Dyslexia

Definition of Dyslexia

Dyslexia is defined by the International Dyslexia Association as a neurologically-based, often familial, disorder which interferes with acquisition and processing of language. Varying in degrees of severity, it is manifested by difficulties in receptive and expressive language, including phonological processing in reading, writing, spelling, handwriting and sometimes arithmetic. Dyslexia is not the result of lack of motivation, sensory impairment, inadequate instructional or environmental opportunities or other limiting conditions, but it may occur together with these conditions. Although dyslexia is a lifelong disorder, individuals with dyslexia frequently respond successfully to timely and appropriate intervention.

Dyslexia is a Type of Learning Disability

Dyslexia is a reading disability. Dyslexia is described by Dr. Sally Shaywitz as unexpected difficulty in reading experienced in children and adults who otherwise possess the intelligence and motivation considered needed to be a good reader. Dr. Shaywitz estimates that dyslexia affects approximately 17 percent of school-aged children.

Dyslexia is the most common learning disability. It affects 80 percent of children who have a learning disability. A reading disorder, dyslexia affects the phonological system of reading. This means it "affects the student's ability to segment the written words into its underlying phonologic elements." (S. Shaywitz) see article by S. Shaywitz

Recognize Warning Signs of Dyslexia

The most commonly known warning sign of dyslexia described by people is reversing letters. However that is only one characteristic sometimes seen with people who have dyslexia. Effects of dyslexia depend on the severity of the condition but may include difficulty with word recognition, reading fluency, spelling and complex language skills such as grammar, reading comprehension and writing.

Dyslexic people may also experience difficulty with spoken language, having trouble with expressing themselves clearly and understanding exactly what others mean when they speak. Speech therapy is often recommended to work on oral communication, understanding of language and social skills.
Fine motor skills and handwriting can often be an area of weakness for students who have dyslexia. Occupational therapy is often considered to address these concerns. In conclusion, this disability can often lead to a negative self-image and to students disliking school due to failure at academic tasks.

Click the icon below for a list of warning signs for dyslexia by Bright Solutions for Dyslexia

![Click here for list of warning signs](pdf)

**Diagnosing Dyslexia**

A child can be professionally diagnosed with dyslexia as early as 5 1/2 years old. Many people are reluctant to test children before the third grade. Parents are often told that their children will "outgrow" reading difficulties or that the difficulties or a lack of motivation. It is important to diagnose children as young as possible because it takes less time to remediate the reading problem at age 6 than at age 10, and it is more difficult the older the child gets without treatment.

A comprehensive evaluation is required to diagnose dyslexia. The ACCESS Evaluation and Resource Center provides a comprehensive educational evaluation. Our evaluation team consists of a clinical psychologist, speech pathologist and occupational therapist. It is important to obtain a comprehensive evaluation. Our test battery consists of multiple tests so that we can investigate every area that might be impacted by dyslexia.

In order to design an effective treatment approach, all areas much be examined. Once the testing is complete, the next step is to work on an intensive treatment program. A technology and resources consultation is available when applicable to accompany the evaluation. There are many resources that are available for students with dyslexia. Resources including Academy Therapy (tutoring) and educational technology are discussed in the consultation.

**Treatment & Therapy**

The most important fact for treatment of students with dyslexia is start immediately! Don't wait. Children do not outgrow dyslexia. Hesitancy in seeking help with reading can cause much
regret. You do not have to wait for a formal dyslexia diagnosis to begin reading instruction using an evidence-based reading approach.

Susan Hall, coauthor of "Straight Talk about Reading" has this to say:
The crucial window of opportunity to deliver help in development of reading skills is during the first couple of years of school. Beginning treatment with reading for students beyond the third grade is more complicated. The longer you wait to get help for a child with reading difficulties, the harder and more time it takes to get them caught up. It can take as long as four to five times as long to improve the same skills that it would take if you started in kindergarten or first grade.

**Multi-Sensory Approach**

The multi-sensory approach is the most effective teaching method for all children. This is imperative for children with dyslexia. Using a multi-sensory approach allows students to gather information in multiple ways. It is a method that uses all senses to relay important information. Teachers use auditory, visual, tactile and kinesthetic information to stimulate the brain during teaching. This means to incorporate the senses of hearing, seeing, touching, movement, smell and taste during the learning process.

Often children with dyslexia have an impairment in the visual or auditory systems. This makes it more important to use touch and movement as components of teaching. For young children this could mean writing letters in sand or finger paint, saying sounds as you write them in the air or on a chalkboard. By saying sounds as you write them, you are combining two senses. Writing letters in sand or finger paint with gives sensory input that is different than writing with a pencil using paper.

The most effective reading method for students with dyslexia is a multi-sensory phonics approach. It is important to select a method that is incremental and systematic and is recognized by the International Dyslexia Association as a valid teaching method. At ACCESS, we use several reading remediation approaches including The Dubard Association Method®, Orton-Gillingham and The Wilson Method. Because of the intensity needed, many students require private tutoring. Most tutors require students to be enrolled in tutoring sessions three to four hours weekly.
**Color Coding**

Color coding is another tool that can be used with dyslexic students. Teachers can highlight important or new information or write it in another color to call attention to that information. Some teachers have found it helpful to color code words that designate the parts of speech. For example, nouns in orange, verbs in green, descriptive words in blue and prepositions in purple. This gives visual clues and can be used by a teacher as a cue during writing assignments. Color coding can also be used in text documents to highlight the main idea, vocabulary words or important facts. It is often helpful to establish a specific color for each of these elements and keep it consistent in textbooks across all subjects.

**Mental Organization**

Organization of ideas, thoughts and physical space is often difficult for students with dyslexia. Tips on organization should be shared with students to be used at home and in class. It is important to assist students with organizing thoughts. Using graphic organizers is a tool to express ideas and thoughts in a visual format. This concept can be used during brainstorming ideas, presenting ideas or as a guide during the writing process. With graphic organizers, students are focused on the ideas and connections between ideas - not on spelling, grammar or punctuation. Once the ideas are in place, students can then move to the writing process in which their ideas can be transformed into a written document.

Educational technology can often assist students with difficulties in reading and writing. These tools can bridge the gap between potential and performance.

**Treatments and Products that Won’t Work**

Most parents have tried one or more of the following products or treatments and know they do NOT work for children with dyslexia.

- Hooked on Phonics or the Phonics Game
- Reading Recovery
- Vision Therapy
- Fast ForWord
- Brain Gym or Other Neurodevelopmental Exercises
- Special Glasses
- Medicine
• Special Diets
• Accelerated Reader
• Most commercial learning center chains, such as Sylvan, Kumon and Score

**Helpful sites to visit:**
Bright Solutions for Dyslexia
All Kinds of Minds
LD Online
Schwab Learning