

Advocacy

What is Advocacy?

The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) provides the following definition of advocacy:

"In broad terms, advocacy for people with disability can be defined as speaking, acting or writing with minimal conflict of interest on behalf of the interests of a person or group, in order to promote, protect and defend the welfare of and justice for either the person or group by:

- being on their side and no-one else's.
- being primarily concerned with their fundamental needs.
- remaining loyal and accountable to them in a way which is empathic and vigorous."

Further information regarding the definition and models of advocacy are available on the [FaHCSIA](#) website.

Advocating for students with Dyslexia

All schools are required to make reasonable adjustments for students with a disability at the time of their enrollment and during the course of their education, ensuring they have the support they need to successfully access and participate in the school curriculum, programs and activities in the company of their peers.

Public schools should actively engage with parents and families to provide inclusive, accessible and high quality education for all students. They should:

- consult with you to understand your child's education needs and whether adjustments are needed to support the student

- make the reasonable adjustments that are necessary to enable a student with a disability to take part in education on the same basis as other students
- assist students and families to feel safe and supported in the education environment.

Adjustments may be made in the areas of curriculum, environment or teaching methods, and will vary according to the needs of individual students.

Students with Dyslexia (Specific Learning Difficulty) are covered under Disability Education legislation and policies.

Disability Education legislation and policies

Australian Government

[Disability Standards for Education 2005](#)

[Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#)

[Privacy Act 1988](#)

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA 1992) includes Dyslexia as a disability under its definition:

“disability, in relation to a person, means:

(f) a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction; or..”

The Disability Standards for Education 2005 (the Standards) clarify the obligations of education and training providers and seek to ensure that students with disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as other students.

The Standards sit under the Commonwealth [Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#) (DDA) and seek to clearly outline the obligations of educational institutions in regards to the provision of educational services.

Additionally, the Australian Human Rights Commission provides information on the rights of individuals with disability in regards to education. Resources, including fact sheets, brochures and a frequently asked questions page, can be found at

http://www.hreoc.gov.au/disability_rights/education/education.html

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Advocating for what?

So what should you be advocating for?

- Dyslexia and Learning Difficulty screening and assessment (the Year 1 Phonics Check);
 - Evidence-based instruction and interventions, including Decodable Readers, implementation of appropriate pedagogy and programs, additional assistance in class;
 - Reasonable adjustments (accommodations), including use of laptops, extra time, readers and/or scribes during examinations. Allowing your child to present their work in a different format or in an adjusted manner (for example, not reading aloud in front of class but providing a powerpoint presentation or iMovie instead);
 - Assistive Technology, including use of laptops, evidence-based Apps or other appropriate devices;
 - Mental Health support and adjustments (as required).
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Advocacy Steps

Setting up an ILP:

1. At the beginning of each year politely introduce yourself to your child's teacher.
2. Ask to make an appointment to see them.
3. During the meeting, discuss your child's specific learning needs and support requirements, including evidence-based instruction, reasonable adjustments and accommodations, including assistive technology etc. Enquire as to the Teacher's

current knowledge of Dyslexia. If they know very little about Dyslexia, then offer to drop off a Dyslexia pack a couple days later, including Dyslexia Fact Sheets (see website Resources), lists of possible Adjustments, Assistive Technology ideas and any other information you can gather.

4. Request an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) to be drawn up for your child (if not already done). Make sure that all of your child's support needs are included in the ILP (refer to: Individual Learning Plan fact sheet). If your child's Educational Psychologist or the Australian Dyslexia Association have provided a list of recommendations, make sure they are included in the ILP.
5. Revisit your child's ILP each year.

When things are NOT going right:

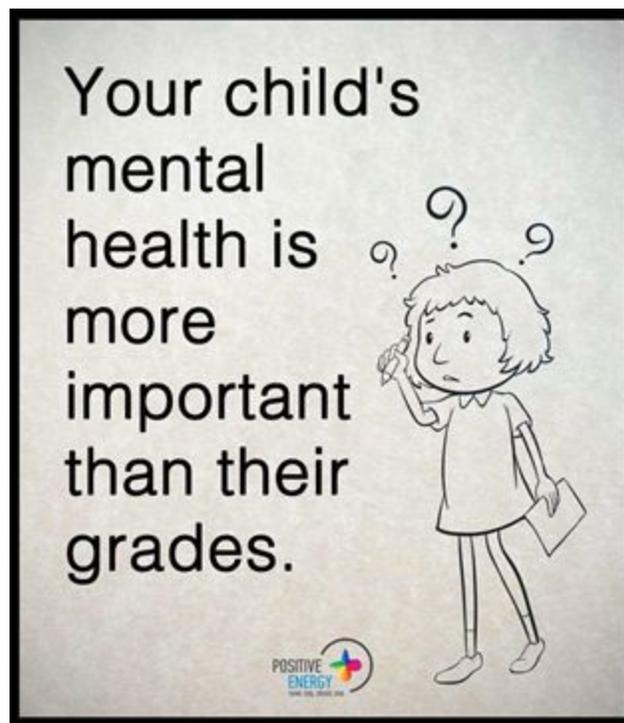
1. If you have provided your child's Teacher with all of the necessary information and your child is still not receiving appropriate support, then do not hesitate to make an appointment to see the School Principal.
2. It is likely the Principal will also invite your child's Teacher and maybe other professionals, such as the School Counsellor to any meetings. So be prepared!
3. Have a written list of concerns ready to discuss.
4. Systematically cover all of your concerns and wait for a response. Record the responses by writing them down and ask for clarification, if you are not sure.
5. It is very important to keep any discussions civil in order to keep future lines of communication open and appropriate.

Time to contact the Department of Education or Education Directorate (State/Territory):

1. If you have exhausted all avenues to gain appropriate learning support for your child at their school, including meetings with Teachers, School Counsellor, Principal, then it's time to contact the Department of Education.
2. Each Department of Education should have a Learning Support/Disability Team or Advisors. Contact them and notify them of your concerns.
3. The Department should not only provide you with further advice but should also be willing to contact your school and arrange a meeting to address your concerns with the Principal and provide any further support or guidance the school may need in order for them to appropriately support your child's learning needs.

Your child needs to learn to advocate too:

1. It's very important that your child learns to advocate for themselves.
2. As a student, they need to know what and when to expect additional support, adjustments and use of assistive technology.
3. They need to learn to speak up if they are not receiving what they should be, or if they are being asked to do something they shouldn't.
4. A child has the right to refuse any assistance and sometimes this happens, even after all your hard work of putting everything into place. As frustrating as this can be, it's important to gently persist and convince your child to accept the provided support by helping them to understand that the adjustments and support do not give them an advantage, rather allows them to work on an even playing field. Embarrassment is often a reason for a child to refuse support, again this is something worth working on, as your child will not succeed without the support, and the smile on their face when they do well at school will be worth the effort.



[READ MORE ON OUR WEBSITE](#)

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No one should act upon the information provided without appropriate professional advice and after a thorough examination of their particular circumstances.

Please do further research before making any decisions based on the information provided!

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