



Understanding Dyslexia: How to Identify, Prevent and Remediate Word Level Reading Difficulties

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What We Will Cover

1. What dyslexia is and what it is not
2. What causes difficulty learning to read and spell written words
3. How to recognize the signs of dyslexia
4. The principles of effective intervention and instruction for students with dyslexia using the multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) framework

Basic Facts About Dyslexia



Dyslexia

- What is dyslexia? dys – lexia
 - dys – difficulty*
 - lexia – with words*
- Why is definition important?
 - Clear up myths and misconceptions
 - Link educators to information and resources
 - Promote science-based instruction

What We Know From Research

Thousands of studies have addressed these critical questions:

- How does a good reader read?
- How do students learn to read?
- Why do some students fail to learn easily?
- What is the relationship between language and reading?
- How can we be most helpful to students with reading, spelling, and language problems?

Dyslexia Legislation or Guidelines

- All but 8 states now have such rules
- The US Office of Education affirmed that there was no reason not to use the term “dyslexia” where appropriate (2015)
- California’s guidelines were adopted in the fall of 2017 (A.B. 1369)
- Most of these gains resulted from organized parent advocacy

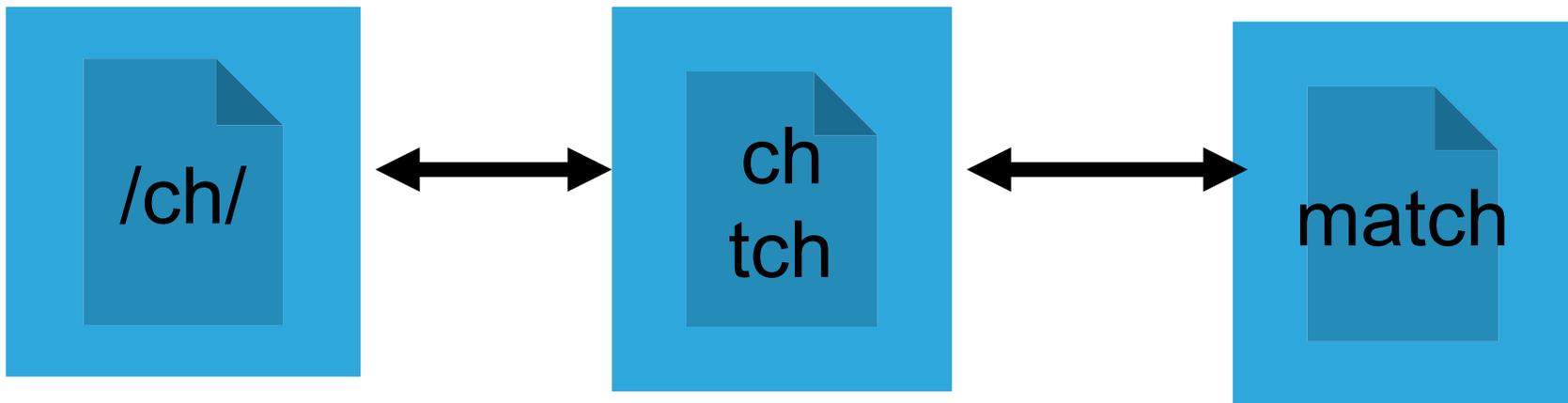
Dyslexia Defined

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 growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.

Lyon, G.R., Shaywitz, S. E., Shaywitz, B.A. (2003). A definition of dyslexia. Annals of Dyslexia, 53, 1-14.

The Heart of the Problem

Identifying speech sounds in words, learning all sound-symbol correspondences, and consolidating word memories.



