

Who will be responsible for the testing? The school.

What is screening?

**Screening establishes “at risk” or “not at risk” for dyslexia.
It is not diagnostic.**

Example, our screener.

**Psychometrics help establish validity. It is important that
the screener has evidence that it is valid for dyslexia.
Screening can be done by the teacher who knows the
student best.**

Dr. S.Shaywitz

What is the next step once a child has been identified through this screening?

Follow screening of those “at risk” for dyslexia with full diagnostic testing (or begin to provide evidence-based instruction). Full diagnostic testing to identify those that are dyslexic allows the student to know why they are struggling and to get accommodations for life and an evidence-based education.

Dr. S. Shaywitz

One question referred to literacy- based delays.

Think of dyslexia as the converse of literacy. Think of it as, “children who lack literacy” have dyslexia. Specific dyslexia screening and testing that we just talked about should be done. We must go from broad terms like “literacy” to concise terms like dyslexia. This helps the student, the parent, and the teacher.

Dr. Sally Shaywitz

What major barriers exist to successful passage of this important legislation? How can we ensure success?

- 1) Learn the issue including solutions.
- 2) Dyslexia advocates must acquaint federal legislators with the need for the legislation. Educate the Members and their staff.
- 2) There are those who will oppose –fear of change.
- 3) There is opposition from other advocates for the disabled who want all disabled in one group. They are advocating at a federal level against the bill.

Sen. Cassidy

With dyslexia removed from SLD, how is it to be identified?

SLD is very vague and non evidence based. Dyslexia is very specific, and evidence- based screening will identify those at risk for dyslexia, leading to early identification and early intervention.

Dr. S. Shaywitz

We are building a national grassroots dyslexia parent coalition. How can we, as a grassroots organization, lobby and/or influence other members of Congress to support your initiative?

Understand the science of dyslexia, so that you can discuss confidently, that science has gone forward and supports dyslexia in its own category and that we can use this knowledge to help large numbers of children, at least one in five. Educating everyone including Members of Congress and their staff is helpful.

Sen. Cassidy

When students are identified, schools will need therapists or interventionists who can actually deliver services in public schools and private schools. How can our country creatively fund the growth of certified practitioners to serve students through a model that supports effective prevention and intervention? How can a pipeline of educators ready to provide those services be created?

There is a lot of money earmarked for literacy. Usually, little to no money is directed toward helping the dyslexic child. If dyslexia is separate from SLD and acknowledged as the major contributor to literacy problems, the money will follow.

Mandate at the state level that universities teach 21st century knowledge of dyslexia including its prevalence and basis. Establish specialized schools where teachers can be trained.

Dr. L. Cassidy

Is there funding to scale the work?

Most states understand that a large number of children are not reading close to grade level. A lot of money over the last 2 decades has been sent from the federal level to the states. That money has been earmarked for “literacy” but little to none has gone to dyslexia. We still have a reading crisis so there must be money dedicated to those extensively trained in dyslexia education as opposed to only those trained as reading coaches or literacy specialists.

Sen. B.&Dr.L. Cassidy

How will the panel ensure that science-based /structured literacy is implemented in schools, and that literacy progress is tracked? Having dyslexia as its own category will change dyslexia from a “hidden entity” under SLD to a recognized valid entity. The definition will reduce confusion and lays the foundation for identification and remediation. It will incentivize schools to use evidence- based screening and evidence -based interventions (as opposed to research based) and incorporate all the scientific knowledge of dyslexia including its early impact. Furthermore, students who are struggling to read will know what it is that is causing their difficulty and that it has a name, dyslexia, and that there are many examples of people with dyslexia who have succeeded in many fields (writing, science, law, medicine) and I talk about these in Overcoming Dyslexia.

Dr. S. Shaywitz

What (if any) impact could this legislation have on higher education?

It expands the concept of “literacy” to acknowledge that dyslexia is the most common reason children are struggling to read. This legislation will improve higher ed by ensuring that there is a specific focus on dyslexia, the most prevalent and best characterized of any learning disability. Parents and advocates can drive change at the state level once dyslexia is acknowledged at the federal level.

Dr. L. Cassidy

How might universities be incentivized to become accredited or partner with other accredited agencies for a Masters of Reading Program?

Establish the definition in law.

Establish the prevalence and connect dyslexia with literacy.

This establishes a need.

If states and school districts then fund positions for these professionals to educate the large number of dyslexics which is recognized as a common valid entity, universities will want to train their graduates for these positions.

