**There is help for students who have characteristics of dyslexia.**

Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI²) mandates require universal screenings for students in Kindergarten - 8th grade. The universal screener for Knox County, aimswebPlus has indicators for the five areas of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension.  It is likely that students with dyslexia will struggle in at least one of these areas.  Reading intervention through RTI² incorporates evidence-based strategies and intervention programs to address student needs.

Students with dyslexia share some common characteristics, but it is important to remember that it manifests differently depending on the individual, their age, and other factors affecting his/her foundational reading skill development.  Decisions made about reading instruction for students receiving intervention are made by a team of professionals and rely on multiple sources of data.”

“Our universal screener has indicators for the five areas of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension,” Evans said. “If students have dyslexia, they will likely struggle in at least one of these areas. Reading intervention through RTI² and in special education use research-based strategies and intervention programs. School teams meet at least every 4.5 weeks to talk about what’s working or not working with their students. Decisions made about reading instruction for students receiving intervention are made by a team of professionals and rely on multiple sources of data.”

One misconception about dyslexia is that a child will reverse the letters. That is not a true indicator. Some reversals are developmental and not all dyslexic students exhibit reversals. If the reversal problem does not clear up by the middle of the second grade, it is time to get concerned. Another misconception is that dyslexic children have below-average or above-average intelligence.  Dyslexia is a spectrum with different levels of severity. In severe cases, the child cannot read. In a mild case, the child may read but have trouble spelling.  Many students given the right intervention, strategies, and accommodations can achieve a college degree.

"Characteristics of dyslexia" is a more inclusive term that does not require that a student be identified with a specific learning disability. The term is adopted in Tennessee HB 2616 / SB 2635. It was adopted to ensure that students who struggle with word reading skills in any grade (K - 12) receive appropriate direct systematic instruction to teach them to read words accurately and/or fluently in support of comprehending written language.

Both terms "dyslexia" and "characteristics of dyslexia" apply to public schools in Tennessee in accordance with Tennessee HB 1735 / SB 2002 and Tennessee HB 2616 / SB 2635.

**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 the growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.  
International Dyslexia Association definition and the definition adopted in Tennessee HB 1735 / SB 2002