Dyslexia

- is a *language-based* problem
- does not mean seeing things backwards or making reversals
- exists across all levels of intelligence
- is not caused by a lack of motivation



Dyslexia

- occurs at all socioeconomic levels
- occurs slightly more often in boys than girls
- may develop even with optimal classroom instruction
- often occurs with other developmental problems (e.g., ADHD)



Dyslexia and Literacy

- The term *dyslexia* is most often used to identify a **reading** problem that originates in an inability to **recognize** and **spell** written words accurately and quickly
- **Literacy** is a broader term. Literacy is the use of printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential.

National Center for Educational Statistics, 2003

Dyslexia and Special Education

- 80-85% of students with an identified specific learning disability has a primary problem with reading and/or language
- 10-20% or 1 out of every 5-10 students has symptoms of dyslexia



National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2003)

Preschool and Kindergarten

- Late learning to talk or slow to learn new words
- Trouble producing speech sounds
- Avoids letters or confuses them
- Can't recall sounds of letters
- Unable to break words into separate speech sounds



Grades K-1

- Trouble learning phonics (sound-symbol correspondences)
- Poor handwriting and spelling
- Can't remember "sight" words
- Avoids reading and writing
- Low on phoneme awareness tests (taking apart speech sounds in words)



Grades 2-3

- Can't recall words even after practice
- Poor phonics skills
- Poor spelling, handwriting, and written work
- Slow on reading fluency and makes many word recognition errors
- Poor word recognition interferes with comprehension



Grades 4-6

- Slow on oral reading fluency tests
- Inaccurate reading of real words and nonsense words
- Poor spelling, handwriting, and written expression
- Avoidance of reading
- Weak in reading strategies



Grades 7-8

- Slow and laborious reading
- Overwhelmed by multiple assignments
- Can't work fast enough to cope
- May lack effective strategies for studying
- Needs accommodations and modifications
- Written work remains a huge problem



High School



- Reads slowly
- Comprehension and vocabulary may have declined from lack of practice
- Writes poorly and with effort
- Needs strategy instruction and study skills
- May need foreign language exemption

Screening for Dyslexia

- Timed tests of **letter naming or letter-sound associations** in kindergarten and early first grade
- **Phoneme awareness tasks** in kindergarten and beginning first grade level
- Direct measures of **decoding and word recognition** toward the middle and end of first grade and beyond
- **Oral reading fluency**, a timed test that combines reading rate and accuracy, once the student can read connected text

Social/Emotional Consequences

- Frustration, fear, anxiety
- Learned/chronic helplessness
- Avoidance behaviors/misbehaviors
- Trouble expressing self in social situations
- Feelings of inadequacy

Characteristics of the Successful Student with Dyslexia

Ability to solve problems and navigate in spite of the learning difficulty

- Repertoire of effective strategies
- Independent use of strategies
- Resilience
- Flexibility
- Self-monitoring, self-advocacy



Characteristics of the Successful Student with Dyslexia

- One or more strengths that provide success and bolster self-esteem
- Strong, constant, supportive relationship with at least one adult who believes in the child's worth and capabilities
 - Role model, advocate, mentor, charismatic other

Essential Components of Effective Instruction

- Phonemic awareness
- Phonics and word recognition
- Fluency
- Vocabulary
- Comprehension
- Speaking and listening
- Written expression



Definitions of Terms

- *Phoneme* - the smallest unit of speech sound
- *Grapheme* – a letter or letter group that represents a speech sound or phoneme
- *Morpheme* – the smallest linguistic unit that has meaning

Phonemic Awareness

The ability to notice, think about, and work with the individual sounds in spoken words



Phonemic Awareness

Principles of Instruction

- Teach what the speech sounds are, as they are not the same as letters
- Use multi-sensory strategies – looking in a mirror during sound pronunciation, describing what the mouth is doing, moving chips or blocks to show sounds in words
- Link to letters as soon as the student is ready

Phonics and Word Recognition

The relationships between the letters (graphemes) of written language and the individual sounds (phonemes) of spoken language

shock = /sh/ /ɒ/ /k/

Explicit Phonics Lesson Sequence

1. Develop phonemic awareness.
2. Introduce sound/spelling.
3. Blend words.
4. Build automatic word recognition.
5. Apply to decodable text.
6. Do word work to practice decoding and encoding.

