



**Response to Senator Cassidy's Roundtable on Dyslexia  
Submitted by the Division for Learning Disabilities of the Council for Exceptional  
Children (DLD)**

On behalf of the Division for Learning Disabilities (DLD), we appreciate the attention Senator Cassidy has brought to the needs of students with dyslexia and their families. The experiences shared by parents at the roundtable reflect persistent and concerning realities, including delayed or missed identification, inconsistent access to services across states, and the harm that results when students do not receive effective reading instruction. These concerns warrant continued federal attention.

At the same time, several clarifications are important to ensure that policy solutions are aligned with existing law and evidence.

First, dyslexia is included under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) within the category of Specific Learning Disability (SLD), and its use in evaluation and IEP documentation is both permissible and appropriate. However, identification addresses what a student is called, not what a student will receive. Under IDEA, eligibility determinations require careful consideration of exclusionary factors and must reflect intrinsic learning differences rather than the effects of inadequate instruction or other external influences. Identification is a legal determination. Services are an instructional decision. At present, these two are not reliably connected in practice, and this disconnect contributes to the inequities described by families.

Second, we caution against framing disabilities in competition with one another (i.e., autism and dyslexia). Students frequently present with co-occurring conditions, and IDEA is designed to support individualized identification and service provision based on need. The focus should remain on accurately identifying and addressing learning needs, rather than elevating one label over another.

Third, we reaffirm the IDEA requirement that students with disabilities be educated in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). While specialized programs may be appropriate for some students, placement decisions must be individualized and not driven by disability label or program availability. A diagnosis of dyslexia alone does not determine placement. Removal from general education settings is only appropriate when a student cannot make satisfactory progress there, even with appropriate supports and evidence-based instruction.

Fourth, we emphasize the importance of strengthening the systems that support identification and instruction. The challenges described at the roundtable are not solely issues of identification, but of instructional quality, educator preparation, and implementation. Ensuring that all students receive evidence based reading instruction, and that educators are prepared to deliver and adapt that instruction, is essential. Federal investments in teacher preparation,

education research, professional development, and public understanding of learning disabilities remain critical.

We also reiterate the importance of fully funding IDEA to ensure that states and districts have the capacity to meet their obligations. Resource disparities continue to drive inequitable access to services.

Finally, DLD reaffirms its previously stated concerns regarding the 21st Century Dyslexia Act. While we support efforts to improve outcomes for students with dyslexia, policy approaches should reinforce, rather than fragment, existing IDEA frameworks and should prioritize coherence, evidence, and equitable access.

DLD remains committed to supporting policies and practices that improve outcomes for students with learning disabilities through evidence-based instruction, aligned systems, and faithful implementation of federal law.

Respectfully submitted,  
Division for Learning Disabilities of the Council for Exceptional Children

### **About Us**

The Division for Learning Disabilities (DLD) is one of 18 special interest groups of the Council for Exceptional Children. Since 1983, DLD has worked on behalf of students with learning disabilities and the professionals who serve them to meet the needs of millions of school-aged children and youth identified as having learning disabilities in the United States. The Division for Learning Disabilities values the educational rights of individuals with learning disabilities (LD). We recognize our expanding role to address the needs of learners within the education system in the United States. We facilitate access to knowledge and resources related to effective practices to support individuals who experience challenges with academic performance, inclusive of those who are formally identified with LD and those with other learning differences.