Dr. L. Cassidy

How do we turn university education programs around so that teachers are correctly taught to teach reading?

Pass legislation so that 3 credit hours of reading instruction at the university level includes an overview of the body of scientific work regarding dyslexia, an overview of evidence-based instruction for individuals with dyslexia, and an introduction to the process of becoming a dyslexia therapist or practitioner.

Dr. L. Cassidy

What type of coursework is needed for pre-service teachers and what kind of professional development is needed for in-service teachers to be equipped to teach students with dyslexia?

In college, the teachers need to learn the [general] 21st century, evidence-based science about dyslexia and the presentation in the classroom so they can identify students and ensure they are referred for the correct education and accommodations. In service PD is geared to the possibility of a language certification or masters degree specific to dyslexia. Coursera.

Dr. L. Cassidy

Identification must be supported by a knowledgeable leader at the state department, district, and school level. What are the implications for how preparation programs should apprentice decision makers to understand dyslexia as a disability, and how to scale intervention services within a system successfully?

Once dyslexia is its own category there will be administrative positions designated for dyslexia and people will want to fill these positions and will accumulate experience and knowledge. Advocates must push for evidence -based solutions. States follow other states.

Dr. L. Cassidy

What progress has been made in states to screen incarcerated individuals for dyslexia?

This is already federal law and is being implemented by many states.

We would be happy to send you a recent paper about dyslexia in prisoners.

Cassidy L, Reggio K, Shaywitz BA, Holahan JM, & Shaywitz SE (2021) Dyslexia in Incarcerated Men and Women: A New Perspective on Reading Disability in The Prison Population. Journal of Correctional Education 72(2):61-80.

Sen. Cassidy

There is a clear connection between the number of inmates in prison, and undiagnosed dyslexia. The First Step Act is focused on intervention to provide services. What is needed for a model focused on prevention for children in high poverty neighborhoods where access to therapy is not yet available or affordable?

Early identification of children at risk for dyslexia will lead to provision of services early. Public charter or traditional schools for dyslexia can solve this problem. This will allow the child to learn to read, know what they have, and that they are not dumb.

Sen. Cassidy

In this same vein, another questioner asked about the societal cost attributed to not supporting students with reading difficulties?

People talk about the school to prison pipeline. In our recent study 50% of prisoners are dyslexic. Tragically, many dyslexics are only identified once they are in prison, rather than when they were in school. We know that unidentified dyslexics are more likely to drop out of school and more likely to be incarcerated.

Dr. L. Cassidy

How do you think the 21st Century Dyslexia Act will impact services provided in schools? (For example, do you think this will influence schools to train special educators in Orton Gillingham?)

Yes, this will encourage schools to screen for “at risk for dyslexia” and to follow with evidence-based programs which include instruction in alphabets (PA, phonics), vocabulary instruction, and read aloud to increase fluency.

Dr. S. Shaywitz

What is needed to ensure every special education teacher is apprenticed in evidence-based practices to ensure students with dyslexia who are in special education classrooms are provided with appropriate intervention services?

Mandate by law (state or federal) that special ed teachers are knowledgeable about the 21st century science of dyslexia which could include specific courses taken and opportunities for practicums with dyslexic students. Need schools of excellence.

