

Recognizing Dyslexia in the Classroom: Seven Steps to a Healthy Classroom for Dyslexics

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Step one: Agree that dyslexia is real.



No matter what
anyone tells
you, anywhere,
in any meeting.

“We do not understand why the term ”dyslexia” is often viewed as if it were a four-letter word, not to be uttered in polite company.”

~Siegel & Mazabel (2013)

“Without a label we have no way of talking about a problem.”

~Johns & Kauffman (2009)

He understands everything he hears and is very bright. He has a great verbal vocabulary and is creative – and he is about to go into the fourth grade reading at a first-grade level. So, why can't he read? In one word, dyslexia.

-Dr. Kelli Sandman-Hurley



Every child would read if it were in her power to do so.

~Betts, 1936

Step Two: Do not wait, ever.

The WTF Model

Wait to fail.

Watch them fail.

Why they fail.

The WTF Model

Wait to Fail

They'll grow out of it.

We will give them some extra help.

We have to wait until third grade.

They have to be two grade behind.

We are looking for a severe discrepancy.

Watch them Fail

Response to Intervention

A little pull-out here and there.

Accommodations only.

Why they Fail

Proper assessment

Strengths and Weaknesses

Recommendations based on identified needs and a proper interpretation of the data collected.

Step Three: Understand dyslexia deeply.

Dyslexia

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graph LR; A[Dyslexia] --- B[Phonological Processing]; A --- C[Rapid Naming]; A --- D[Orthographic Processing]
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Phonological
Processing

Rapid Naming

Orthographic
Processing

More than just phonological awareness.

Phonological Processing

Phonological awareness includes rhyming, counting words in spoken sentence, and clapping syllables in spoken words. An important aspect of phonological awareness is phonemic awareness or the ability to segment words into their component sounds, which are called phonemes.

Rapid Naming

An Individual's ability to recognize a visual symbol such as a letter or color and name it accurately and rapidly.

An excellent predictor of reading fluency.

(Wolf & Bowers)

Orthographic Dyslexia

Students with dyslexia have weaknesses in the automatic recall of spelling patterns and spell words the way they sound rather than the way they look.

Egzact versus exact

(Roberts, R., and Mather, N)

And yes, spelling matters.

*If you can read a word it does not mean
you can spell it, but if you can spell a
word you can read it.*

~Gina Cooke and Pete Bowers, Personal Communication

Fortune

S

A, B, C, ~~D~~, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, ~~S~~, T, U, V
W, X, Y, Z

During the summer I went to Hers Kasol. He was literly a biliener he billt a kasol that took 23 yers to bid and its still being billt. He is no longer ahve. It was aseme fo see the boteme flere of the kasol.

7th
Grade

All stories are made up of words and
every word has a story.

~Gina Cooke

Implications for Screening

Screen for:

Phonological
processing

Rapid Naming

Orthographic
Awareness

- As early as kindergarten
- Check progress every six months to weed out false positives.

Step Four: Shed the One-Size-Fits-All Mantra

Teaching should be such that what is offered is perceived as a valuable gift and not a hard duty.

~Einstein, 1952

What Dyslexia is not.

- Lack of motivation.
- Lack of effort.
- Seeing letters or words backwards.
- A medical issue.
- A vision or hearing issue. Vision therapy will not help a student

Remember the 'I' in individual.

- Dyslexia occurs on a continuum
- Respond to the identified needs of the individual student.
- What works for one child may not work for another child.
- Need to work within a homogeneous group.
- Students in middle and high school may still need individualized assistance.
- Yes, still a structured literacy approach, but designed with the individual needs in mind.

What is a structured literacy approach?

- Multisensory
- Explicit
- Structured
- Language-based

Danielle is a 7 1/2 year old second grade student. She has attended the same school since kindergarten with no attendance issues and no major medical history. Her parents report that they read to her every day. She does not choose to read in her free time but loves listening to stories. She understands everything that is read to her. She has significant difficulty decoding single syllable words which makes her sound very dysfluent while she is reading. She has difficulty understand how to verbally manipulate the English language. Danielle avoids writing tasks, her spelling is almost unreadable and she seems to be on the brink of tears when she is asked to write. Both kindergarten and first grade teachers expressed concerns about her progress in reading.

