

Governor Terry McAuliffe has recognized October 2015 as Dyslexia Awareness Month for the Commonwealth of Virginia. October has traditionally been declared Disability Awareness Month and continues as such. In 2004, the International Dyslexia Association's Board of Directors voted to promote this month as Dyslexia Awareness Month as well, and from that time forward, activities have been focused during this month by organizations associated with research, instruction, and support of individuals with dyslexia to raise awareness of the strengths and challenges of those with dyslexia.

A definition of dyslexia is contained the Administrative Code of Virginia within the *Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia*, [8VAC20-81-10](#). **Definitions.** "Specific learning disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia."

"Dyslexia is distinguished from other learning disabilities due to its weakness occurring at the phonological level. 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." From the Virginia Administrative Code: <http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?000+reg+8VAC20-81-10;>

From the "where as" statements within the Governor's proclamation, we understand that dyslexia is a language-based learning disability with the severity of impact varying from individual to individual. The proclamation further acknowledges that the challenges of this condition should be addressed with effective instructional approaches and practices. By proclaiming October as a month to raise awareness around dyslexia, an opportunity to discuss appropriate instruction to address the needs of students is provided, but also an opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments of those individuals with dyslexia.

Below are suggested activities to highlight this month of dyslexia awareness with in schools.

### **School Faculty Meetings**

- As the proclamation indicates, some individuals with dyslexia are quite famous and/or have achieved prominent statue within their professions. A discussion and presentation regarding these individuals would allow a view of the positive accomplishment among those that in education are perceived to have challenges. This link provides a listing of famous or prominent individuals with dyslexia categorized by their professions, <http://www.dyslexia.com/famous.htm>.
- The proclamation also notes that an awareness of the characteristics of dyslexia and an understanding of effective instructional approaches and practices should be noted. During a staff meeting, materials may be shared from presentations on this topic delivered at the Virginia Council for Administrators of Special Education (VCASE) in May, 2015 and through a series of the Accessible Instructional Materials center of Virginia (AIM VA) presentations in September, 2015. This information is provided in the Web site links below.

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- VCASE May 2015 - <http://dyslexiainsightsandunderstandings.pbworks.com/w/page/96399477/Dyslexia%20Insights%20and%20Current%20Understandings>
- AIM VA September 2015 – <http://aimvaseptember2015.pbworks.com/w/page/101107771/AIM%20VA%20Presentations%20-%20September%202015>
- Dyslexia: Insights and Current Understandings (an article within the TTAC WM Link Lines) - <http://ttacwm.blogs.wm.edu/dyslexia-insights-and-current-understandings/>
- During staff meetings, the following resources might be noted for information regarding dyslexia:
  - International Dyslexia Association – <http://www.eida.org/>
  - Virginia Branch of the International Dyslexia Association – <http://www.vbida.org/>
  - Decoding Dyslexia Virginia - <https://www.facebook.com/DecodingDyslexiaVirginia>
  - National Center for Learning Disabilities, <http://www.nclid.org/>
- A teacher who participated in the Multisensory Structured Language Instruction Pilot Project , sponsored by the Virginia Department of Education, in August 2015 may be invited to speak on the instructional approach provided during the training. If you are not aware of a teacher within your division attending the training, please contact your local TTAC or Mary Stowe at [mmstowe@wm.edu](mailto:mmstowe@wm.edu).
- A dyslexia simulation might be conducted for the faculty. The Virginia Branch of the International Dyslexia Association, <http://www.vbida.org/>, may be contacted to possibly provide this, or Decoding Dyslexia Virginia, <http://www.facebook.com/DecodingDyslexiaVirginia>, may be contacted.

### Teachers in the Classroom

The following resources may be sent to general and special educators for them to review for use in the classroom.

- <https://forms.wm.edu/form/success/16218/fe08528df17d381b2450ba76d905fe95>. This link will lead to a series of learning modules on Multisensory Structured Language Teaching and the components of a multisensory structured language instruction.
- *Dyslexia In The Classroom* from the International Dyslexia Association, <https://app.box.com/s/fsxvph0hmseucs0we0jpix1c3qhjo95v>
- Supplementary aids and testing accommodations may be found at [https://www.osepideastthatwork.org/parentkit/school\\_accom\\_mods\\_eng.asp](https://www.osepideastthatwork.org/parentkit/school_accom_mods_eng.asp),
- Dyslexia is addressed in *Virginia's Guidelines for Educating Students with Specific Learning Disabilities* - [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special\\_ed/disabilities/learning\\_disability/learning\\_disabilities\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/disabilities/learning_disability/learning_disabilities_guidelines.pdf)
- Use of interactive books for students, <https://eida.org/ten-interactive-books/>
- Avenues for providing information to students within their classrooms about dyslexia,
- [http://www.pbs.org/parents/readinglanguage/articles/dyslexia/the\\_facts.html](http://www.pbs.org/parents/readinglanguage/articles/dyslexia/the_facts.html), <http://www.dyslexicadvantage.org/#>!
- Some suggestions for reading material regarding students challenged in reading:

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- *Double Dutch* by Sharon Draper;
- *The Alphabet War* by Diane Burton Robb and Gail Piazza;
- *Manic Magee* by Jerry Spinelli;
- *It's Called Dyslexia* by Jennifer Moore-Mallinos and Nuria Roca

### Parent Resource Centers

- The centers might seek information from:
  - Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC), <http://www.peatc.org/> around dyslexia;
  - The International Dyslexia Association for parents, Parenting Children with Dyslexia: Where Are You on the Journey? (Parents' Roadmap) <https://eida.org/parenting-children-with-dyslexia-where-are-you-on-the-journey/>;
  - Decoding Dyslexia Virginia, <https://www.facebook.com/DecodingDyslexiaVirginia>, about dyslexia and the parent organization;
  - The National Center for Learning Disabilities, <http://www.nclld.org/>, and Understood, <https://www.understood.org/en>.

### Parent Teacher Associations and Organizations (PTA/PTO)

- Local PTAs and PTOs may provide information regarding the Dyslexia Resolution adopted by the Virginia Parent Teacher Association, <http://vapta.org/component/content/article/185-committees/legislative-education/resolutions/912-dyslexia-resolution.html>.
- A dyslexia simulation might be conducted for the faculty. The Virginia Branch of the International Dyslexia Association, <http://www.vbida.org/>, may be contacted to possibly provide this, or Decoding Dyslexia Virginia, <http://www.facebook.com/DecodingDyslexiaVirginia>, may be contacted.
- Local PTAs and PTOs may provide a program around dyslexia, with the speaker being an individual with dyslexia. Contact with The Virginia Branch of the International Dyslexia Association, <http://www.vbida.org/>, may be contacted to provide a name, or Decoding Dyslexia Virginia, <http://www.facebook.com/DecodingDyslexiaVirginia>, may be contacted.