(CORE Teaching Reading Sourcebook, p. 175)

Phonics

Principles of Instruction

- Systematic – planned teaching of all useful sound-spelling correspondence patterns
- Sequential – planned sequence of instruction
- Multisensory – using listening, speaking, reading, and writing together
- Explicit – concepts are explained, not left to “discovery learning”
- Cumulative – ample practice with “old learning” is provided as new concepts are introduced

Fluency

- Reading text with sufficient speed to support understanding
- Includes accurate and fluent recognition of word elements (letters, letter groups, syllable patterns, and individual words)
- Depends on a lot of text reading practice

Vocabulary

- Knowledge of the meaning of individual words, especially academic content area words on which comprehension depends
- Use of words in oral and written language



Vocabulary

Principles of Instruction

- Repeated exposures – oral and written – gained from READING and listening
- Modeling of word use
 - Explanation of multiple meanings
 - Use in varied contexts
- Emphasis on relationships between and among words and concepts
 - Semantic (graphic) organizers
 - Comparison charts
- Formal definitions

Comprehension

Depends on:

- Accessing background knowledge
- Knowing the individual word meanings
- Understanding text structure
- Interpreting complex sentences
- Constructing mental images of the concepts
- Making reasonable inferences
- Monitoring one's own comprehension

Comprehension, Principles of Instruction (1)

- Before reading a passage:
 - Preview the topic, provide background
 - Survey the text, anticipate and predict
 - Set a purpose for reading
- During reading:
 - Ask probing questions
 - Enable visualization of concepts
 - Think aloud: verbalize thought processes

Comprehension

Principles of Instruction (2)

- After reading:
 - Summarize and retell
 - Reread for a specific purpose
 - Outline or complete a concept graph
 - Connect and apply information to other information outside the text

Speaking & Listening

Develop Oral Language Competence

- Listen to text read aloud
- Recite poetry and speeches
- Role play social situations
- Expand and elaborate ideas in discussions about text
- Formulate sentences, combine sentences

Written Expression

Expository Writing

- Formulate phrases, sentences, paragraphs, with emphasis on basic expository skills
- Spell most common words and spelling patterns
- Practice letter formation and handwriting fluency
- Learn punctuation, capitalization, and usage

To Summarize, Effective Instruction is...

- Explicit
- Systematic
- Cumulative
- Sequential and Incremental
- Data-driven



Explicit

- Concepts are clearly and directly explained
- No assumptions are made about the students' ability to make inferences



Systematic

- The entire system of speech sounds, spelling patterns, sentence structures, text genres, and language conventions is integrated into lessons
- Lessons follow familiar, teacher-led routines



Cumulative

Skills are continually reviewed, practiced, extended, and once mastered, applied to more and more difficult text



Sequential and Incremental

- Follows a planned scope and sequence that gradually addresses all common correspondences and patterns in the writing system
- Progresses in measurable, manageable steps



Data-driven

- Progress-monitoring assessments are used frequently
- Curriculum-based measurements are emphasized to assess progress
- Guided practice is continuous and ample
- Independent application is expected



Successful Instruction Includes...

Multisensory learning: Children use their eyes, ears, hands, mouths, and sometimes whole bodies as they learn concepts of language



Successful Instruction Includes...

Cognitive strategies

- Learning steps involved in task completion
- Selecting an approach to problem-solving
- Monitoring one's own thinking
- Evaluating results of effort

The Successful Individual

- Self-advocates, and is self-aware
- Accesses resources
- Connects with a mentor or role model
- Strives for life-long learning
- Discovers and maximizes personal strengths



How do we put it all together?

- Early identification
- Explicit, systematic instruction
- Progress-monitoring
- Comprehensive programming
- Student self-advocacy



For More Information

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Questions?



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