

Dyslexia

Guide for Elementary School Teachers

What is Dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a learning disability that affects an individual's ability to read and spell. Dyslexia is more than just reversing or mixing up letters. It involves trouble matching letters on a page to the sounds they make.

The Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity defines dyslexia as "an unexpected difficulty in reading in an individual who has the intelligence to be a much better reader." (The Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity, 2017)



Did you know?

Dyslexia is a genetic and neurological disability

Not all students with dyslexia experience it the same way

There are varying severities of dyslexia

The signs of dyslexia change depending on the age of the individual

Students with dyslexia have many strengths that should be highlighted in the classroom

Early Years

Preschool to Grade 1

From the Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity Shaywitz states the following:

Students with Dyslexia may present some of these signs:

- Trouble learning common nursery rhymes
- Difficulty learning and remembering the names of letters in the alphabet
- Difficulty recognizing letters of their own name
- Mispronounces familiar words
- Doesn't recognize rhyming patterns (cat, bat, rat)
- Reading errors (depend on pictures instead of the sound of words)
- Avoid reading
- Reading difficulties
- Difficulty sounding words
- Difficulty remembering the sounds that each letter makes

Student strengths:

- Curiosity
- Great imagination
- Ability to figure things out; gets the gist of things
- Eager to embrace new ideas
- A good understanding of new concepts
- Surprising maturity
- A larger vocabulary than typical for age group
- Enjoys solving puzzles
- Talent for building models
- Excellent comprehension for stories told verbally

(Shaywitz, 2005)



School Age

Grade 2 and older

From the Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity Shaywitz states as students get older there are more signs that appear

Speaking:

- Searches for specific words but end up using vague language such as “thing” without naming the object
- Pauses, hesitates, and/or uses “um” a lot when speaking
- Confuses words that sound alike (tornado-volcano, ocean-lotion)
- Mispronounces long, unfamiliar, complicated words
- Seems to need extra time responding to questions

Strengths:

- Excellent thinking skills: Conceptualizing, reasoning, imagination, abstraction
- Learning through meaning rather than memorization
- Ability to get the “big picture”
- A higher understanding of what is read aloud by others
- Ability to read and understand words in a specific area of interest
- Improvement as an area of interest becomes more specialized
- A surprisingly sophisticated listening vocabulary
- Excels in areas not dependent on reading (math, computers, visual arts, or in more fact-driven subjects such as biology, social studies and creative writing

Reading:

- Very slow at acquiring reading skills
- Reading is slow and awkward
- Trouble reading unfamiliar words (often have wild guesses and cannot sound out the words)
- No apparent strategy for reading new words
- Avoids reading out loud

School life:

- Trouble remembering dates, names, random lists
- Struggles to finish tests on time
- Poor spelling
- Messy handwriting
- Low self-esteem that may not immediately be visible

• (Shaywitz, 2005)

Classroom Strategies

Techniques, Strategies, Approaches & Considerations

Phonics

Students who have dyslexia struggle with phonics and phonemic awareness (Toua, 2004). These are skills that are required for reading and spelling. Teaching phonics and providing opportunities to practice and develop phonemic awareness are essential for students with dyslexia but are beneficial for all students.



Use Graphic Novels and Comics

Graphic novels and comics are a great addition to classroom libraries. Graphic novels and comics are a great tool to promote reading with students who struggle with reading. Graphic novels tell stories through words and pictures. For students who have dyslexia graphic novels can help them by using the pictures to help decode what is going on in the story. Graphic novels are good for all students in the classroom. Research shows that graphic novels use more rare words than children's books which increases students' vocabulary. (Dyslexic Advantage Team, 2019).



Repeat reading for fluency

Chard and Harn define reading fluency as “efficient, effective word recognition skills that permit a reader to construct the meaning of text. Fluency is manifested in accurate, rapid, expressive oral reading and is applied during, and makes possible, silent reading comprehension” (Chard & Harn, 2020). All students benefit from working on their reading fluency. Students with dyslexia struggle with reading fluency. It is shown that repeated reading of the same passages help all students develop reading fluency. Teachers should try and make time to have students increase reading fluency through repeated reading such as during guided reading. (Chard & Harn, 2020).

Resources and Tools

Students with dyslexia struggle with reading and spelling. There are many tools that teachers can use in their classroom to help students who struggle with reading and writing.

