
Lincoln County Department of Education

The Lincoln County school district serves as a leader in the statewide movement to identify and serve students with characteristics of dyslexia, a learning disorder that affects areas of the brain that process language and make reading especially difficult. October is Dyslexia Awareness Month, and a great time to communicate about this disability that affects an estimated 15 percent of all Americans. People with dyslexia have normal or above intelligence and include well-known leaders like Albert Einstein, John F. Kennedy, Steven Spielberg, Steve Jobs, and Walt Disney. Because many dyslexic children are exceptionally bright, it can sometimes go undiagnosed because they are capable of compensating for their inability to read in other ways until the reading content becomes subject specific or difficult.

Since dyslexia was first documented more than a century ago, scientists have searched for the causes and therapies to treat it. Although dyslexia is neurological and there's not a cure, early assessment and intervention result in the best outcome. Lincoln County Schools created protocols to identify issues early through universal screening and weekly educator team meetings designed to look at multiple sources of data. Students who demonstrate the need for further assessments and additional reading support are provided assistance by a trained intervention teacher.

In 2014, Lincoln County Schools began training all lower grade teachers in the Orton-Gillingham method, a gold standard for teaching struggling readers and students with dyslexia. In 2018, all of Lincoln County Schools' K-8 intervention teachers and most special education teachers received certificates for the completion of the Orton-Gillingham International 40-hour teacher training, a program of study approved by the International Dyslexia Association (IDA). Intervention teachers continue to meet district-wide and receive further training in instructional practices specifically designed for students with characteristics of dyslexia. Lincoln County has also invested in high quality, dyslexia approved materials. From the earliest classrooms to specific student-based interventions, students are exposed to the highest quality materials available for learning to read. Training continues district-wide, and by the end of October, all kindergarten through 12th grade teachers will have received training on the characteristics and needs of students with dyslexia.

Additionally, Lincoln County Schools' highest priority is to meet the needs of the "whole" child: academically, emotionally, morally, and physically. When highly intelligent and very capable children struggle immensely in learning to read, it has a far-reaching impact. The word "dyslexia" has far more meaning for students and families than its definition implies because the impact can turn a family's world into a continuous cycle of struggles that include extra time-commitments, research, and emotional demands. Partially due to the historic "Say Dyslexia" Bill that was signed into Tennessee law on June 9, 2016, more information is available to schools and parents than ever before. The Lincoln County School District partners with families to assist in supporting dyslexic children. Information about dyslexia is available below and can also be obtained from the Lincoln County Department of Education.