Meet Javier. He's an adorable, engaging, very bright (gifted) and extremely motivated young man who is ten years old.

Javier has had an IEP since the third grade for unexpected reading difficulties. Spelling difficulties were evident but not included in the IEP. He has average to above average performance on phonemic awareness tasks. In fact, he scored in the above average range in phonological awareness and phonological memory on the CTOPP-2, but he still struggled to read, and he was spelling entirely phonemically.

Interestingly, he was able to spell words like *brandish*, which has direct phoneme/grapheme correspondence, but not the word *who*, which *requires visual memory and an understanding of English orthography*. So, could it still be dyslexia if his phonological skills are intact? Yes, yes, yes!

What helped Javier.



act + ing → acting

act + or → actor

act + s → acts

re + act → react

re + act + ion → reaction

re + act + ive → reactive

re + act + ive + ly → reactively

act + u + al → actual

act + u + al + ly → actually

Step Five: Adequately Train Educators

The knowledge of the structure of their (teachers) own language, knowledge of what we're talking about when we talk about phonemes and phonology and orthography, knowledge of how the writing system is structured so it doesn't seem like a mysterious mess to them. They communicate to kids the confidence that the spelling of any word can be explained, and that there is a path through all of this.

~Louisa Moats, 2003, Children of the Code

Basic skills for teachers: Every teacher should be a linguist

- Teach English structure to teachers using a linguistic basis, not an educational view of the English language
- Every teacher should be comfortable teaching the schwa.
- Every teacher should know the difference between a phone and a phoneme.
- Every teacher should understand that English orthography is morphophonemic, not syllabic.
- Every teacher should know how to help students investigate why words are spelled that way they are. E.g.: <two> and <sign>



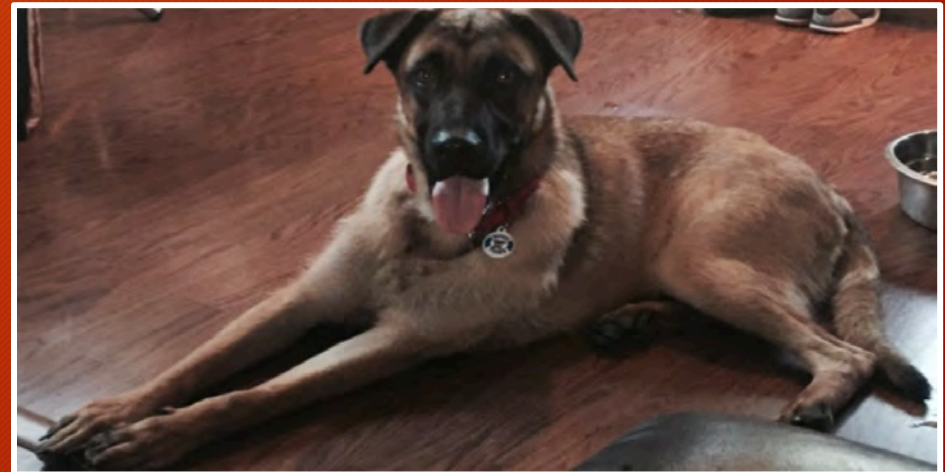
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0mbuwZK0lr8>

Step Six: Develop empathy and understand accommodations

Step 7: Don't forget that children with dyslexia become adults with dyslexia.

What rescue dogs teach us (and what in the world does that have to do with dyslexia)?

Resiliency



Resources

Dyslexia Training Institute: www.dyslexiatraininginstitute.org

Decoding Dyslexia: www.decodingdyslexia.net

Book:

Dyslexia Advocate!: How to Advocate for a Child with Dyslexia within the Public Education System, *Kelli Sandman-Hurley*