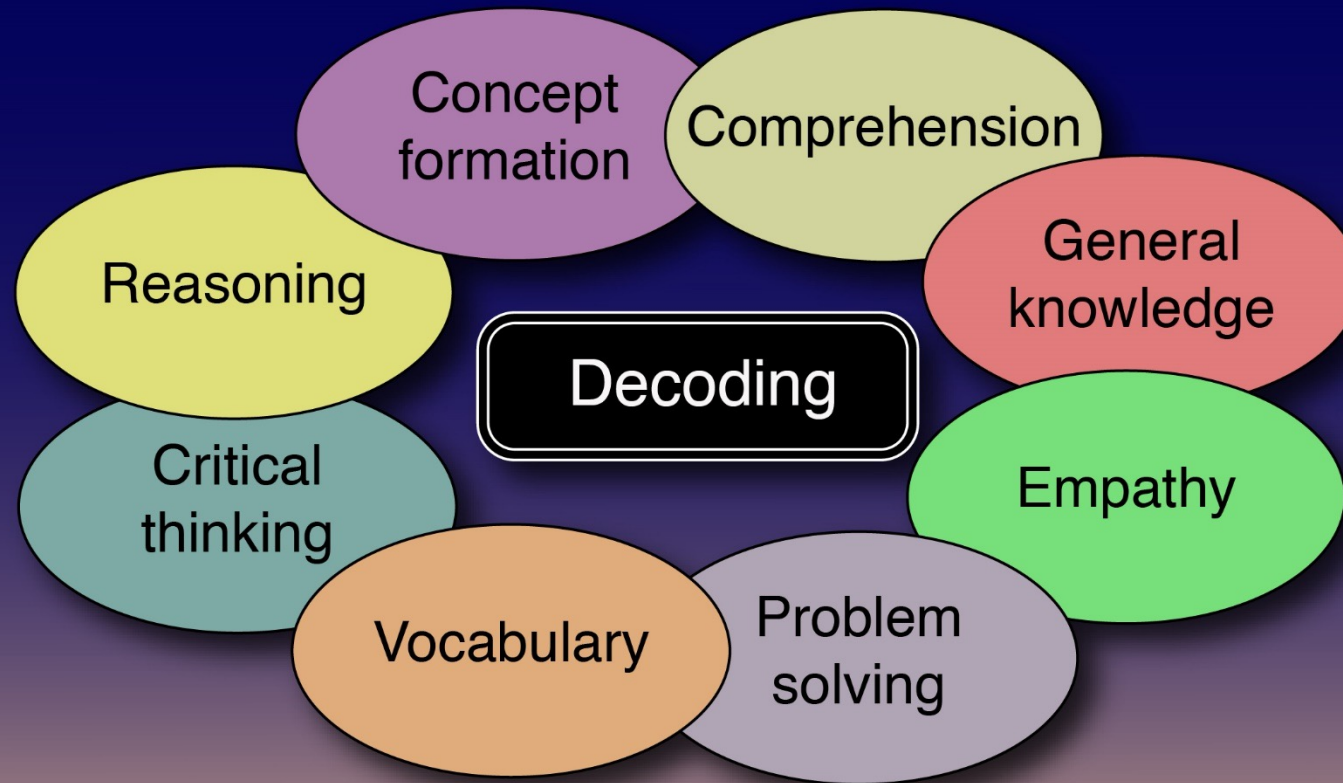
Dr. Sally Shaywitz

The needs of students with dyslexia must be addressed holistically. How will social workers and school psychologists be leveraged to address the social and emotional impact of dyslexia?

These professionals need to understand the current evidence - based on the understanding of dyslexia and its impact on a student. The school and those listed above must understand the sea of strengths model. I would also recommend social workers and school psychologists familiarize themselves with Chapter 22 of Overcoming Dyslexia titled Protecting And Nourishing Your Child's Soul.

Dr. S. Shaywitz

Sea of Strengths Model of Dyslexia



Would it be possible to have tuition vouchers for dyslexia specific schools for students who are diagnosed with dyslexia? I am located in Alabama.

That is a good idea but it is expensive to educate a dyslexic student and state vouchers will not completely cover costs. Economically speaking, special schools for dyslexic students can take the best education to scale. All students then get the same opportunity but the price tag is zero for the public option and \$20k-\$60k for the private school.

Dr. L. Cassidy

How would this impact the schools in the inner cities?

The inner cities could benefit from this bill the most as traditional schools ignore dyslexia and parents don't have access to trained tutors. Parental education is crucial which can be led by advocates. Having dyslexia as its own category with a current definition should take away the shame/stigma and encourage early screening, early identification and intervention.

Dr. L. Cassidy

Are there community supports for parents of children with dyslexia or other forms of learning disabilities? If so, how accessible are those resources?

Each state and community is different but the current model leaves education up to the schools which is why specialized schools for dyslexia are a game changer. The families of those schools share a bond and become more effective as advocates because there is strength in numbers.

Dr. L. Cassidy

Knowing that most students with dyslexia also have concurrent conditions like dysgraphia or dyscalculia, do you expect many students will need to be classified as multiple disabled (meaning dyslexia and SLD)?

Dysgraphia and dyscalculia are often associated with dyslexia. In fact, so many children with dyslexia also exhibit dysgraphia that I encourage parents to teach their dyslexic children to learn to type as early as possible.

As for dyscalculia, beginning arithmetic such as learning the times tables, is coded phonologically and so it is not surprising that early on some dyslexic children also exhibit problems referred to as dyscalculia. Math is also very language heavy.

Dr. Sally Shaywitz

Are you open to making any revisions or amendments to this bill? Parents are seeing some holes in this bill which will work against them in seeking appropriate services for their kids.

This bill is a first step and hopefully this conversation has helped all understand the enormous positive impact of the legislation.

Sen. Cassidy