Ways to support students with reading:

- Read Aloud Books (Epic Books)
- Audio Books
- Graphic Novels
- Bee-Line Reader App (converts black and white text to an eye guiding colour gradient text that helps eyes focus on a specific line of text)



Ways to help students with writing:

- Google Voice to Text
- Typing instead of writing responses

Tools for teachers:

- Online dyslexia course and materials for educators to support students
[Http://learningspecialistsmaterials.blogspot.com](http://learningspecialistsmaterials.blogspot.com)
- Dyslexia Handbook (IDA, 2014)
- Teacher Strategies for Dyslexics (2006, LD Online)
- Orton Gillingham Training (summer teacher program available at Learning Literacy: 1453 Sherwood Mills BLVD, Mississauga, ON. www.learnliteracy.com)



Annotated Bibliography

Additional Resources for Teachers

Academy of Orton-Gillingham for Practitioners and Educators. (2018). *What is the Orton-Gillingham Approach*. Retrieved from Academy of Orton-Gillingham for Practitioners and Educators at <https://www.ortonacademy.org/resources/what-is-the-orton-gillingham-approach/>

- This website introduces the Orton-Gillingham Approach. It is a direct, explicit, multisensory, structured, sequential, diagnostic, and prescriptive way to teach literacy when reading, writing, and spelling does not come easily to individuals, such as those with dyslexia. It is most properly understood and practiced as an approach, not a method, program, or system. In the hands of a well-trained and experienced instructor, it is a powerful tool of exceptional breadth, depth, and flexibility

Beeline Reader. (2017). *Read Faster and Easier, All Day Long*. Retrieved from Beeline Reader at <https://www.beelinereader.com/>

- Beeline reader website provides information and downloads on their software for converting regular black and white text to an eye-catching colour gradient. This helps your eyes focus on the correct line when they're reading.

Chard, D. & Harn, B. (2020). *Repeated Readings to Promote Fluency*. Retrieved from https://www.teachingld.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/TeachingTut6_Fluency.pdf

- This website provides information on how to build reading fluency for students with dyslexia by repeat readings

Dyslexic Advantage Team. (2019). *COMICS AND DYSLEXIA: A Curious Connection*. Retrieved from <https://www.dyslexicadvantage.org/comics-and-dyslexia-a-curious-connection/>

- This website offers comic resources that are an excellent tool for teaching reading with dyslexia. It helps train their brain and focuses on the images in the comics to make meaning of the story line.

Greeley-Zetler, Cynthia. (2018, September) *Understanding Dyslexia*. Retrieved from TeensHealth at <https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/dyslexia.html>

- This website is written by Cythina Greeley-Zetler, PhD. She provides information on what dyslexia is, the diagnosis process, what it's like to have dyslexia and how to deal with it..

Learning Disabilities Association of Ottawa-Carleton. (2012). *Info Night Topic and Schedule*. Retrieved from IDAO at <https://www.ldaoottawa.com/info-nights-for-parents-individuals-professions/>

- This website includes dates and information for workshops on different learning disabilities such as dyslexia for parents, individuals and professionals.

Annotated Bibliography

Additional Resources for Teachers

Learn Literacy. (2018). *Learn Literacy: Language for Life*. Retrieved from Learn Literacy at <https://learnliteracy.com/>

This website offers Orton Gillingham training for teachers in Canada to sign up for over the summer months. It is located in the Toronto area.

Redford, Kyle. (2017) *Creating a Reading Culture*. Retrieved from The Yale Centre for Dyslexia and Creativity at <http://dyslexia.yale.edu/resources/educators/instruction/creating-a-reading-culture/>

- This website discusses how one educator and mother of a boy with dyslexia wanted to engage her struggling dyslexic readers to enjoy books. What she observed was that their dislike for reading was that they never finished the end of the story. With specific books, and tactics she implemented she noticed an increase in enjoyment of all students in her class.

Shaywitz, S. (2005). *Overcoming Dyslexia*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group

- This is a book from an author who has dyslexia and her experience overcoming it. She highlights the strengths, needs and signs of an individual with dyslexia.

Siegel L. S. (2006). Perspectives on dyslexia. *Paediatrics & child health*, 11 (9), 581–587. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pch/11.9.581>

- This journal article discusses what dyslexia is; the prevalence and history; routes to reading; assessment of dyslexia; prevention and current directions in dyslexia.

Troia, G. (2004). Phonological Awareness. *Current Practice Alerts*. (Issue 10) <https://www.teachingld.org/practice-alerts/phonological-awareness/>

- This website has information on phonological awareness for individuals with dyslexia.

Warren, Dr.Erica. (2019, December). *Learning Specialists and Teacher Materials- Good Sensory Learning*. Retrieved at <https://learningspecialistmaterials.blogspot.com/>

- A website by Dr.Erica Warren complying many resources for educators, parents and therapists to support students with dyslexia. She also offers online education courses for teachers to better understand dyslexia and support their students.

Young, Seagull. (2018). *Learning Disability Associations of Ontario*. Retrieved from IDAO at <http://www.ldao.ca/introduction-to-ldsadhd/articles/about-lds/dyslexia/>

- This website discusses the signs and symptoms of dyslexia in schools. It includes how phonological processing occurs and treatments that are available.