the ability to understand the big picture. Dyslexia affects males and females as well as people from different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds nearly equally.

Research suggests that approximately 15% of the population has dyslexia. As children, most of these students are educated in the general education environment. School personnel are not expected to be experts in dyslexia, nor are they authorized to diagnose it. Instead, districts are expected to create a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) that addresses the needs of a wide

range of students with reading difficulties. As written in the California Dyslexia Guidelines, “in a ‘Dear Colleague’ letter presenting guidance on dyslexia, the federal Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS) defined a multi-tiered system of support as a ‘school-wide approach that addresses the needs of all students, including struggling learners and students with disabilities, and integrates assessment and intervention within a multilevel instructional and behavioral system to maximize student achievement.’ The letter also notes that MTSS is an approach used to identify children who are suspected to have a specific learning disability as it serves as an instructional framework through which schools can identify students at risk, including those who may have dyslexia, provide evidence-based interventions, and monitor students’ progress.

### **Dyslexia Screening**

Early identification of reading challenges and intervention with fidelity is critical as 74% of children who are poor readers in 3rd grade remain poor readers in 9th grade. As we await direction from the California Department of Education on the dyslexia screener that will be required of all districts, we are continuing to work with our early elementary teachers on standardizing the assessments currently used across all elementary schools to better ensure that we identify students with reading challenges early and provide the supports to help make sufficient progress each year.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

No fiscal impact

### **ATTACHMENTS**

[Link to the California Dyslexia Guidelines](#)- a set of guidelines developed in 2017 by the California Department of Education

[Senate Bill 237](#)- Bill to require the use of an evidence-based tool to screen for dyslexia  
[California’s Multi-Tiered System of Support \(MTSS\)](#)- an integrated, comprehensive framework that aligns academic, behavioral, and social-emotional learning in a fully integrated system of support for the benefit of all students.