18.52 Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, Dyscalculia, Developmental Coordination Disorder

Resolution passed 2026

Whereas, specific learning and developmental disabilities — including dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, and Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD, sometimes known as dyspraxia) — are neurobiological in origin and affect approximately 1 in 5 students, or more than 200,000 children in Washington state's public schools; and

Whereas, specific learning and developmental disabilities have been defined to include a variety of neurological conditions that interfere with a person's ability to store, process, or produce information, or to coordinate movement which may interfere with learning. These conditions are defined by leading scientific and medical bodies as follows:

- Dyslexia is a specific learning disability characterized by difficulties in word reading and/or spelling that involve accuracy, speed, or both, and vary depending on the orthography; these difficulties occur along a continuum of severity and underlying difficulties with phonological and morphological processing are common.
- Dysgraphia is a neurological learning disability that impairs a person's ability to write legibly and organize written thoughts. It affects the physical act of writing, such as fine motor skills and handwriting, as well as the cognitive process of translating thoughts into written words.
- Dyscalculia is a specific learning disability in mathematics, including difficulties with number sense, memorization of basic math facts, and accurate and fluent calculation.
- Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD), commonly known as dyspraxia or apraxia, is a neurodevelopmental condition that affects fine and/or gross motor skills and balance, including motor planning and execution or speech. Although DCD is a motor condition rather than a learning disability, its effects on handwriting and classroom participation directly impede academic access; and

Whereas, decades of neuroscience, multidisciplinary research and the science of reading have confirmed that these disabilities are neurobiological in origin and that learning to read requires explicit, systematic instruction; Structured Literacy — encompassing phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, oral language, and knowledge building — is the most effective approach for all students, and especially for those with specific learning and developmental disabilities; and explicit, systematic instruction is equally the evidence-based approach for mathematics in dyscalculia (building number sense, computational fluency, and problem solving), for written expression in dysgraphia (multisensory handwriting/letter-formation, explicit transcription and composition skills of the writing process), and for motor coordination in DCD (task-oriented occupational therapy); and

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Whereas, when specific learning and developmental disabilities are left unidentified or unsupported, the consequences extend beyond academics to students' mental health, self-confidence, and long-term opportunities; these harms fall disproportionately on students of color, English Language Learners, and students from lower-income households or experiencing homelessness, who are less likely to be identified and more likely to lack access to effective intervention; and many educators remain underprepared to recognize early warning signs and lack the knowledge and skills to deliver effective instruction; and

Whereas, effective support for students with specific learning and developmental disabilities requires a whole-school approach — including pre-service preparation that equips new educators with the knowledge and skills to identify and serve these students, ongoing in-service professional development that keeps educators current with evidence-based practices, and training for school administrators who must understand the legal obligations, support implementation, and direct resources to ensure every student receives timely and appropriate intervention; and

Whereas, Washington state has made important first steps — including requiring early literacy screening for students in grades K–2 and adopting evidence-based Structured Literacy curriculum standards — yet 40% of the state's fourth graders are still reading below grade level (16), and too many students with dyslexia and related disabilities continue to wait too long for identification and support; and

Whereas, screening for dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, and DCD too often stops after early elementary grades, leaving many students unidentified into middle and high school; students who mask their learning differences, along with those from historically underserved communities, are especially likely to go undiagnosed, as their struggles may be misattributed to other factors rather than an underlying learning or developmental disability, and their families often lack the resources to pursue private evaluation.

Therefore, be it

Resolved, that Washington State PTA and its local PTAs and councils support universal, evidence-based, and culturally responsive screening for all students, at designated developmentally appropriate grade levels, with screening available at any grade level when concerns arise (or) for newly enrolled students upon enrollment for signs of specific learning and developmental disabilities, including dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, and DCD. Results should be shared promptly and transparently with families in their home language, along with clear information about available supports, their right to request a full evaluation under federal law, and access to counseling and assistive technology to proactively support individual student needs and prevent or address the educational and emotional impacts of these disabilities when unidentified or inadequately supported; and be it further

Resolved, that Washington State PTA and its local PTAs and councils support evidence-based instruction and interventions for all students with identified or suspected specific learning and developmental disabilities — including explicit, structured approaches to literacy, mathematics, written expression, and motor skill development — delivered as high-quality core instruction for all students and with greater intensity for those who need additional support through a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS)

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framework, in both general education and special education settings, and responsive to students' individual, cultural, and linguistic needs; and be it further

Resolved, that Washington State PTA and its local PTAs and councils support meaningful training and professional development for all educators, including district-employed and contracted evaluators, and school administrators, including:

- pre-service preparation and ongoing in-service learning that provide comprehensive instruction in foundational literacy and mathematics skills and instructional practice grounded in the principles of Structured Literacy and aligned with current neurocognitive and multidisciplinary research; and
- expanded specialization opportunities — in identifying and supporting students with identified or suspected specific learning and developmental disabilities, including dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, and DCD, across diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds; and be it further

Resolved, that Washington State PTA and its local PTAs and councils support sustained public funding for robust, evidence-based Tier 1 instruction in foundational literacy and learning skills for all students — grounded in Structured Literacy principles and aligned with current neurocognitive and multidisciplinary research — delivered within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework to ensure effective implementation; and for evidence-based intervention, referral, and alignment at Tiers 2 and 3 for students who need additional assistance; reported transparently and, where feasible, examined for equity gaps across existing student groups; the development of screening and assessment tools valid for multilingual learners and students from Indigenous language communities; and updating Washington's statutory definitions to align with current science.

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